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Details from Skansen's spring festival, as reported in *Ny Illustrerad Tidning*, 1893, *Open Air Museums*, 21.

Open Air Museums: The History and Future of a Visionary Idea

by Sten Rentzhog; translated by Skans Victoria Airey

Sweden: Jamtli Förlag and Carlsson Bokförlag, 2007; ISBN 978-91-7948-208-4 (hardcover)
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"Open air museums – or outdoor museums – are marvelous. They are versatile cultural institutions, educational centres and tourist attractions, with a potential far greater than most people imagine." So writes Sten Rentzhog in the introduction to *Open Air Museums: The history and future of a visionary idea.* This is the first comprehensive history of open air museums worldwide, and it should be read by all concerned about such museums, be they staff, board members, students, and libraries serving universities with museum studies and public history programs. Visitors to such sites can also benefit from understanding the history behind these multi-sensory educational institutions, as can staff working with heritage tourism and park and recreation development.

The book is large, 532 pages, and it covers museums in Scandinavia, Europe, the United States, and Canada. Seventeen chapters take the reader from the founding days of the movement, including Arthur Hazelius' efforts to create Skansen in Stockholm, but it also considers contemporary efforts by founders of other museums. Rentzhog addresses the various goals that founders pursued as they created open air museums throughout the late nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. He explores their reasons for collecting buildings, folk trades and crafts, and rural traditions of people during an era of intense nation building. The book moves chronologically through the ways war, politics and capitalism affected museum development. It concludes with several chapters devoted to current issues affecting open air museums, particularly the ways that institutions can position themselves to remain relevant in a changing world. The general public values authenticity and family and multi-generational experiences, and what better facility than open air museums can deliver these experiences!

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