

Sons of Norway Information Banks

# #226: THE SONS OF NORWAY LOGO

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## INTRODUCTION

A logo is created and used to aid and promote public recognition. It can be either purely graphic or it can include the name or acronym of a company or organization. An emblem, on the other hand, is an object, figure or design that symbolizes a principal, idea or state. The two are often confused for one another but just remember that an emblem is typically found within an organization's official logo.

Sons of Norway has been providing quality insurance products and Norwegian cultural benefits to its members since 1895 and the organization has been "dressed" with a new design numerous times throughout its existence. Sons of Norway has captured the history and tradition of its past with its iconic Viking ship and North Star present in almost every logo since 1904. The present Sons of Norway logo incorporates the organization's emblem which is the Viking shield design alongside the stacked name of the organization. The emblem and the name combine to create the official Sons of Norway logo.

The following history and evolution of the logo has been pieced together based on the dates they appeared in official Sons of Norway publications and firsthand knowledge from various credible resources. In that regard it is important to note that there is not a wealth of information documented about the original creators or idea makers behind each design.

One element that has appeared in most of the logos is the Viking ship. What is so significant about this powerful ship that the organization continues to incorporate it? The Viking long ship was built to sit shallow, long and slender in both deep oceans and shallow seaports. It was built to act as a ship with many oars that could be either rowed or sailed making it the most versatile ship in the world. The ship was not only capable of crossing the treacherous North Atlantic, but of skimming up shallow rivers deep inland. Evidence of the ships' landings have been found as far inland as Alexandria, Minnesota, where Norse explorers are said to have carved out a message on the now famed Kensington runestone, which says in part: "Have 10 of our party by the sea (Hudson's Bay) to look after our ships 14 days—journey from this island (Cormorant Lake, Minn.) Year 1362."

Toward the end of the tenth century, the saga of Viking Warrior Olaf Trygvason told of his Long Serpent which was said to have been 160 feet long and having 34 oars on each side. Most ships, however, were 80 feet long, sharply pointed on prow and stern, widening to about 16 feet amid ship, with 16 oars on each side. For their size they were extremely light and shallow. There was no structure above to protect the crew from the elements except that, while in port, a canvas could be stretched tent-like over two long poles running down the center of the ship. The rudder or "steerboard" was on the right side where it could be pivoted up out of the way in shallow water. There was little room aboard so all shields were stored hanging

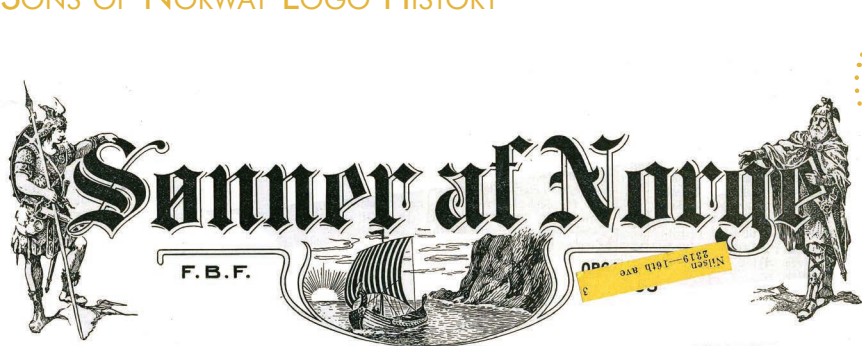


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over the gunwales on each side, a sight that nowadays can be easily associated with Viking ships. The Vikings were proud of their ship. The brightly painted shields, brilliantly enameled dragon heads on the prow, and for special occasions, brightly colored and vertically striped velvet sails made a dazzling impression (as pictured in the first Sons of Norway emblem).

The Vikings were tough and fearless. Their chiefs became kings and ruled with purpose. The Viking Age came to an end around the 11th century when stronger bridges were built on rivers to bar the long ship's passage through. Coastal defenses were also much improved and Viking raids came to an end as overseas trading became conventional. It was then the Viking Dragon disappeared from the seas and rivers but took her place in the hearts of those who remembered her sleek beauty. All of this history is symbolically represented in the Sons of Norway shield which has anchored itself in the organization's official logo since the beginning.

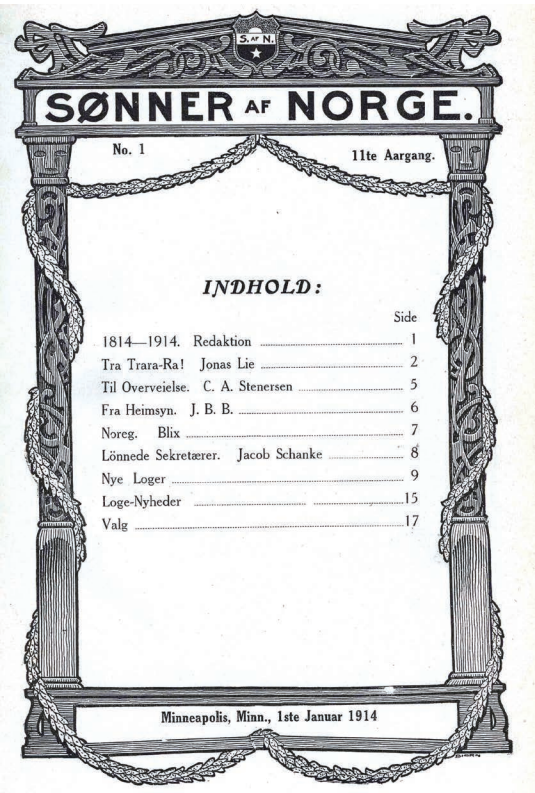
Sons of Norway Logo History



1904

The current logo of Sons of Norway is undoubtedly the most recognizable but like our roots we must not forget the journey of the unique designs that have shaped the present. The design to the left was the first logo that symbolized Sons of Norway. A dragon headed Viking ship making its way out to sea under the setting midnight sun. On the right are the cliffs of what seem to be the mountains of Norway. This logo

was first seen in the official *Sønner af Norge* publication which was laid out as a 4-page tabloid similar to a newspaper and equivalent to what the *Viking* magazine is today. The design was positioned as a banner for the publication but whether it was meant to be the masthead for the publication or the organization's official logo is unclear. The words "Sønner af Norge" are listed above the picture and the letters "F.B.F." stand as a motto below (meaning Frihed, Broderkjærlighed, Fremskritt – Freedom, Brotherly Love, and Progress from the Norwegian of the time). The Viking ship illustrated on the design is an authentic representation of the old Viking ships that sailed from the North. There are no apparent records identifying the creator of the first Sons of Norway logo but it was truly a design that included characteristics that would survive the years.



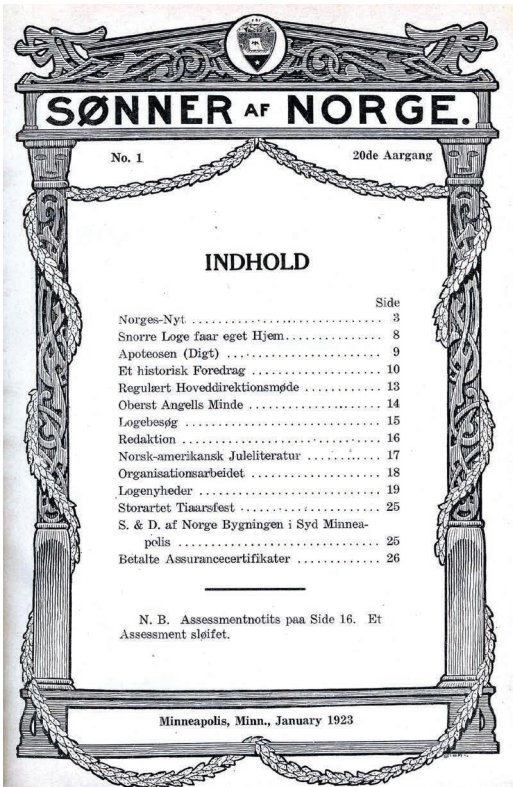
1913

Revealed in the 1913 issue of *Sønner af Norge* was the new logo design shown to the left. The emblem within the logo was reduced to a small shield emerging as a simpler representation of the organization. Apparently the Sons of Norway's board of directors voted to approve this logo probably in hopes of modernizing with the times and increasing visibility through promotion with the emblem/shield. However, it is unclear whether the shield was used alone to promote the organization as it is today.

This logo consisted of a tricolor (not apparent in the black and white image left) shield that's more rotund than later shields (like a sheriff's badge). In the top red stripe there is a symbol representing the midnight sun, while the bottom blue stripe contained the North Star. The center white stripe was reserved for the abbreviation "S. af N." for Sønner af Norge as the organization was then known. The most interesting part of the design is the logo's surroundings. Similar to the first logo it is unknown whether this design was purposed solely as the banner for the publication or if this was the organization's official logo. With that said, this logo's full design remarkably takes up a whole page. The entire design was used to frame the publication's table of contents and dually act as the front page. The design resembles a medieval arched trellis complete with woodcarvings and wreath wrapping the frame. The shield anchors the top of the gateway and the name proclaims itself proudly below. This wood carved trellis design was upheld as part of the next two logos with minor transformations in 1922 and 1929.

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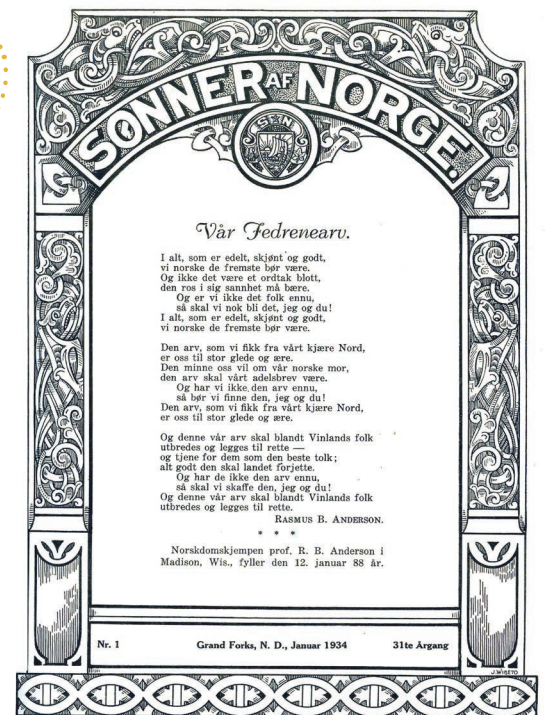
1922

In 1922 the new logo changed just slightly. At the time a committee selected this new shield from a design created by Martin J Grindheim (then president of Nordkap 1-008). The new emblem/shield is very hard to interpret because of its small size within the logo. In many ways this design resembles the shield we associate with today because of its slender appearance that encloses a Viking ship and the North Star. However the Viking ship is shown from a side view and the North Star is found at the bottom of the shield, where it had been in the previous design. Other differences include the reappearance of the letters F.B.F. over the ship and an American eagle perched over the top. The surrounding wood carved trellis remains the same as does the official name and language of the organization. Norwegian endured in Sons of Norway publications until 1943 when the official language was changed to English.

1929



As early as 1914, a movement was started to include Canadian symbolism in the shield, and in the 1929 *Sønner af Norge* publication another revised version of the logo was presented. This emblem/shield shifts to form a circle encompassing the shield. A forward-facing Viking ship and the midnight sun behind are articulately sketched inside. Above the shield a banner appears, with the initials "S" and "N" separated by a star, undoubtedly to symbolize the North Star. This was the first apparent depiction of the star placed between the S and N, a combination that today is truly symbolic of the Sons of Norway. On the left of the shield is an American eagle and on the right, the Canadian maple leaf. This symbol was used in the masthead of the organization's newsletter, and later the *Viking*, for many years afterward. At least as early as 1948 a slimmed-down version of the shield (integrating the "S" and "N" into the top of the shield and omitting the eagle and flag) appears on the cover of a Sons of Norway songbook. This leaner logo also appears in the *Viking* as early as 1951, and was in widespread use by the time the current Sons of Norway Headquarters building was built in 1962. At what point this symbol came into official use, we are unable to say. With slight alterations this emblem is one that has rooted our organization's present logo.



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## SONS OF NORWAY INTERNATIONAL

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### Post 1955-late 1990's

After 60 years of existence the Sons of Norway revealed its new and improved shield. Uncovered in the January 1955 issue of the Sons of Norway magazine this emblem has lasted the longest of any other design. Transformed into a narrower shield, the design became widespread and recognized by its red, white and blue colors. On the emblem/shield, the letters "S" and "N" remain proudly up top while the North Star adorns the center. The design is simplified and consistent with the first ever Sønner af Norge logo from 1904. The midnight sun is prominent in the background while the Viking ship has changed shape slightly. The sail loses its stripes and the dragon's mouth closes. The design gives off a rather pleasant feeling of sailing over the calm blue sea to new lands as the midnight sun brightens the way ahead. The emblem is clean cut and modern but not forgetting of a touch of history. However the combination of the the specific font design and emblem (above) were not joined together to form the official logo until the late 1990's. Until then the emblem you see directly above was most widely seen on the organization's letterhead and various organization publications. The emblem/shield has stayed exactly the same since 1955.

The text below within the current logo is unique in that the font was designed specifically for Sons of Norway and its logo usage. Not until the late 1990's did the emblem/shield and the stacked text to the right become the official logo of this organization now seen on mailings, magazines, letterhead, pens, bags and much more promoting Sons of Norway.



# SONS OF NORWAY

### Late 1990's-Present

An emblem is an object, picture or small graphic that alone symbolizes the bigger idea of the organization. In this case the idea or creative vision behind the current emblem can symbolize the organization sailing towards the future ready to explore new seas with each new generation to come. Although the emblem/shield can work on its own it is only considered the official Sons of Norway logo if the emblem and name are placed together as seen left. The shield can often

be seen alone on items such as membership pins, iron on patches or local lodge buildings however in order to be distinguished as the official logo of Sons of Norway it must be presented as shown left.

A noticeable change from past logos is language of the name of the organization. The meaning has stayed the same but the spelling and language changed to English. Instead of Sønner af Norge it became Sons of Norway. The official language of the organization was changed to English in 1943. Printed in the January 1943 issue of Sons of Norway an article addresses the reasons behind the shift. From the 1942 Sons of Norway International Convention in Chicago Supreme President E.B. Hauke was quoted saying, "Language is only the medium for the expression of thought. When Norwegian ceases to be that medium for the great majority of our people it becomes necessary to use the language that does." As the logo has changed over time so too did the official language used in this organization. Language is inherently tied to culture and heritage so by changing the official language it did not mean that Norwegian was disregarded but rather it meant that this organization needed to change with the times and modernize in order to appeal to those who did not speak the language. The purpose and goals of this organization have stayed unchanged and with that Sons of Norway continues to provide quality financial products and educational and cultural benefits for its members. Similarly unchanged is the symbol which seems to find its way in nearly every Sons of Norway logo, the Viking ship.

This iconic graphic is a testament to the organization that over time small things will modify in order to appeal to each new generation but the symbol of the organization has and will always remain true. The ship will stay on its course and navigate the changing currents ahead.

- For logo usage rules and guidelines please contact The Sons of Norway Headquarters at 1-800-945-8851 or 612-827-3611.