From the Acting Director
by Kermit Westerberg

The academic year 1989-1990 has been one of transition and change, both for Augustana College and the Swenson Center. This issue of the Swenson Center News focuses on some of the major developments and changes that will shape the future of the Center, its research collections, and physical facilities.

Usually, the first page of every issue serves as a report from the Center's Director. This past year, however, Dag Blanck has been on research leave in Uppsala, Sweden, and he is returning there for more doctoral work during the 1990-1991 academic term. Serving as Acting Director and News Editor during his absence is Archivist-Librarian Kermit Westerberg.

In January, 1990, the co-founder of the Swenson Center, Birger Swenson, died at the age of 94, after an illness of several years. At his wife Lyal's request, memorials in Birger's name have been directed to the operating expenses of the Center. Friends and associates have already contributed generously to this memorial fund. Additional contributions may be made payable to the Swenson Center/Birger Swenson Memorial and sent to Augustana College. For more details on the death of Birger Swenson, see p. 6.

On May 11, 1990, Augustana College symbolically locked the doors of Denkmann Memorial Library and began moving books, equipment, and staff to the new library building. In June major renovation and reconstruction work began inside Denkmann to create expanded and improved facilities for the Swenson Center and other departments of the College. During construction, which is expected to be completed in September, 1991, the Center's staff and its most heavily used collections (microfilms, microfiche and reference books) are housed temporarily in the lower level of a private College residence. The Center's telephone numbers and mailing address remain the same, but the temporary street address is 3428 7th Avenue. For more details, see the feature article on p. 2.

Since 1981, genealogists and family historians have been steady users of the Center's microfilm collections of Swedish-American church records and Swedish passenger lists. Up to now the Center has been able to assist only with the Swedish-American aspect of research, beginning with the ports of embarkation in Sweden. We have not had access to parish records for the Church of Sweden, and patrons have normally been referred to specific archives and libraries in Sweden. Soon, however, much of this will change. The Center has been designated the official American distributing agency for the microfiche edition of the Swedish parish records, produced by a special division of the Swedish National Archives called SVAR (Svensk Arkivinformation). For more details on these and other new reference materials, see the feature article on pp. 4-5 and the "Center News" section, pp. 6-7.

Several important manuscript collections from organizations in the East and Midwest were added to the Center's holdings over the past year. These are the focus of the Archivist's Collection Update, pp. 5 and 8.
The Augustana College campus, where the Swenson Center is located, is currently undergoing great changes. A new library building has just been completed, and during the past summer the Augustana College Library moved into its new home.

In the coming year, the old Library building, Denkmann Memorial Library, will undergo major reconstruction work to make room for classrooms, offices, a concert hall— and greatly expanded facilities for the Swenson Center. The Center has, since its opening in 1981, been on the third floor of Denkmann Library, where it has shared space with Special Collections of the College Library.

Under the new plans, the Swenson Center will move downstairs to the first floor in Denkmann Library. The new entrance will be located in the main lobby, and it will lead into the research/reading room. Here, ample space will be provided for researchers and visitors, including microfilm and microfiche readers and reading tables. The Center’s often-used microfilm and microfiche collections of important source materials, as well as the reference collection, will also be kept on this level. In addition, there will be new office space for the Center’s staff.

The Center will benefit from greatly increased stack space and storage areas for its growing collections, as well as a special work area for the processing and handling of incoming archival materials in need of special care. The stacks and storage space will be located below and above the reading/research room, which will be connected by an elevator. The plans include space for an exhibition area, where different displays related to the history of Swedish immigration to the United States can be presented.

A major grant of 3.5 million Swedish crowns (approximately $600,000) has been received from three foundations closely associated with the Wallenberg family in Sweden to cover part of the renovation of Denkmann Library, including the new facilities for the Swenson Center. In recognition of this grant, the new concert and recital hall, which will be located in the present main reading room of the Library, will be called Wallenberg Hall.

The new facilities represent an important step forward for the Swenson Center. We have long since outgrown our current space, and we are very happy that we will now have access to a more suitable reading/research room. The new stack and storage areas will also mean that we can bring all of our collections together in up-to-date and climate-controlled surroundings.

The remodelling of Denkmann Library will take approximately one year, and we are thus looking forward to moving into the new facilities in September, 1991. To facilitate the remodeling work, the Swenson Center will leave Denkmann Library from June 1990 to September 1991 and be temporarily located in an adjacent building. The address of the temporary location is 3428 7th Avenue in Rock Island, Illinois. It is the ground floor of a private residence, located some 30 yards west of Denkmann Library off the alley. The mailing address and the phone numbers will still be the same.

If you are planning to visit the Swenson Center during this coming year, we strongly encourage you to call or write in advance, so that we can give you the best assistance possible.
Goals Established for Financial Support

Elsewhere in this issue, comment is made regarding the endowment gift of almost ten years ago from Birger and Lyal Swenson. That gift made it possible to establish the Swenson Center, and it still forms an important part of our financial structure. Without it, the Center could not have been started.

Income from the endowment is not, however, sufficient to carry the current program of the Center. While Augustana College provides important support services, it is necessary for the Center’s operating expenses to be met by endowment income and gifts specifically designated for the Center.

To meet this challenge, the Center’s Advisory Committee has authorized two new programs. First, there is a need to increase the Center’s endowment by at least $400,000. An endowment gift is the best way to ensure the Center’s financial strength, as the fund produces a continuous flow of income for the operating budget. Major donors can be recognized through the naming of certain areas within the new facilities or through designated programs of support. This is an excellent way to pay tribute to a Swedish immigrant in your own family or to express your own concern for preserving the Swedish heritage in America. Interested persons are encouraged to contact Glen Brolander, Augustana College, Chairman of the Center’s Advisory Committee, for details.

The second program is the establishment of a new level of annual support — the Swenson Center Circle. Two years ago, the Swenson Center Associate program was established. For an annual contribution of $25.00 or more, donors are recognized as Swenson Center Associates. They also receive a discount on genealogical work and receive all mailings from the Center. We have been encouraged by the number of persons enrolling as Associates. We have also been encouraged by suggestions that a higher level of support be established.

A new category has now been established — the Swenson Center Circle — for persons who are willing to take a sponsorship role in supporting the Center’s objectives by making an annual contribution of $250.00. Besides providing important financial support, Circle members receive the same benefits as Associates, all publications from the Center, and a guest invitation to a special dinner given at the time of the annual Ander lecture.

Gifts of all sizes, either for the endowment fund or for annual support, are welcome and gratefully received. All contributions are tax deductible.
Swedish Record Keeping and Microtechnology

Sweden is a country that for centuries has kept track of its population. In 1686 a law was issued, stating that detailed records had to be kept of all the people living in the country. The task was assigned to the Lutheran state church, to which all Swedes then belonged. The Swedish church records are unique in the world, extending back to the early seventeenth century and providing a wealth of information about individual Swedes. Not only is it possible to find names and dates of birth and death, but one can also follow the persons as they move from place to place, as families grow, and as their occupations change throughout their lives.

These records are of particular importance to persons researching their family histories. The number of people using the records has increased greatly in the last several decades, and in order to protect the originals, to relieve the pressure on different Swedish archives, and to make them more easily available to users, a division of the Swedish National Archives called SVAR (Svenska Arkivinformation) has begun converting these records to microfiche.

Not only Swedes have use of these records. They are also of great importance to people of Swedish ancestry living in North America who wish to trace their family histories back to Sweden.

Up to now, that process has been rather complicated, involving much time, travel and correspondence. Now, however, that situation is changing, as SVAR has designated the Swenson Center its representative in North America.

This means that it will soon be possible to buy microfiche copies of all Swedish church records (up to about 1900) through the Swenson Center. If you have traced an ancestor back to a specific parish in Sweden, you soon can contact the Swenson Center and order the records of that parish for a particular point in time. If you are interested only in a special type of record, it is possible to buy just that record group. You will then be able to continue your search for Swedish ancestors on your own, using the Swedish church records at home or on a microfiche reader at your local public library. No longer will you need to write to church archives or provincial archives in Sweden.

What Do The Records Include?
Several kinds of source groups make up the Swedish church records. They include:
- Birth records
- Baptismal records
- Marriage records
- Death records
- Funeral records
- Records of out and in migration from the parish
- Household clerical survey records (parish catechetical examination registers)

The contents of these record types are fairly self-explanatory. For tracking down information about emigrants, the records of in and out migration and the household clerical survey records are of particular importance. The records of in and out migration include information about when and where each person moved out of the parish. When a person emigrated to America, this was also noted in the out migration record. Most often a specific place of destination is not given, simply “N. Amerika.”

The household clerical survey records are also of great importance. Here one will find all the members of each household noted, including servants and boarders, with names, birth dates, their relationship within the household, how well they could read and write, how knowledgeable they were in the catechism, and additional comments that the minister may have had.

As these examinations were held each year, it is fairly easy to follow a household over a longer period of time, observing its growth and changes. When people moved out of the parish, this was noted in a special column of the household clerical surveys.

How Useful Are These Records?
The Swedish church records encompass an enormous amount of material, and obviously there are gaps, missing records, etc. The completeness of the records depended on the minister in the congregation, and some took this job more seriously than others. Some records have been destroyed by fires over the years; others may be missing for other reasons. Sometimes the notations are hard to read, either because of the old handwriting or because of the poor quality of the church book itself.

On the whole, though, the Swedish church records are very comprehensive, and in terms of their extent and completeness they are usually considered to be unique in Europe. With the proper preparations (such as learning the way the records are set up, mastering some basic terminology in Swedish and old Swedish handwriting, and gaining access to a microfiche reader), anyone tracing his or her Swedish ancestors will find these records to be of immense value. They make it possible to track down individual persons born in Sweden, to find out who their parents, siblings and other relatives were, and to follow individuals and subsequent generations in time and space.

If you are interested in buying microfiche copies of the Swedish church records, you should contact the Swenson Center. We anticipate having an ordering system in place after January 1, 1991. We will have detailed lists of what types of records are available for the different parishes throughout Sweden. Currently, each microfiche card sells for $2.50, and it contains several volumes of original church books.
Over the past year, several new collections of records and papers from Swedish-American organizations have been added to the Center’s manuscript holdings. One collection comes from the neighboring city of Moline; the other two are from distant St. Paul, Minnesota, and New York City. This installment of Collection Update by Archivist Kermit Westerberg devotes attention to these collections and their value for research of the Swedish-American community. Photographs used here and elsewhere in this newsletter are based on the originals found in one of these collections.

Mentioned only briefly in the last Collection Update were the thirty or so cartons of records and papers of the Swedish Olive Lodge #583, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Moline, Illinois, and seven merger lodges from the surrounding area, covering the period 1872-1987. The third oldest IOOF lodge in Moline, Swedish Olive #583 was founded in 1875 by twelve Swedish members of Moline Lodge #133 with the help of Past Grand Job Tuffley. Tuffley predicted at the time that a lodge “composed entirely of members of the Scandinavian race, using the English language, would succeed and become the largest Lodge of the Order in the city.” That prediction was eventually fulfilled during his lifetime. Later, in 1937, the second oldest Moline lodge, Manufacturers #485, with a purely “Yankee” membership, merged its efforts with Swedish Olive. By the 1950s most of the other IOOF lodges in the immediate area had closed down and merged their memberships with the Swedish lodge. These other Illinois lodges were Automobile #934 (East Moline), Coal Valley #304, Sherrard #637 (formerly #532), Swedona #637, Silvis #424 (later #18) and Matherville #997. As a rule, their extant records were deposited with the Swedish Olive Lodge at the time of merger.

Perhaps one of the greatest drawing powers of the Swedish lodge was its three-story brick building built in 1907-1908 at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirteenth Street in downtown Moline. Still standing today, this assembly hall became the hub of much benevolent, fraternal, drill team, and social activities among area Odd Fellows, including the contributions of various women’s lodges and the Swedish Olive Male Chorus. During the 1940s the Olive Social Club and its bar/lounge (!) became a favorite hang-out for members and servicemen home on leave.

The records and papers of the Swedish lodge, which are by far the most extensive of this IOOF material, cover all aspects of its activities throughout its lifetime (1875-1987). Perhaps the most important record series are the handwritten minutes, the various membership registers, and the lists of sick-and-death payments. Membership “question books” and application forms usually record specific birthplaces, occupations, and local addresses for each individual. Aside from serving genealogical and biographical purposes, such data can be used to study the occupational, ethnic, and demographic composition of the lodge membership over time.

Another new collection that adds to our knowledge of fraternalism, benevolence, and inter-ethnic relations in immigrant communities is comprised of the records of the Independent Scandinavian Workingmen’s Association (ISWA), Union Lodge #82 (formerly #62), St. Paul, Minn.

What is so interesting about this organization is that it was founded by a group of twenty Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes from St. Paul’s working classes. The Danish-Norwegian membership appears to have led the lodge activities from the very start (October, 1901), as the earliest minutes are written in Dano-Norwegian and many of the first officers are either Danes or Norwegians. For some unexplained reason, no minutes were kept after September, 1902, until the reorganization of the lodge in May, 1906, by a Thorwald Swennes of Viking Lodge #6 (La Crosse, Wisconsin) of the ISWA. The Association’s Grand Lodge was located in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. An abrupt change of language and nomenclature is recorded in the minutes of January 11, 1917: from this date on, all of the recording secretaries write in English, and the

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A “grass roots” welcome for Prince Bertil in Escanaba (Mich.) during that city’s celebration of the Swedish Pioneer Centennial in June, 1948 (ASNE archives, Swenson Center).
Third Annual O. Fritiof
Ander Lecture

Professor Rudolph Vecoli of the University of Minnesota was the featured speaker at the Swenson Center’s third annual O. Fritiof Ander lecture in immigration history delivered April 7 on the Augustana College campus. Professor Vecoli spoke on the topic of “The Trials and Tribulations of an Immigration Historian: George Stephenson and the Swedish-American Community.”

George Stephenson, a second-generation Swedish-American and a graduate of Augustana College, was a pioneer in the study of Swedish as well as general American immigration history. He was professor of history at the University of Minnesota from 1924 to 1952, was very active in the Swedish Historical Society of America, and wrote numerous books and articles in the field.

Himself a prominent immigration historian and the director of the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, Professor Vecoli discussed Stephenson’s contributions to the field, underscoring the fresh and still very relevant aspects of Stephenson’s work, not always appreciated by the Swedish-American community of his time. Stephenson showed a great appreciation for the complexity and variety of the immigrant community, Vecoli maintained. Furthermore, Professor Vecoli’s talk about the work and career of George Stephenson illustrates the problems involved with writing the history of one’s own ethnic group. His major work, Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration, published in 1932 by the University of Minnesota Press, is a classic and can be recommended for anyone interested in the history of Swedish immigration to America.

American Immigrants and Their Generations

In April the book American Immigrants and Their Generations: Studies and Commentaries on the Hansen Thesis After Fifty Years was published by the University of Illinois Press. Edited by Peter Kivisto and Dag Blanck, the book includes the lectures presented at the session commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Marcus Lee Hansen’s thesis on the third generation in American history, which was a part of the conference “The Ethnic Mosaic of the Quad Cities,” arranged by the Swenson Center in April, 1987.


Hansen’s thesis about the role of immigrant generations in American history—what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember — serves as the starting point for the articles in the book. Each author has approached Hansen’s thesis from different points of view, thus making for a varied and stimulating discussion of this topic.

The book is priced at $19.95 and can be ordered through bookellers or directly from the University of Illinois Press, 54 East Gregory Drive, Champaign, Illinois, 61820.

Lectures at the Swenson Center

During 1989, the Swenson Center has sponsored two lectures by visiting Swedes on the topic of Swedish immigration to the United States. On October 10, Professor Lars Ljungmark from the University of Gothenburg spoke about the immigration of Swedes to North America, focusing on such topics as the recruitment of Swedes to the United States by various government and state agencies in this country. Ljungmark has published widely in the field of Swedish immigration history, and his work, Swedish Exodus (1979), is an excellent overview of the history of the mass Swedish emigration.

The second lecture focused on Swedish-American genealogy, always a matter of interest at the Swenson Center. The speaker was the well-known genealogist Ted Rosvall from Falköping, Sweden. His, at times humorous, presentation was called “Buried as John Doe: The Story of a Lost Swedish Immigrant.” Rosvall, who has done extensive genealogical work in Sweden and in the United States, discussed the different kinds of sources available in doing Swedish genealogy as well as the various problems confronted by a genealogist.

St. Louis Conference

In early November, 1989, a great number of Swedish-American organizations met in St. Louis for the first “Conference of Swedish America.” The conference was sponsored by the Swedish Council of America and was intended to bring together Swedish-American organizations from all over the country to share information, to strengthen institutional and personal relations, and to promote the cultural ties between Sweden and the United States.

The Swenson Center was one of the over fifty different groups or organizations that took part in the conference, and it was one of the thirteen groups that had an exhibition booth at the Swedish-American Resources Fair, held as a part of the conference. Acting Director Kermit Westerberg and Researcher Christina Johansson spent three busy days in the booth and elsewhere in St. Louis, informing visitors about the work and the resources of the Swenson Center. The general consensus of the participating organizations was that the conference was a great success, and we are looking forward to the second “Conference of Swedish America,” to be held in Dearborn, Michigan, in October, 1990.

Birger Swenson Dies at 94

Birger Swenson, the co-founder of the Swenson Center, died on January 18, 1990, at the age of 94. He was born in the parish of Östra Fågelvik in the province of Värmland in Sweden and came to America at the age of 16.
in 1912. He enrolled at Augustana College in 1916, and graduated in 1924, having served in the United States Army during World War I. Throughout his life, Birger Swenson was very active in the Swedish-American community. During his first years in America he worked as an agent for the leading Swedish-American newspaper Hemlandet, traveling all over the United States and gaining an intimate knowledge of Swedish America. In 1926, Birger Swenson began his thirty-seven year association with the largest Swedish-American publishing house, the Augustana Book Concern. From 1945 to 1962 he served as the Book Concern's general manager.

Following his retirement, Birger Swenson and his wife Lyal, whom he married in 1943, traveled widely in the United States and overseas, visiting, among other places, Africa, South America, the Antarctic, and, of course, Sweden. In 1980, the Augustana Historical Society published Birger Swenson's autobiography, My Story.

Birger Swenson had a strong commitment to the study and preservation of the history of Swedish immigration to North America. Through a major endowment to Augustana College in 1980, Birger and Lyal Swenson made it possible to establish the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center. Since then, the Swenson Center has grown and become one of the leading archives and research institutions in the United States for the study of Swedish immigration to this country. The Swenson Center, Swedish America, and all those interested in the history of Swedish immigration to North America are deeply grateful to and will always remember the dedication and contributions of Birger and Lyal Swenson to Swedish-American studies.

New Materials at the Center

As a result of the co-operation between the Swenson Center and the SVAR division of the Swedish National Archives, we have recently acquired a complete set of the microfiche church records for Kopparbergs län, including most of the province of Dalarna in north central Sweden. This collection is made up of more than 11,800 microfiche cards and includes the following record types for all the parishes in Kopparbergs län: Household catechism rolls (husförhörslängder), records of in and out migration, marriage records, birth and baptismal records, and death and burial records.

In some cases the records go back as far as the early seventeenth century. If you have relatives hailing from the province of Dalarna (Kopparbergs län), the church records you need are now available at the Swenson Center.

In addition, we have also obtained various records of departing passengers for several Norwegian ports. Many Swedish emigrants, in particular those from the western parts bordering on Norway, left from Norwegian instead of Swedish ports. The ports included are the capital Kristiania (today Oslo) covering the time period 1867-1902, Bergen 1874-1924, and Trondheim 1867-1890.

As many of these new records are on microfiche, the Center has also bought a modern microfiche reader, which enables us to make copies from the fiche. We are very grateful to the American-Scandinavian Association at Augustana College which generously contributed towards the cost of this reader.

New Lists of Swenson Center Genealogical Holdings

The Swedish-American church records are among the most frequently used sources at the Swenson Center. Currently we have nearly 2,000 rolls of microfilm of all the major Swedish-American denominations. To facilitate the use of these church records, we have produced up-to-date lists, including detailed information about what kinds of records are included on the different films. These lists are available at the Center, as well as on microfiche cards, which have been sent out to libraries and archives throughout the United States and Sweden. These archives and libraries include many state and historical societies as well as other archives in areas with strong Swedish-American population groups.
ISWA is now called Scandinavian American Fraternity.

Aside from the lodge minutes (1901-1954) and some later financial transactions, the ISWA collection contains membership records (names and local addresses, 1901-1949), an officer's roll call register (1915-late 1940s) and, most significantly, a detailed listing of insured lodge members and their beneficiaries (names, occupations, local addresses and insurance amounts, 1904-1917). The membership and insurance records show that working women had joined the lodge by at least 1909 and were insuring themselves for the benefit of husbands and other family members. Like the Swedish IOOF records, the Union Lodge data on individual members can be used for more detailed study of the organization's social, ethnic, and demographic composition.

The third important manuscript collection consists of extensive office files from the American-Swedish News Exchange (ASNE), New York City, NY. For over forty years, from 1921 to the late 1960s, the ASNE functioned as a general information bureau in the United States for Swedish culture, business, industry, and political affairs. Its task was not only to inform the American public of current events and trends in Sweden but also to stimulate that public's interest in Sweden as a country for research, business and travel. The ASNE published scores of news bulletins, books and brochures; assisted journalists and researchers in the preparation of research studies on Sweden; and served as a supplier of news copy and photographs to American newspapers and wire services.

Manager of the ASNE during much of its history was Allan Kastrup, whose book Med Sverige i Amerika (1985) provides a detailed account of the "picture of Sweden" in the United States and the role of the News Exchange in that context. The extant office files of the ASNE cover the period 1930-1968. There are press releases and speech manuscripts prepared for the visits of such Swedish royalty as Prince Bertil, who was frequently in the United States after World War II. Other press releases and clipping collections cover specific events or particular topics in contemporary Swedish culture and politics. Of particular interest to Swedish-American research are the manuscripts, clippings and photographs relating to the United States celebration of the Swedish Pioneer Centennial in 1948. A major part of the collection contains "subject files," clippings and articles that record the way in which Sweden was portrayed in American press circles from the early 1930s through the 1960s. Included among the office files are printed annual reports of the ASNE and stenciled lists of published articles and books on Sweden.

How to Reach the Center

The Swenson Center is temporarily located at 3428 Seventh Avenue, Rock Island, just west of Thirty-fifth Street and Denkmann Memorial Library.

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

If you plan to visit 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; and Christina Johansson, researcher.

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