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Vestkusten is now digitized!

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Vestkusten is now digitized!

The newspaper *Vestkusten* was a “liberal literary and political newspaper for the Swedes on the Pacific Coast” to cite their masthead.

We are citing parts of an article on the *Vestkusten* history, by *Muriel Nelson Beroza*, and published in 2008 on the *Nordstjernan* web site, see a [link on p. 30](#).

“There were several attempts to produce a Swedish language newspaper on the west coast starting in 1873, but none of them lasted for more than a year or so. The first successful paper was *Vestkusten*. It was the brainchild of Johannes Telleen. He was born in 1846 in Halland and immigrated with his parents to Moline, Illinois, in 1853 at the age of 7. Eventually he attended Augustana Seminary and was ordained in 1872. After serving in several churches in the Midwest, he answered the call for a position as the first pastor of the Ebenezer Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church in San Francisco in 1883. Telleen was 37 years old at the time. One of his plans was to have a Swedish language newspaper to help his parishioners settle in the new land. The primary purpose of the publication would be to carry church news, discussions of ecclesiastical subjects, and other items of interest from Sweden.

“The paper started with the name of *Ebenezer* and it was a small four-page pamphlet, published monthly. The first issue was 31 October 1886. The second was issued in November of that year. Telleen’s grand plans for a real newspaper proved to be too difficult financially and too time consuming. He turned the paper over to the editor Alrik G. Spencer, who had also been serving as the typesetter. Spencer, born in Västergötland

in 1870, started his career in San Francisco by printing city directories and sheet music. The first issue under the name *Vestkusten* was printed in January 1887. Spencer managed the paper for four years. He expanded it and published it weekly. Some of the men who served as editors and staff members under him were Murberg, Borgström, and J.A. Almqvist.

“In 1891 Ernst Skarstedt was hired as the new editor. He was a well-known and respected writer of articles and books about the Swedish people in America. Skarstedt was born in 1857 at the Solberga parsonage where his father served. His father Carl Wilhelm Skarstedt was eventually appointed professor of theology at Lund University. Ernst received an excellent education but had no desire to follow his father’s career in the church. At the age of 18, he went to sea and eventually came to America. He was a talented violinist, a poet, a photographer, a good observer of the world around him, and he had a profound understanding of the Swedish people about whom he would write. During his time at *Vestkusten* he raised the literary quality of the paper by translating books of literary merit into Swedish, which appeared in serial form in the paper. He also wrote articles, poems, his observations of the Swedes, and the scene in San Francisco. He stayed with *Vestkusten* for close to six years and even continued to send articles later.

“Alexander Olsson joined the paper in 1890 as typesetter and treasurer. Olsson was born in 1868 in Onsala. He had worked for the newspaper *Norra Hallands Tidning* in Kungsbacka, Sweden, for four years. He

learned the basics of the newspaper and printing business there before coming to San Francisco in 1889 at the age of 21. By 1894 Spencer and all of his backers were tired of waiting for some financial rewards and decided to abandon the ownership of the paper. The paper was purchased by Skarstedt and Olsson that year. With some good management techniques, they began to turn the corner and the paper became a popular source of news for the Swedish people of the area.”

Vestkusten lived until 2007

The last owner of *Vestkusten* was well-known philanthropist Barbro Sachs-Osher who bought it in 1991, together with Sune Lundberg, who passed away shortly afterwards.

In November 2007 *Vestkusten* merged with *Nordstjernan* from New York, which is still active.

How to use the digital Vestkusten

After you have followed the link on p. 30, you come to the *California Digital Newspaper Collection*, which shows a list of available newspapers. Scroll down to *Vestkusten* and click on the name, and you will come to a page which will show you the available issues, and then look for the one you want. The newspaper was a weekly for many years, and then became a semi-weekly, and the last years a monthly.

It is not yet searchable by texts, names, or places, only by issue in the form of pictures. It has many family notices and much other information, even letters left at the consulate.

Elisabeth Thorsell