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## News from the Swenson Center

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# News from the Swenson Center

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## The Dagmar and Nils William Olsson Visiting Scholar Award 2015

This annual award helps defray costs for one person doing research for an extended period of time at the Swenson Center and was established by Nils William Olsson, a leading authority in the field of Swedish-American studies, and his wife Dagmar.

The Olsson award is a reimbursement of travel and living expenses associated with your visit to the Swenson Center, up to \$2,500, and is open to anyone doing academic research on any aspect of Swedish-American history. It is not intended to be used for genealogical research. We particularly encourage graduate

students and younger scholars to apply. The minimum stay required at the Swenson Center is three weeks, and the award must be used within one year of notification. Following the completion of your study at the Swenson Center, you will be expected to write a short article summarizing your project and use of the Swenson Center's materials for publication in our quarterly journal and on our website.

Anyone interested in applying for the research award should submit a two- to three-page proposal to the Swenson Center outlining the pro-

posed research topic. The proposal should also include a current curriculum vitae, as well as a statement showing how the resources of the Swenson Center are appropriate for the particular project. Depending on your area of research, you may encounter a significant number of our resources in the Swedish language.

**The deadline for applications is 1 May 2015.**

See web address for the scholarship on p. 30.

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## Swedish-language newspapers archived online

In the late 19th century, when huddled masses of Swedes began arriving in America in droves, they looked for whatever help and comfort they could find in adjusting to their strange new home. Relatives who preceded them established communities of countrymen, including the church.

And for the 1.3 million Swedes who left their homeland for the promise of good farmland in the Midwest or jobs in industrial centers like Chicago, a flourishing Swedish-language press also helped ease that traumatic transition.

Now, an international partnership of the Royal Swedish Library, the American Swedish Institute, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College in Rock Island, Ill., is leading an effort to digitize some of the more than 600 Swedish-language newspapers that were published in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The project not only will preserve a part of the immigrant story particularly significant to Minnesota,

which became the most Swedish of the states, but it also will allow scholars, genealogists, and curious descendants to easily access those newspapers for research – eventually including a translatable form.

One of the most popular and successful of those newspapers, *Svenska Amerikanska Posten* (The Swedish American Post), was published in Minneapolis from 1885 to 1940. Its innovative owner and publisher, Swan Turnblad, bequeathed both the newspaper and his fine mansion on Park Avenue in Minneapolis to the American Swedish Institute, which he founded.

The ASI houses in its collection bound copies of the newspaper's complete run.

"These newspapers were extremely important to the Swedish-American community," said Bruce Karstadt, president and CEO of the American Swedish Institute, adding that his organization is excited about the digitization project. "The Swedish-language immigrant press was one of the largest foreign-language press in America, second only to the German-language press."

The Swedish-language press, like those of other immigrant communities, not only brought news from the homeland in the native language, but was instructive in the ways of American culture, Karstadt said, from social issues and politics to more practical information like cooking with unfamiliar foods.

"These were important tools that helped immigrants adapt to their new lives in the United States and become a part of American society," Karstadt said.

The Minnesota Historical Society has been in the business of digitizing newspapers for nearly a decade, said Jennifer Jones, director of library and collections. Collecting and preserving newspapers is part of the society's mission, mandated by state law requiring all newspapers that publish public notices to archive their publications.

Now, the project that first started in 2008 is heading to completion, and Jones expects the Swedish-language newspapers will go online by late next year.

*(StarTribune, Minneapolis, article first published 14 Dec. 2014, now by permission of author Jim Anderson, 2 Feb. 2015).*