

## **Country Corner – by Mona El Gayar**

### **Happy Birthday, Ramses!**

On October 22, we would like to wish a very happy birthday to a very dead king of Egypt: Ramses. If you would like to celebrate with him, feel free to visit the Temple of Abu Simbel in Abu Simbel, Egypt. As the sun rises on October 22, sunlight illuminates the seated statues of the sun gods Re-Horakhte and Amon-Re, as well as the statue of the birthday boy, King Ramses II. The statue of the Theban god of darkness, Ptah, remains in, well, darkness. This sun festival is repeated on February 22, the date of the coronation of King Ramses II.

### **The Temples of Abu Simbel**

Outside of the temple, four colossal statues of Ramses, each 66 feet high, guard the entrance to the temple. Rising to the pharaoh's knees are smaller statues of family members: his mother, favorite wife, Nefertari, and his son, Prince Amonherkhepshef.

Inside the temple, three connected halls extend 185 feet into the mountain. Images of the Ramses' life and many achievements decorate and adorn the walls of the temple. A second temple at Abu Simbel is dedicated to Ramses' favorite wife, Nefertari.

In the 1960s, the construction of the Aswan High Dam resulted in the creation of Lake Nasser; it also resulted in the flooding of a large number of archaeological sites along the Nile. The flooding threatened the temples of Abu Simbel. The solution was a massive movement of the temples. The temples were expertly cut and moved 690 feet back from their original location. This movement caused the sun festival to be pushed back from February and October 21 to the 22.