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Augustana Seniors Fall 1885: Introduction

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Augustana Seniors Fall 1885: Introduction

Thomas E. Bengtson
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The series of papers “Augustana Seniors Fall 1885” represent the work of students in FYI 103 Practical Genealogy, taught by me in the spring term of the 2018–2019 academic year. The course is part of a three-term sequence of First Year Inquiry courses that all first-year students at Augustana take. The students in my class worked in small teams to investigate the family history and genealogy of an Augustana alum. The alums were taken from the members of the senior class as listed in the Augustana College catalog of 1885–1886.\(^1\) The resulting papers were part of the requirements of the course.

Somewhat remarkably by modern standards, the catalogs in the 1880s listed every student at the college. The catalog of 1885–1886 listed fifteen students in the senior class. Only seven of those students were the subject of a research paper this year. All the alums chosen for study graduated from Augustana in the spring of 1886 and all of them became pastors in the Augustana Lutheran Church. For each alum chosen, there was a record card signed by the alum himself in the Augustana Library Special Collections. (All of these alums were men.) The record cards served as a starting point for research on each alum.

The record cards are about 13 cm by 20 cm. The cards have more detailed information, and ask about the date and place of birth of the student, the name of the father and the father’s occupation, and the name of the church of which the student was a member. Although there is not always a record card for each, the alums this year were chosen partly because there was such a record for each of them. An example of such a registration card is included later.

The alums were immigrants from Sweden. Armed with the knowledge of what parish in Sweden the student or his family had emigrated from, it was possible to find that family in Swedish parish records. The Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, via ArkivDigital and Ancestry.com was able to provide access to these Swedish records. Much of the work on the ancestors of each alum was done there.

The Swenson Center also is a repository for microfilm copies of Swedish American church records. As the seniors of 1885 were a religious lot, they went to church in this country. Quite often they could be found in these American records. Sometimes information about their descendants showed up.

Another common source for many teams was Conrad Bergendoff’s *Augustana Ministerium*.\(^2\) Although compiled from other sources, it is generally reliable and gives information about the career of each pastor ordained in the Augustana Lutheran Church.

The research teams were encouraged to consult a wide variety of sources. Some of the more frequently used sources included the Augustana student newspaper, *Augustana Observer*, records in genealogical website FamilySearch.org, and various census records in the United States.

Each paper has several sections. The first is a biography of the Augustana alum himself. For some much is known, while for others there isn’t a lot to say. Next comes an ancestors report (ahnentafel).

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The next section is a descendants report. For some alums there is quite a bit to say, but for others there is almost nothing. Descendants who might still be alive are indicated only as “living” even when the research team know the names of the descendants. (Citations may provide the reader with sources as to who these living people might be.)

Time was short, and so each report has some open questions suitable for further research. Interested readers are invited to pick up the trail and fill in the gaps. The teams created records for their subjects on the Family Tree on FamilySearch. The report gives the record locator on FamilySearch and readers can use this locator to find the Augustana alum in this big and growing tree.

The final section for each report is a list of sources. We have tried to follow good genealogical practice in creating citations as footnotes and then listing our sources at the end. In the few instances where an image of the alum was available, credits for the photograph are given at the very end.

Acknowledgments

My students and I are especially grateful to Special Collections librarian Emma Lincoln, who gave much useful guidance on what materials were available and was generous with her time.

Many thanks go to the staff of the Swenson Center, including Jill Seaholm, Susanne Titus, and Lisa Huntsha, who were patient and generous as they first helped the teams locate these old Swedish records and then translate them into English.

Special thanks go to Augustana Librarians Connie Ghinazzi and Mary Tatro. Connie and Mary were instrumental in getting these projects to Augustana Digital Commons.
Example of a Registration Card

The image to the right is a full size scan of the registration card for Peter Olof Hansen. The registration is a printed form, with blanks apparently filled in by the registrant, and signed by the registrant. Of particular interest for genealogical research is the date and place of birth, the name of the father, the approximate date of immigration to the United States, and the church where the registrant was a member. The card also shows the name of registrant exactly as given by the registrant. An added bonus is the signature of registrant.

Scan of an early registration card, courtesy of Augustana College Special Collections librarian Emma Lincoln.

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Sources

