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News from the Swenson Center

Jenny Lind Chapel Museum Preservation Project

BY LISA HUNTSHA
Archivist / Librarian

Over the past few months, two employees of the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center have launched a project to better preserve and exhibit the Jenny Lind Chapel Museum artifacts, kept in the Jenny Lind Chapel in Andover, Ill.

Swenson Center student worker *Rebecca Knapper* visited the museum and noticed a strong need for preservation assistance. With the help of *Lisa Huntsha*, Archivist/Librarian at the Swenson Center, Knapper designed a project to preserve and update the exhibits at the Jenny Lind Chapel museum, which has been without a professional curator for approximately 20 years.

The Jenny Lind Chapel, which houses a museum on its lower floor, was the first church of the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America (which later merged into the E.L.C.A.). Historically, this site tells the story of pioneering Swedish immigrants of the mid-1800s through photographs, documents, textiles, artifacts, and paintings, which earned it a place on the National Register of Historic Places.

The purpose of the project was to implement procedures for the museum to provide the protection and sustainability of its historical materials. The six steps of the project included securing grant funding, measuring the impact of the museum through a pre-project survey, conducting a needs assessment of the museum, rehousing museum materials in archival enclosures and updating interpretive text, conducting a training session for museum volunteers on preservation methods, and finally, measuring the impact of these

preservation efforts through a post-project survey.

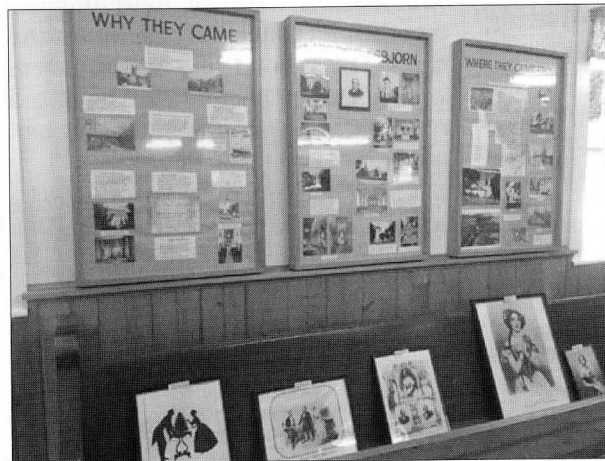
Preservation efforts are ongoing, but much progress has already been made thanks to this preservation project.

The Jenny Lind Chapel, *Rebecca Knapper*, and *Lisa Huntsha* wish to thank the Swedish Council of America for their financial support of this project.

If you have not visited the Jenny Lind Chapel and Museum in Andover, Illinois, now is the time!



The Jenny Lind Chapel. By the door is Jill Seaholm. (photo: E. Thorsell).



The old display cases with information on the chapel, and with basic information on why Swedes left their homeland. There is information on Pastor Lars Paul Esbjörn, who asked famous singer Jenny Lind to donate money to build the chapel. She was touring America with P.T. Barnum in 1850.

Jenny Lind's gift was \$1500 to build the chapel. This would be more than \$45,000 in today's money. (Photos: Lisa Huntsha).

Here are the display cases, with new texts.



Jenny Lind (1820-1887).

