



**Sons of Norway**  
**HERITAGE PROGRAMS**



## **MiniPresentation16**

**PRINCESS KRISTINA OF TUNSBURG**

# Princess Kristina of Tunsberg

In the year 1257, a 23-year-old Norwegian princess left her homeland to marry in Spain. The groom was not yet selected. The princess's father, King Håkon Håkonsson (HAWK'ohn HAWK 'Ohn 'sohn) was a powerful monarch, held in high esteem by the princes of Europe. It was considered an honor that his daughter, Kristina (Kris 'TEEN 'ah), was chosen candidate for a political marriage. When the king of Spain sent representatives to Norway, offering a union between Kristina and one of the king's four brothers, King Håkon accepted. Kristina was free to decide which of the brothers she liked best.

And so, furnished more splendidly than any other Norwegian princess before her, she set off for Spain in a long-ship, accompanied by a hundred distinguished men. Their first stop was Normandy, France. From there, Kristina traveled on horseback to Spain. It was a triumphal procession for the princess, who was received with grand ceremonies wherever she stopped along the route.

On Christmas Day in 1257, she reached Burgos in Spain and was presented to the king's four brothers. One of them had a harelip, said to be caused by his passion for hunting. Another brother had rebelled against his father and was out of the question as a candidate for marrying an honorable princess. The third was destined to be an archbishop and expected to live in celibacy.

The fourth, Filipus, was a master of all sports and games. He was a brave man who hunted alone for wild boars and bears. The king liked Filipus best, and so did Kristina and her advisors. That settled the matter and the wedding was celebrated Sunday after Easter in 1258 with all the pomp and circumstance that the Spanish court could muster.

In the 1960s Spanish scientists worked on identifying the remnants of a woman buried in a great sarcophagus in the royal mausoleum in Covarrubias. It turned out to be Kristina. And the Norwegians took new interest in their almost-forgotten princess: What had happened to her?

Instead of the green hills of her homeland, the fresh air and outdoor life, Kristina had to cope with the dry heat of the Spanish plains and the Spanish court, which was extremely formal and restrictive, especially for women. She lived for only four short years after her marriage before dying in 1262.

The city where she had spent most of her life—Tønsberg, on the southeastern coast of Norway—chose Kristina as its patron when the 1,000th anniversary of the city was celebrated in 1971. So symbolically, Kristina returned to Tønsberg, where an annual festival is celebrated in her honor. An historic play is staged every summer right beneath the cliff where Kristina stood as a little girl, overlooking the fjord and the pleasant countryside around Tønsberg.