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## Swenson Center News, 1993

Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Augustana College

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# Swenson Center News

PUBLICATION OF THE SWENSON SWEDISH IMMIGRATION RESEARCH CENTER • NUMBER 7 • 1993

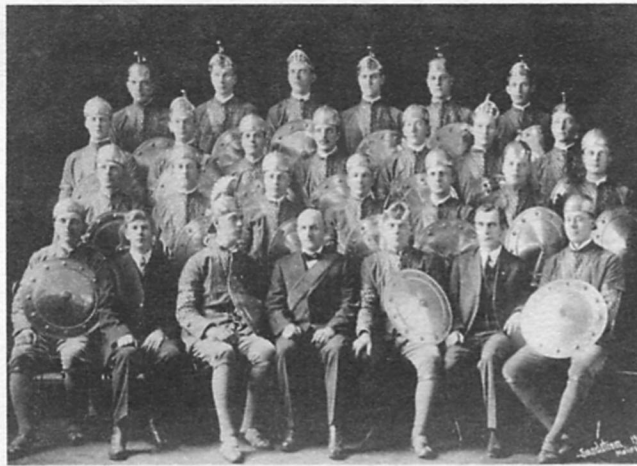
## On Vikings and Columbus

Another year, the first since our move into the new facilities in September 1991, has gone by since the last issue of the *Swenson Center News* appeared. The new space has meant a world of difference for the Center, and we encourage you to come and visit and enjoy our new quarters.

1992 was also the year in which the 500th anniversary of Columbus' landing in the New World was celebrated. The observance of the jubilee was not uncontroversial, especially if the arrival of Columbus was seen as a discovery of the Americas, as there were large numbers of people already living in the New World in 1492.

Moreover, the marking of 1992 also put the spotlight on the perennial question of whether Columbus and his men really were the first Europeans to reach the shores of the New World. This is an old discussion, in a way going back to the time when the peopling of America began. Several nationalities have claimed "their own" to be the first to land in North America, including Swedes and Scandinavians, who have advanced the Scandinavian Viking Leif Eriksson

*Drill Team from the Thor Lodge No. 9, Independent Order of Vikings, Moline, Illinois, 1915. Photo courtesy of Thor Lodge No. 9, IOV, Moline, Illinois*



as an alternative to Columbus. It might thus be worthwhile to reflect a little bit on the Vikings and America.

By now it seems generally accepted that Scandinavian voyagers from Greenland landed on the North American continent around the year 1000, and perhaps spent as long as a winter there. Archeological excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows on Newfoundland in the 1960's have given evidence of Scandinavian-style settlements there. However, this early

Scandinavian presence in America was not sustained for any length of time, and it is not possible to speak of any major Scandinavian impact on America from this time period.

Still, the Vikings in America have been a powerful symbol among Scandinavian-Americans, and over the

years a great deal of effort and energy have gone into advancing the case of Viking history in America. This is partly a function of the need of all immigrant and ethnic groups in America to establish a sense of history in the new land; to try to find the earliest settlers, and to highlight the contributions by members of the immigrant community to the new land.

Also, as anti-foreign sentiments ran high in America at times, it also became a way of telling the

new country that the particular ethnic group was an important element in the forging of the new nation.

Both the Norwegians and the Swedes have made good use of the Vikings in America, at times quarreling about the nativity of Leif Eriksson. In 1873, Norwegian-American educator and writer Rasmus B. Anderson, the first professor of Scandinavian studies at the University of Wisconsin, published a book called *America Not Discovered by Columbus*, claiming the "discovery" for Leif Eriksson, and twenty years later, the leading Swedish-American author and journalist Johan Enander brought out a similar book called *Nordmännen i Amerika eller Amerikas upptäckt* (The Norsemen in America or the Discovery of America) with the subtitle "An Historical Treatise in View of the Columbian Festivities in Chicago 1892-93."

The immediate reason for the

### *Kermit Westerberg assumes new position*

On 1 October 1992 Kermit Westerberg, Archivist/Librarian at the Center, took up a new position as Monographs Librarian at the Divinity School Library of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Westerberg, who had been with the Swenson Center since it opened in 1981, played an important role in the Center's development. We wish him all the best in his new responsibilities at Yale University and thank him for his significant contributions to the Swenson Center.

## Swenson Center becomes publisher of *Swedish American Genealogist*

In 1981, a new journal in the field of Swedish-American studies was born, *Swedish American Genealogist* (SAG). Currently in its twelfth volume, SAG has become an indispensable publication for anyone interested in, as the subtitle of the journal says, "Swedish American biography, genealogy and personal history." A multitude of articles on Swedish-American personal history have been published in SAG over the years. Some have dealt with methodology and problems in doing research, such as how one uses different sources and discussions of the use of names in Sweden, while others have presented source materials, such as naturalization records and church registers, sometimes with additional information about individual persons.

Many articles have dealt with individuals or with families and their lives in America (including such an intriguing article as "Who Was President Zachary Taylor's Swedish Maid?"). We have also learned about Swedes in various occupational groups, such as painters, guitar-makers, glassworkers and pharmacists, about group migrations from one area in Sweden to another in America, and about the histories and membership of different Swedish-American organizations. In conjunction with the 350th anniversary of the establishment of the New Sweden Colony on the Delaware River, a series of articles on the colony and the colonists also appeared.

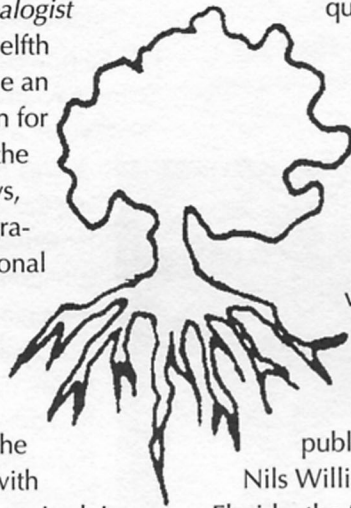
Both new and old books are discussed, occasionally *Ahnentafeln*

will be published, and, finally, every issue of SAG has its genealogical queries department, where one can seek the assistance of other readers to elicit further information about elusive Swedes and Swedish Americans.

The Swenson Center is very happy to announce that beginning with volume 12 (March, 1992), we became the publishers of this journal. Dr.

Nils William Olsson of Winter Park, Florida, the founder and up to now the publisher and editor of the journal, will continue as editor of *Swedish American Genealogist*, and all questions dealing with editorial matters, queries, manuscripts, *Ahnentafeln*, etc. should be addressed to him at P.O. Box 2186, Winter Park, FL 32790. Questions dealing with subscriptions, back issues, advertisements, and other financial matters should be directed to the Swenson Center.

Currently, the annual (calendar-year) subscription rate to SAG is \$20. Swenson Center Associates will, however, receive a one-year subscription for the reduced rate of \$10. If you are not already a subscriber to *Swedish American Genealogist*, we strongly encourage you to become one. Simply fill out and return the coupon on page 7 of this issue of the *Swenson Center News*, and you too will be able to enjoy this highly interesting journal! □



## How to reach the Swenson Center

The Swenson Center is located on the main floor of Denkmann Memorial Hall, 3520 Seventh Avenue, on the campus of Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to noon, and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except for holidays. Hours may be limited during college vacation periods.

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

### SWENSON CENTER STAFF

DAG BLANCK / director  
VICKY OLIVER / administrative assistant  
CHRISTINA JOHANSSON / researcher

Direct all correspondence to

Augustana College  
639 38th Street  
Rock Island, Illinois 61201-2273  
Telephone: (309) 794-7204  
Telefax: (309) 794-7443

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DAG BLANCK / Editor  
VICKY OLIVER / Assistant Editor



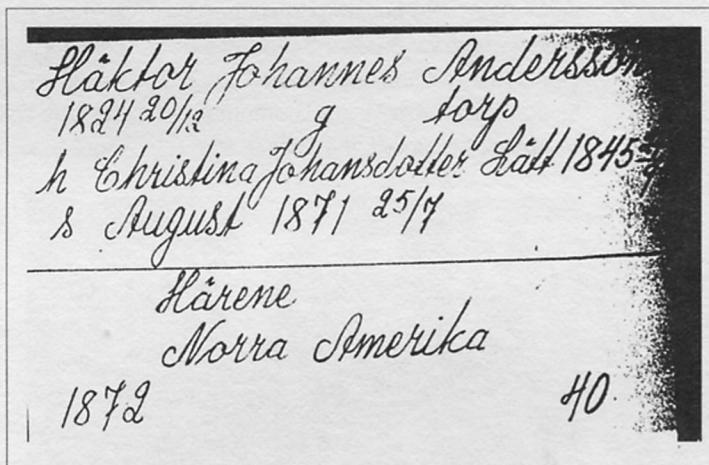
Christina Johansson, The Center's researcher, will be on maternity leave from January to July, 1993. During her absence, Jill Seaholm will serve as genealogical researcher. Ms. Seaholm is from Moline, Illinois, and graduated from Augustana with a degree in Scandinavian Studies.

# Microfilm, record acquisition continues

The Center is in the process of acquiring additional microfilm of new materials from both Sweden and the United States that our researchers should find useful. Of particular interest for genealogical researchers are indexes of passenger lists from two new cities—Stockholm and Norrköping—as well as additional indexes for the city of Malmö. These acquisitions mean that the Center will soon have records of emigrants leaving the Swedish port cities of Gothenburg (Göteborg) 1869-1930, Kalmar 1880-1893, Malmö 1874-1939, Stockholm 1860-1920, Norrköping 1860-1920, as well as the Norwegian capital Kristiania (Oslo) 1867-1902. In addition, the Center will also acquire an index of Swedes arriving in New York 1861-1868, based on excerpts from passenger manifests of arriving ships in New York that were compiled by the provincial archives in Gothenburg (Landsarkivet i Göteborg) in the 1970's.

The Center will also obtain microfilmed indexes to the summarized lists of emigrants kept by the National Bureau of Statistics in Sweden—in Swedish “personregister till SCB:s nominativa förteckningar över utvandrare”—for several Swedish counties (*län*). These are indexes to listings of emigrants that, beginning in 1861, each Swedish parish was required to submit annually to the National Bureau of Statistics. The indexes are arranged alphabetically for each county (*län*), specifying the names, birth dates, last parish of

residence, occupation, and destination (which, however, often is given as only “N. Amerika”) for each person. The following counties (*län*) and years will be obtained: Älvsborgs län, 1861-



1900; Hallands län, 1861-1900; Jönköpings län, 1860-1895; Kalmar län, 1869-1900; Kronobergs län, 1861-1890; Malmöhus län, 1861-1900; and Värmlands län, 1861-1900.

Moreover, the Center will procure microfilms of some interesting collections of archival materials located in the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul, Minnesota. One of those collections is the very detailed diaries of everyday life on the Minnesota frontier kept by the Swedish immigrant farmer Andrew Peterson between 1854-1898. These are the diaries

▲ An example of an entry for the SCB Personregister for Älvsborgs län. It shows Johannes Andersson Häktor born 20 December, 1824, who is married and a crofter. He emigrated from the parish of Härene in 1872, with his wife Christina Johansdotter Lätt, born 24 September, 1845, and his son August, born 25 July, 1871. The family emigrated to North America.

which Swedish novelist Vilhelm Moberg read in the 1950s, and was inspired by in the writing of his classic tetralogy of Swedish immigration to the Midwest *The Emigrants*, *The Immigrants*, and *The Last Letter Home*.

A second collection, which is only partially available on microfilm, is that of the Swedish Historical Society of America, founded in 1905 in Chicago and dissolved in Minneapolis in the 1930s. This group was perhaps the first Swedish-American organization devoted to collecting materials and promoting historical

research on the history of Swedish immigration to North America.

The SHSA collection includes both records of the Society itself as well as materials collected by the organization. Included in the later category are the records of the Linnean Monument Association, founded to put up the Linneaus statue in Chicago in 1891, a group called Stringbergarne active in Chicago in the 1910s, promoting the works of Swedish writer August Strindberg, as well as writings by Swedish-American writers Johan Enander and Jakob Bonggren.

The annual **O. Fritiof Ander lecture** will be held on Saturday, 17 April 1993, at 7:30 p.m. in Wallenberg Hall. Dr. Mary Swanson, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota will speak on Swedish American art and artists. All are cordially invited to attend this free lecture.

## Education conference held on campus

Education is an important part of life in America for immigrant groups today, and played an equally big role for immigrants at the turn of the century. Education meant both an encounter with the American public schools and the ensuing exposure to the culture and values of the host society, as well as attempts by the immigrant groups themselves to create their own schools through which religious and national traditions could be continued in the new land.

Although most of the Scandinavians who immigrated to America came from the lower strata in society, many of them had had some rudimentary schooling. Sweden became the first country in the world to introduce a compulsory elementary education in 1842, but the Lutheran churches in the Scandinavian countries had been teaching their young basic skills, in many cases as early as the 17th century. This means that the degree of literacy was very high in 19th century Scandinavia, in the case of Sweden perhaps approaching 90%, and that the great majority of Scandinavian immigrants in America could read, and, to a lesser degree, write.

Once in America, Scandinavian immigrants by and large were supportive and availed themselves of the opportunities of the American public schools. They also founded a number of their own schools—academies, colleges, seminaries, Sunday schools, so-called “week-day schools”, etc.—through which they more directly influenced the education of their

youth. Many of these schools were operated by a Scandinavian-American denomination, so religion was a major component in the curriculum.

Gradually, however, the teaching of Scandinavian languages, literature, and culture also became one important aspect of the work of the Scandinavian-American schools. As the Scandinavian-American communities in America matured, they began to



develop cultural and intellectual patterns of their own. In particular, the Scandinavian-American colleges played an important role in this process. For example, between 1903 and 1929, the Augustana College catalog described one of the purposes of the college to be an “exponent of Swedish-American culture.”

These and other aspects of Scandinavian-Americans and education in North America were explored in a conference hosted by the Swenson Center in cooperation with the



*Moshier School, District 27, Oakridge, Hampton, Illinois School Class Picture, Spring 1905. Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Helen Gehring.*

Swedish-American Historical Society in late April. “Scandinavian Immigrants and Education in North America” attracted more than one hundred participants in the audience, as well as 14 persons who presented papers. The keynote speech, “Immigration and Education: Some Ethnic Comparisons,” was given by Professor Mark Stolarik of the University of Ottawa, and focused more broadly on immigrants and education in both the United States and Canada, whereas the remaining papers all dealt with one of the Scandinavian groups and focused either on the educational activities within the ethnic group or on the relationship between the ethnic group and public education.

The following papers were presented on the ethnic communities’ own educational undertakings:

- “Education and Identity Formation among

Swedish-American Mission Friends: The Case of Ansgar College, 1873-1884” (Philip Anderson, North Park Seminary);

- “Cultural and Educational Expressions of the Icelandic Community in Canada” (Christopher Hale, University of Alberta);

- “Shaping the Culture of an Immigrant College Town: Decorah, Iowa” (John Christianson, Luther College);

- “From Political Right to Left: The Spectrum of Finnish Educational Practice in the United States” (Michael Karni, Minneapolis).

- “The Role of the Danish Children’s Schools in Danish Communities: Language and Cultural Mainte-

nance" (Rudolf Jensen, Grand View College);

- "Swedish Visitors' Views of Swedish-American Education" (H. Arnold Barton, Southern Illinois University);
- "Teaching Swedes in America to Be Swedish: Educational Endeavors in the Augustana Synod" (Dag Blanck, Augustana College);
- "In Public and Private: The Dialogue of Libraries, Immigrants, and Society" (Kermit Westerberg, Yale University);
- "A Proper Scandinavian Education: The Academy Movement among Norwegian-Americans at the Turn of the Century" (Art Lee, Bemidji State University).

Papers dealing with the relationship between the ethnic groups and public education included

- "Swedish Immigrants and the Public School System in Chicago" (Anita R. Olson, Spartanburg, S.C.);
- "Passing the Torch: Scandinavian Studies and American Universities" (Larry Scott, Augustana College);
- "Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American Governors of Minnesota and Education" (Bruce Larson, Mankato State University); and
- "Second Generation Finns and the Public Schools: A Community Study, 1930-1940" (Peter Kivisto, Augustana College).

Those who could not attend this conference will be glad to know that the Swedish-American Historical Society has recently decided to publish a book based on the papers presented at the conference, which is scheduled to appear during 1993. It will include most of the papers from the conference, and will be available for purchase through the Swedish-American Historical Society. □

## Göteborgs-Emigranten visits Center, donates computerized database

In May, representatives of the Gothenburg Emigration Research Group visited the Swenson Center. This research group was started several years ago, and focuses its attention on emigrants and the emigration from the port city of Gothenburg (Göteborg). The group is a collaborative effort between the History Department at the University of Gothenburg, the provincial archives in Gothenburg, Riksföreningen Sverigekontakt, and the city of Gothenburg. So far the group has published three volumes dealing with the city's emigration history.

During their visit to the Center, Bengt and Gunnel Bogårde, Inger and Per Clemensson, Berit Flyborg, Lars Ljungmark, and Lennart Limberg, familiarized themselves with the Center's resources and donated a computerized database of emigrants from the parish of Haga in Gothenburg to the Center. The Center looks forward to further cooperation with the

Gothenburg Emigration Research Group.

Anyone interested in further information about the group's work and in ordering their publications should contact:

Göteborgs-emigranten  
c/o Riksföreningen Sverigekontakt  
Box 53066  
S-400 12 Göteborg, Sweden

## *SVAR update*

We are continuing to place orders for microfiche of the Swedish parish records from SVAR in Ramsele, Sweden for individual researchers. It should be noted that the Swenson Center orders these records from Sweden. Unfortunately, we do not have a set here at the Swenson Center for researchers to use.

## *Scandinavia, immigration and genealogy focus of ELDERHOSTEL program*

The Swenson Center took part in an ELDERHOSTEL program held at Augustana College 31 May – 6 June 1992 on Scandinavia, Scandinavian Immigration and Genealogy. Forty-four students from across the U.S. heard presentations about Scandinavian history, doing family history research in Swedish, Swedish-American and American sources, Scandinavia today, and topics of local interest. Everyone got to spend at least a part of one day doing hands-on research at the Swenson Center.

There was also a field trip to Sheffield, Andover and Bishop Hill to visit immigrant settlements and churches.

A similar ELDERHOSTEL is planned for early June, 1993. For further information, please contact the coordinator for Augustana College's ELDERHOSTEL, Dr. Marsha Smith, Sociology Department, Augustana College, 639-38th Street, Rock Island, IL 61201-2296, telephone 309-794-7270.

## A word about finances

From the very beginning, endowment income has been vital to the Swenson Center. In the early years, income from the original endowment established by Birger and Lyal Swenson was sufficient to pay for the Center's program. In the following years, however, interest rates fell, resulting in less endowment income, while at the same time the program of the Swenson Center grew, resulting in the need for more funds. The gap has been met in two ways. First, the endowment fund has grown by gifts from other persons. The fund now totals \$966,000. This includes the \$500,000 fund established by Larry Plym. A second source of funds includes annual gifts and fees received from friends of the Center. Included are memberships in the Swenson Center Circle and Swenson Center Associates. A small amount is received from research fees. During the past year, 83% of our budget came from endowment sources and 17% came from annual gifts, memberships and fees.

The Swenson Center operates as a part of Augustana College and enjoys

many benefits from this association, not the least of which is the respect which comes from our relationship with a leading educational institution. We operate, however, on a self-supporting basis. We receive no direct support from the College's academic budget. This independence is healthy for the Swenson Center as we are not subject to the changing demands of the College's academic program.

While our budget is presently balanced, we are not adequately staffed to meet the increased work load which we are being asked to handle. We have become the major source of information for persons studying the record of Swedes in America, and there is much work to be done. Services can increase only as income increases. Our goal is to increase the endowment to at least 1.5 million dollars. Endowment funds are permanent and produce a continued flow of income. They represent an ideal way to memorialize a loved one. Why not consider establishment of an endowment in honor of a Swedish immigrant close to you? All gifts are tax deductible.

### *Plym Endowment Increased*

A gift of \$200,000 from Lawrence J. Plym of Niles, Michigan and Delray Beach, Florida has increased the Plym Endowment to \$500,000. The endowment was established to support Swedish American historical studies through the Swenson Center.

Plym is retired president of the Kawneer Company of Niles, Michigan, a leading manufacturer of fabricated aluminum products, now a part of

AMAX, Inc. For 15 years, he has been a member of the board of directors of Swedish Council of America. The Plym Research Room at the Swenson Center is named in his honor.

### *Gifts*

The following major gifts received since July 1, 1991 are acknowledged with gratitude:

#### **\$1,000 and over**

Lawrence J. Plym  
Milford J. Nelson  
Lyal Swenson  
Erick Schonstedt  
Robert Linrothe

#### **\$250 and over**

Conrad Bergendoff  
Betsey Brodahl  
Earl R. Brolander  
Glen E. Brolander  
John Caldwell  
Ruth A. Gregory  
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Gerald R. Sime  
George Simpson  
Harold Sundelius  
Mary Swanson  
Bertil G. Winstrom  
Mildred Carlson Estate

#### **\$100 and over**

Herbert Carlson  
Philip A. and Marjorie L. Johnson  
Byron Nordstrom  
Robert Skold  
Swedish Council of St. Louis  
John M. and Kari Telleen

**V**olunteers are important persons to non-profit organizations like the Swenson Center. We are very fortunate in having a dedicated volunteer in Mr. John Page of Bettendorf, Iowa, who has spent at least a day per week at the Center during the past year, assisting us with genealogical research and other projects. The Center gratefully recognizes the services of Mr. Page!

Swenson Center Circle and Associates

We invite you to become a member of the Swenson Center Associates or the Swenson Center Circle. More than 350 persons have enrolled as Swenson Center Associates, each making an annual contribution of at least \$25.00. Associates receive a discount on research fees and all mailings from the Center, in addition to supporting the work of the Swenson Center. Associates also receive a discount on the subscription fee to the Swedish American Genealogist. Swenson Center Circle members support the work of the Center through an annual contribution of \$250.00. Circle members receive all publications of the Center, including Swedish American Genealogist, and a guest invitation to a special dinner held in conjunction with the annual Ander lecture. We thank those who are supporting us through the Associates and Circle, and encourage others to consider becoming a member of either group.

New U.S. census figures show increase in Swedish American population

How many Swedes are there in America today? To answer that question, we turn to the federal census, which has been reporting on the ethnic composition of the American people since the mid-19th century.

According to the census figures, the Swedish population in the United States peaked in 1910 when more than 650,000 Swedish-born persons were living in the country. Today the number of Swedish immigrants is, of course, much smaller, but the number of Swedish Americans is still substantial.

According to recently released figures based on the 1990 census, some 4.6 million persons in the U.S. have identified themselves as Swedish Americans (i.e. indicated Swedish as at least one of their national origins.) This figure is up from the 1980 census when it stood at 4.2 million. It should be noted that this figure is not based on "biology" but on self-identifica-

tion, i.e. each individual has actively chosen to identify with a particular ethnic group, regardless of how distantly the ancestors can be found.

Close to 40% of all Swedish Americans still live in the midwest, but the "westward trend" from 1980 continues, and California, which in 1980 counted more Swedish Americans than Minnesota, continues to be the leading state of residence for Swedish Americans.

The largest national group identified by census respondents was the Germans, with close to 58 million Americans claiming at least part German background. Among the other Scandinavian groups, there were 3.8 million Norwegian Americans noted in the census, 1.6 million Danish Americans and 650,000 Americans of Finnish descent. No data is available yet for the Icelanders. As more detailed data becomes available, we will keep you updated.



How you can support the Swenson Center

Please enroll me in the following category of support for the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center:

- SWENSON CENTER ASSOCIATE (Annual Contribution of \$25 or \$\_\_\_\_\_)
SWENSON CENTER ASSOCIATE and one-year subscription to Swedish American Genealogist (Annual Contribution of \$35 or \$\_\_\_\_\_)
SWENSON CENTER CIRCLE (Annual contribution of \$250)
Other Amount \$\_\_\_\_\_
Information requested on endowment possibilities.

Return this form to: SWENSON SWEDISH IMMIGRATION RESEARCH CENTER Augustana College 639 38th Street Rock Island, IL 61201-2273

Name \_\_\_\_\_
Street \_\_\_\_\_
City \_\_\_\_\_
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_
Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_



*On Vikings ...* FROM PAGE 1

publication of Enander's book, was, of course, the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which in 1892-93 marked the 400th anniversary of Columbus' landing in the New World, and which also served as an opportunity to advance the Viking case for both Swedes and Norwegians. In his book Enander made a strong plea for a Viking presence in America, lamenting the fact that these ideas had not been accepted, but concluding that long after the speeches to Columbus have been forgotten, the fact would remain that "the Norseman discovered America and founded lasting colonies there 500 years before Columbus saw the light of day."

On July 20, 1893, when Sweden's day was observed at the Exposition, a Swedish-American parade of more than 12,000 people made its way through downtown Chicago. This parade included people dressed up as Vikings and replicas of Viking ships. The Norwegians too used the Columbian Exposition to advance their Viking claims, and a supposed replica of Leif Eriksson's ship "The Viking" made a spectacular entry in the Chicago harbor in July, after having crossed the Atlantic from Norway.

The Viking tradition in America has remained strong since the turn of the century. Some examples include a master's thesis presented at Augustana College in Illinois in 1901 on "The Norse Discovery of America with Some References to Its True Significance," in which the author—a Danish-American—sought to establish a direct link between the Viking journeys and the 19th century mass migration of Scandinavians, suggesting that "that part of the New World which we are accustomed to calling Danish America began to play its part in history five hundred and six years before Columbus set foot in San Salvador." In 1928, a fictionalized account of Leif's journey appeared in the historical novel *Med Leif Erikson paa Vinlandsreise* (With Leif Erikson on a Journey to Vinland), brought out by the Norwegian-American Augsburg Publishing House and clearly aimed at American-born Norwegian-American youth, who in this book could follow the adventures of their ancestor Leif Eriksson in the New World.

The perhaps most notable example of the longevity of the Viking legacy in America is the controversy over the so-called rune stone in Alexandria, Minnesota. The stone was discovered in 1898 and was claimed to have been erected in 1362 by Vikings on a mission from the King of

Sweden and Norway, and although it was declared to be a forgery by most prominent scholars at the time, as well as by generations of researchers, including such noted persons as Theodore Blegen and Erik Wahlgren, it has continued to have great appeal to generations of Swedish- and Scandinavian-Americans, helping to cement the use of the Vikings as a key ingredient in Swedish- and Scandinavian-American identity.

As the enduring Viking legacy in America shows, history and historical symbols play an important role for immigrant and ethnic groups. This history is important even when such a discovery might mean realizing that earlier generations may have made exaggerated claims. One very useful dimension of historical jubilees or celebrations—be it the 500th anniversary of Columbus' landing in the Americas or the 350th Anniversary of the establishment of the New Sweden Colony on the Delaware—is that they can serve as a starting point for continued reflections on who we are and from where we come. Let us hope that the 1992 Columbian celebrations have been such a point, and led us to an increased understanding of the richness and complexity of the history of the peopling of the Americas.

— DAG BLANCK

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