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Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Augustana College

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From the Director:

Notes from ‘Ethnic Mosaic’

Last fall, we reported here that the Swenson Center had just received funding for a major ethnic studies conference, “Ethnic Mosaic of the Quad Cities: Past and Present Perspectives,” to be held April 24-26, 1987.

It happened as scheduled, but it was bigger and better than anything we could have imagined back then. The standing-room-only attendance at nearly all of the “Ethnic Mosaic” events demonstrated the vitality of immigration and ethnic studies and the great interest the public has in these subjects.

When ethnic scholar Marcus Lee Hansen first gave his address “The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant” to the Augustana Historical Society 50 years ago, he stated “what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember.” This statement was the basis for a major theory on ethnicity, and when reprinted and thus popularized by Dr. Nathan Glazer in Commentary in 1952, it became the starting place for the work of many ethnic scholars.

A major goal of “Ethnic Mosaic” was to re-interpret this theory and apply it to the Quad Cities (Rock Island and Moline, Ill., and Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa). Panel discussions featuring 15 of the country’s most prominent ethnic scholars including Dr. Glazer of Harvard were held early on in the conference, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Hansen’s Augustana talk. These panel discussions gave the scholars the opportunity to re-assess the theory, to exchange ideas and look at the field of ethnic studies today, and to examine the experiences of ethnic groups in the Quad Cities. Those attending the panel discussions included people from all over the United States and Sweden.

The fact that the Quad Cities is itself a major ethnic “mosaic” enabled the Swenson Center and the Putnam Museum to collaborate on a fine photographic exhibit. With the help of photographer Rosendo Terronez, dozens of photos from some 17 ethnic groups were unearthed, duplicated, and displayed at the Putnam through July 22. The display will travel to several public libraries throughout fall and winter 1987-88.

Reprints of the original Hansen essay, with prefaces by Dr. Oscar Handlin (1952) and Dr. Peter Kivisto (1987), are available for $2 each (including postage) from the Swenson Center.

We’d like to extend our special thanks to Augustana staff members John Caldwell, director of the Denkmann Library, and Perry Mason, director of publications, for their work in helping to republish the Hansen essay.

—Dag Blanck
Swenson collection update

In the first issue of the Swenson Center News we introduced our holdings of non-church records by highlighting a number of manuscript collections pertaining to Swedish-American academies and colleges. In this issue we will continue our look at the records of educational institutions and begin a survey of a wide range of other organizational holdings, most of them on microfilm, in the Center's archives.

Recently microfilmed records, and some original records, of the following educational institutions are available for research and study at the Center:

Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kan.: records, 1882-1950. Filmed are minutes of the board of directors (1882-1934), minutes of the faculty (1904-1950), and minutes of a college literary association, Geijerförbundet (1894-1896).

Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn.: records, 1863-1934. Filmed are minutes of the board of directors (1863-1934) and faculty (1886-1931), registrar's books (1863-1889), minutes of the educational committee (1877-1892), a manuscript history of the college and a scrapbook compilation of historical records and other material from 1876-1877. Housed as a separate collection unit are some original records and papers (1860-1864) of the predecessor institution, St. Ansgar Academy, which was founded in 1862 in Red Wing, Minn., but moved in 1863 to East Union, outside of Carver, Minn., where it remained until moving to St. Peter in 1875 as Gustavus Adolphus College.

Luther College and Academy, Wahoo, Neb.: records, 1883-1939. Complementing the non-microfilmed materials described in our first newsletter are the following microfilmed materials: minutes of the board of directors (1883-1913 and 1923-1939) and the executive committee (1899-1922).

Minnesota College, Minneapolis: records, 1904-1930. Filmed are minutes of the board of directors (1904-1930) and faculty (1906-1923). This college, active from 1904-1931, was incorporated as the Northwestern Lutheran Board of Education, with ties to the Augustana Lutheran Church.

Northwestern College Corporation, Fergus Falls, Minn.: records, 1900-1932. Filmed are minutes of annual meetings (1900-1932), board of directors (1929-1932) and faculty (1904-1931) as well as chronological registers of students (1901-1924). Active from 1900-1932, this was another educational institution of the Augustana Lutheran Church.

Swedeburg Academy/Församlingssskolan, Swedenburg, Iowa: records, 1897-1914. Filmed are attendance and teachers' day registers with the names and class records of students. Swedeburg Academy was organized in 1898 by Swedeburg Lutheran Church for the purpose of providing "higher studies" for its young people. It reportedly closed its doors in 1902. The church school (församlingssskolan) was started in 1868-1869 to provide classroom instruction to children of the congregation.

Swedish School, Pee Wee, District #99, Lindsborg, Kan.: records, 1905-1906. Filmed are class and grade reports for the months of April and May in both years.

Upsala College, East Orange, N.J.: records, 1893-1944. Filmed are faculty minutes for these years.

Along with these collections, many other institutional and organizational records have been added to the Center's collections in various ways since 1981. Most original records have been donated by individuals, while microfilmed materials have originated from special purchase arrangements or, more notably, from the 1982-1984 microfilming project sponsored by the Swenson Center.

Aside from adding 145 new congregational records to the Center's holdings, the microfilming project brought attention to the records of Swedish-American social clubs, cultural and literary societies, fraternal lodges and orders, benevolent institutions as well as immigrant-run businesses and occupational associations.

Extensive minutes, membership records and some financial papers are available on microfilm for 51 lodges of the International Order of Good Templars, 35 lodges of the Independent Order of Svithiod, 60 lodges of the Independent Order of Vikings and 30 lodges of the Scandinavian Fraternity of America. The specific value of such records for family, organizational and social history should be obvious to all.

Complementing these record series are extensive microfilmed runs of such magazines as Junior Temperance World (1929-1960), Musiktidning (1906-1982), National Good Templar (1939-1984), Svithiod Journal (1898-1984) and Viking Journal (1899-1984). The last four titles are currently received by the Center.

Shown above is an 1875 photo of the Old Main building on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn. This photo is part of the Swenson Center's collection of artifacts dealing with the early Swedish educational institutions.
Useful tools for genealogical research:

Swedish embarkation records

Bureaucracy can be a boon to those who are researching family roots. In 1869 a new Swedish law required all persons emigrating from Sweden to register with the harbor police at the port of emigration. In this issue, we explain how you can use the resulting embarkation records and emigrant contracts to find your ancestors.

Getting started. Before you start, you should understand the difference between embarkation records and emigrant contracts.

Emarkation records, also called passenger lists or harbor police lists, are useful sources of basic information about an emigrant: name, age, last place of residence (usually in Sweden, but in later years, visiting emigré more and more listed “America”), the date of departure from Sweden, and a reference to a contract number.

This contract number acts as an index to more detailed information contained in the emigrant contracts, which are kept in the Provincial Archives in Göteborg. The contracts provide additional information such as names of traveling companions, the name and destination of the boat leaving Sweden, and the ticket price, including whether it was pre-paid by someone else or purchased by the traveler.

Using this resource. The embarkation records are set up by year, so first you must know the year of emigration from Sweden. Then you must search each port for the names you want.

The Swenson Center owns copies of these records (mostly on microfilm), purchased from the Provincial Archives in Göteborg, for the following ports and years:

- Göteborg 1869-1893 and 1897-1930 (microfilm); 1894-96 (paper).
- Malmö 1874-1886 and 1888-1891 (microfilm); 1892-93, 1895 (paper).
- Finns departing from Göteborg 1869-1884.

By far the largest number of departures were from Göteborg, serving south central and central Sweden (including Stockholm). Emigrants from Skåne usually departed from Malmö or Denmark, and people living in border areas and in northern Sweden sometimes departed from Norwegian ports of Oslo and Trondheim.

The embarkation records are divided into three sections. The first section includes all emigrants by last name. Also, similar last names have been listed together (Jansson, Johansson, Jonasson, Jönsson, Johannesson, etc.). The second section lists those emigrants who had given or were listed only by first name on the emigrant contract. This section includes mainly wives and children. The third section includes families and groups listed by head of household.

For example, suppose that Anders Johansson, his wife Maria Stina Nilsdotter, and their children Anna Sofia, Per Jonas and Emelia Johanna traveled together. Anders Johansson will be found in the first section in the J's. Maria Stina Nilsdotter will also be listed in this section in the N's (she has a last name, though different from her husband's, a practice common in Sweden at this time). Anna Sofia will be in the second section in the A's, because one does not know if she had the last name Johansson, Andersdotter or Andersson (at this time, one generally took the father's first name and added a "son" or a "dotter"). Per Jonas would be in this same section in the P's, and Emelia Johanna would also be in this section in the E's. The entire family would be listed in the third section in the J's, because Anders was the head of the household. The listing might look something like this:

Johansson, Anders
- h. Maria Stina Nilsdotter (h=husbru; wife)
- d. Anna Sofia
- s. Per Jonas
- d. Emelia Johanna

The listing would also note their ages, last place of residence destination, date of departure, and the reference to the contract number. Because they traveled together, they would have the same contract number.

The embarkation records are useful to researchers in several ways. Depending on the information already known, you can, for example, determine the place of residence in Sweden, the destination in America, whether the emigrant came alone or with friends or family members, and the exact date of departure.

If you would like to view photocopies of the emigrant contracts as well as the embarkation records, the Swenson Center can provide you with the addresses for the Göteborg and Malmö archives.

A Caution. You should use all of this information with some skepticism because while all emigrants had their dismissal papers from their parish in Sweden, it was often easier for busy police clerks to take down the information orally, rather than checking each individual's papers. This has led to some contradictory information and misspellings in the records.

Also, perhaps Anders Johansson and his family had said they were going to Andover, Ill., but once they were on the boat, they met a group of emigrants who convinced them to go to Minnesota instead. In this case, the destination listed in the embarkation records would no longer be valid.

Often, the emigrants did not know where in America they wanted to settle: they just wanted to get there. In this case, they often listed their destination as New York or Boston, the destination of the ship.

Finally, some emigrants changed their names when coming to America. Usually they are listed in the embarkation records under their original name.

But even with these discrepancies in the records, the embarkation records can be a useful resource when pursuing family history research.
The Swedish Texans

By Lars Scott, Augustana College

While the Lone Star State is certainly famous for its cowboys, it is hardly known as a bastion of Swedish-America. And the very notion of Swedish cowboys, Yumpalong Yanson to the contrary, is almost too fantastic to contemplate.

Nevertheless, there were Swedes in Texas, quite a few of them, and among them a large number of honest-to-God, Swedish-speaking cowboys.

This strange tale has occupied my time for some years now and is the topic of my forthcoming work in a series of studies on ethnic groups in Texas published, aptly enough, by The Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio.

The first and most famous Swede to settle in Texas was not a cowboy (although he was directly responsible for their creation later on). He was something almost as rare: a slave-owning cotton plantation owner from Barkeryd, Småland, named Sven Magnus Swenson. He had come to Texas, still a Republic in 1838, to seek his fortune and, within a few years, he found it. He married the widow of a wealthy Tennessee doctor who had built a cotton plantation near Richmond (roughly present-day Houston).

Dr. Long liked the handsome 22-year old Swenson and hired him as his overseer. Later, Long arranged to have Swenson succeed him as plantation owner after his death. Thus, almost overnight, Swenson became the embodiment, half Horatio Alger and half Gone With the Wind, of the American dream, in a way that few Americans, let alone Swedish-Americans, could conceive.

Swenson was a slave-owner, but he was also a practical businessman, and he felt that slavery made poor economic sense in the long run. He dreamed, instead, of a colony of transplanted Swedish farmers, transformed into cotton growers on the Black Waxy fields of central Texas. To help him accomplish his dream, and to help him run his ever-expanding capitalistic enterprises, he sent for his uncle, Swante Palm, then a newspaper publisher in Kalmar. Palm, only two years older than Swenson, arrived in 1844 and quickly became useful in the Swenson land and mercantile industries.

Both men soon moved to the new capital, Austin, and Swenson established a new plantation there named “Govalle” after the Swedish expressions “gå valla” or “god vall” (“to graze” or “good pasture”). In 1848, the first modest contingent of Swedish emigrants from Swenson’s home parish of Barkeryd made the long and arduous voyage to central Texas. They came as indentured servants, their tickets having been paid by Swenson in return for one year of labor at Govalle.

Others arrived in the following decade so that by the time the Civil War broke out, there were some 100 Swedes living in and around Austin.

The Civil War meant three things for the Swedish Texans. First, immigration into the South slowed to a trickle during the long and bloody conflict. Second, it meant that quite a few Swedes were conscripted in the Confederate forces. (In fact the two dozen or so Swedish Texans who served the Southern cause constituted over half of all Swedes known to have served the Confederacy). Finally, the War also meant the abrupt departure of Swenson in 1862: his articulate advocacy of preservation and vehement opposition to secession made his position in Confederate Texas untenable. He relocated to New Orleans (by way of Mexico!) and ultimately settled in New York where he founded S.M. Swenson and Sons Bank (later the First Bank of New York, one of the city’s largest). Although Swenson never returned to Texas to live, he is by no means out of our story.

Immediately following the Civil War, agents were again dispatched to Barkeryd to drum up interest in coming to Texas. Just two years later, a group of more than 100 left Småland for Austin.

Soon, the “Swedish pipeline” established by Swenson functioning smoothly, now under the leadership of Palm and Swenson’s brother in Barkeryd, Johan Långsås. Scandinavians settled the Brushy Creek area of Williamson County, north of Austin. This area is now known as Palm Valley, named for the several brothers of Swante Palm who moved there with their families. Eastern Travis County soon boasted “New Sweden” and “Lund,” and almost purely Swedish colonies were hidden behind such American sounding places as “Manda,” “Kimbro,” and “Manor.”

The first Swedish Lutheran congregation was founded in Austin in 1874, with new congregations (including Methodist, Baptist and Mission Covenant denominations) being formed almost annually for the next 30 years. The first Swedish language newspaper, Södra Vecko-Posten, was founded in 1881, and Texas
cotton, cattle and cowboys

mostly on the ground, I'm the was found”
— Yumpalong Yanson, Yippee-Yappee-Yay, Ja Sure

Stockholm were established by land brokers trying to lure “northern” Swedes (and even a few from the overcrowded central Texas settlements).

But what about those Swedish cowboys? Well, they, too, are part of the Swenson saga. After Swenson moved to New York, he missed the vastness and excitement of Texas. His business interests in the East, however, claimed more and more of his time, so even visiting Texas to check on his holdings there became increasingly difficult. So, in the 1880’s, he dispatched his sons Swen Albin and Eric Pierson to look over the land in north Texas that he had acquired over the past 30 years. As in his earlier ventures, Swenson still dreamed of a vast operation run entirely by Swedish immigrants — but this time in livestock instead of cotton.

Using money borrowed from their father (at 6 percent interest: Swenson was, after all, a smålännings!), Swen Albin and Eric began developing three great cattle ranches, each to be named for one of the Swenson children: “Eleonora,” “Ericsdale,” and “Mount Albin.” They hired knowledgeable Swedes from central Texas to advise them on the make-up of their herds. And as they continued to buy land, they also continued to sell it off, just as their father had done, to land-hungry Swedes eager to make a living by working the Swenson land before buying their own.

As usual with Swenson and his equally talented sons, the scheme succeeded brilliantly. Cities like Stamford and Ericsdale (also called “Eriksdahl”) sprang up on the outskirts of the Swenson holdings, which were now managed (as, indeed, they are to this day) by the Swenson Land and Cattle Company.

Aside from Johannes Swenson, the first Swedish cowboys were also imported smålännings. The first four were C.G. Seth, “Judge” Joe Erickson, and the brothers August “Dippe” and Mage Holmberg. The Swenson brothers also hired their cousin Alfred Dyer, son of the earliest settler in Williamson county, as their foreman.

The city of Ericsdale or “Eriksdahl” was created out of the original 50,000 acre Ericsdale ranch of 1882. In charge of its development was yet another of Swenson’s legion of nephews from Barkeryd, Anders Johan Swenson. He worked for his cousins at Ericsdale for more than 50 years, ultimately rising to superintendent over 400,000 acres of cattle land. He interested his brother-in-law, Pastor A. J. Stamline, one of the pioneer Swedish Lutheran pastors in the area, to help boost the sale of Ericsdale land among Swedish immigrants. The Swenson brothers donated 10 acres of land for a church and donated $300 to the upkeep of a minister. A congregation was duly organized, 50 families soon moved to Ericsdale, and by 1908, the entire 50,000 acre tract had been sold, at from $10 to $16 an acre. Swenson had originally purchased it for a few cents an acre! The last major land acquisition of the Swenson Land and Cattle Co. was the purchase of the 437,000 acre Espuela Ranch in 1904, one of the largest cattle ranches in the state. Anglicized as the Spur Ranch, it, too, became the home for many a lonesome Swede seeking his fortune on the high plains of north Texas.

Some tales have survived from that colorful era, when the lonely and poorly-paid Swedish cowboy rode herd on vast herds of Longhorns. One of the most popular concerned the cook at the Spur Ranch, an old grizzled cowboy from Småland. He rode the trail all year in his creaking old cook wagon and loved to entertain the younger hands with stories from the old days of the cattle drives into Kansas and Colorado.

And, we wonder, did the aroma of Jansson's frestelse or bruna bönor mingle with the mesquite smoke and the pot of “Swedish gasoline” on the campfire? Only Yumpalong Yanson knew for sure.
Wallenberg foundations donate $500,000

One-half million dollars was committed to Augustana College and the Swenson Center last spring through grants from three Swedish foundations.

The three grants totaling 3,500,000 Swedish kronor were given by Swedish Foundations related to the family of the internationally-known Swedish industrialist Peter Wallenberg, a member of Augustana’s board of directors. The grants were awarded by the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation, the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, and the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation.

These funds will be used for the expansion and redevelopment of the Swenson Center facilities in Denkmann Memorial Library, following completion of a proposed new college library. The renovations will offer the Swenson Center more space for offices, research areas, and storage of its extensive Swedish-American archives.

“One of the provisions for receiving the Wallenberg Foundation grants was that the results of the project be useful to Sweden,” said Glen Brolander, vice-president for financial affairs at Augustana. “The Swenson Center has proved its usefulness both to the people of Swedish heritage living in the United States and to the people of Sweden.”

Trans-Atlantic research project

What happened when a large number of Swedish immigrants settled in American cities and became neighbors with immigrants from a variety of other European countries such as Italy, Germany, and Ireland? The Swenson Center recently joined a trans-Atlantic research project dealing with the relationship between Swedes and other ethnic groups in American cities. Researching with the Center are the Centre for Multi-Ethnic Research at Uppsala University and the Emigrant Institute in Växjö, Sweden. The cities under consideration are Jamestown, N.Y., Worcester, Mass., Moline and Rockford, Ill., Duluth, Minn. and Tacoma, Wash.

We know very little about the relationship and contacts between different immigrant groups in American cities. Typically, attention is usually paid to the relationship between one ethnic group and the surrounding “American” society. This surrounding society was, however, almost always multi-ethnic, consisting of many different immigrant groups. Therefore, when a Swedish immigrant in Jamestown or Moline went to work or sent his children to school, they were likely to encounter not only “Americans” but also Italians or Belgians.

Questions to be studied include the role of the immigrants in politics: Did the Swedes and Irish in Rockford vote for the same candidates? Local labor markets will also be analyzed. Why was John Deere such an attractive place of employment for the Swedes in Moline? The Swenson Center will be responsible for the study of Moline. We have already begun preliminary work by extracting all the foreign-born residents of Moline from the 1870 census. Work is also underway to create a similar data base from the 1910 census. This solid base of information will then be used for more detailed analyses.

The project, partially funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, will involve scholars from both the United States and Sweden. American participants include members of the Swenson Center staff, professors from Augustana College and the University of Minnesota at Duluth as
women’s history and, when it was time to pick a dissertation topic, she combined her two interests, choosing to write about Swedish immigrant women.

Lintelman visited the Swenson Center to look for any kind of material about female Swedish immigrants. She located some information on organizations largely operated by Swedish immigrant women, such as the women’s immigrant homes in Boston and Chicago. She also found letters written by Swedish immigrant women and some information about some of the more prominent Swedish women immigrants.

Information about Swedish female immigrants is scarce at all archives she has visited. “Just like most other women in history, female Swedish immigrants did not leave many records behind, and thus they remain invisible in history,” she said. Moreover, Lintelman believes historians of the Swedish immigration to America have neglected the history of the immigrant women, and thus most of the information collected by different archives has centered around men.

Lintelman is interested in reaching anyone with materials pertaining to Swedish immigrant women in America, letters, diaries, records of women’s clubs and organizations, etc. She may be reached by writing in care of the Swenson Center.

Bishop Hill. Britta Johansson, is a native of Dalarna in central Sweden ("the Midwest of Sweden," she calls it). She is presently a student at the Department of Folklore at the University of Stockholm, working on a senior thesis. Johansson spent the spring in Bishop Hill, Ill., doing research on its history and on the preservation and restoration work that has been done there since 1962.

While in Bishop Hill, Johansson lived with a family in one of the original colony buildings. “I found Bishop Hill very compelling,” she said. “To read about the history of the colony is one thing, but to actually be there, see the prairies and the buildings, really helps put you back in time and understand what the lives of the early colonists must have been like.” Johansson came to the Swenson Center to find material complementary to her interviews, in particular material relating to the early history of the colony. During her stay in Rock Island, she made use of the extensive microfilm collection of documents relating to the early history of Bishop Hill.
Support for the Swenson Center

We would like to express a heartfelt thanks to those donors who have made significant contributions to the preservation of the history of Swedish immigrants in America.

While the Swenson Endowment provides a large part of the financial support for the Swenson Center, it does not cover all of the costs.

Gifts from friends are immensely important to the Center as it works to preserve and interpret the records of Swedish immigration to North America. We welcome gifts of any size. All donors are considered “Friends of the Swenson Center” and receive mailings from the center. We greatly appreciate the financial support of all who value the Swedish heritage in America and the work being done by the Center.

Materials

If you have materials that you think could be of interest to the Center, we encourage you to contact our archivist, Kermit Westerberg, to discuss appropriate ways in which you can share these materials with us. We are especially interested in the following items:

- Personal papers of Swedish immigrants and their families: letters, diaries, certificates, photographs, family histories, and genealogies.
- Organizational papers from Swedish-American fraternal and labor associations, societies and clubs.
- Minutes, correspondence and other records from business firms started by Swedish immigrants.
- All types of printed and unpublished material related to Swedish immigration and Swedes in America.

GIFTS

The following major gifts received during the period of July 1, 1986 through June 30, 1987, are especially acknowledged with gratitude:

$10,000 and over
Dr. and Mrs. Birger Swenson

$1,000-$9,999
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Dahl
Swedish Council of America
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Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Johnson
Mrs. Arthur Otis
Mr. William R. Peterson
Mr. and Mrs. Neal D. Williams
American Scandinavian Association
at Augustana

How to Reach the Center

The Swenson Center is located on the third floor of the Denkmann Memorial Library on the Augustana College Campus in Rock Island, Ill.

Office hours are from 8:30 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for holidays. Hours may also be restricted during college vacation periods.

If you plan on visiting the Center, we encourage you to make an appointment by calling or writing in advance.

Staff members of the Center are: Dag Blanck, director; Kermit Westerberg, archivist/librarian; Vicky Oliver, researcher. Direct all correspondence to:

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