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The Research Center at the Emigrant Institute in Växjö*

Ulf Beijbom

The formation of the archives and library at the Emigrant Institute in Växjö began in January 1968. It was a natural evolution, based upon the rich resources of historical material founded on the emigration phenomenon in the province of Småland. America letters, diaries, photographs and other source materials in private hands were collected throughout the Småland parishes, most of it copies, so that the originals could be returned to the owners. The Swedish National Labor Board (*Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen*) placed three paid employees at the disposal of the Institute, whose task it became to systematically go through the newspaper files of *Växjöbladet* and *Smålandsposten*, excerpting articles, notices and advertisements dealing with emigration. At the same time the essential cooperation with the various local history societies (*hembygdsföreningar*) and amateur researchers was continuously expanded, of prime importance to the gradual building-up of the archives. Of special importance was the inventory of emigrants from the province of Halland, spearheaded by Nils Johansson in Hässleholm. A basic collection of private emigrant archives from all of Sweden was received as a result of a contest sponsored by the Swedish magazine *Året Runt* in 1966, entitled "Amerikaminnen."

The basis for the Institute's series of statistically important source materials was made with the purchase of microfilmed passport journals and the summaries of census reports. Microfilms of the Swedish American newspapers *Hemlandet* and *Svenska Amerikanaren* were bought in 1967. During the same year an inventory was begun, based on the material dealing with emigrants from parish registers, a task which not only occupied the Institute's staff but also a number of volunteers.

During 1968 an inventory was begun of the research material on emigration existing in other institutions and societies. An appeal was mailed out to about

*Ulf Beijbom, director of the Emigrant Institute in Växjö, received his Ph.D. at the University of Uppsala with his definitive study, *Swedes in Chicago*. He has written widely on the topic of Swedish emigration.

2,000 names and addresses. That year was also to become the watershed in the growth and development of the Emigrant Institute. Three major events took place that year. First of all it was the year the House of Emigrants was dedicated. The second important event was the donation to the Institute by Vilhelm Moberg of his manuscripts and source materials dealing with his *magnum opus*, *The Emigrants* and it was also the year which saw the beginning of the registration and the microfilming of the Swedish American church records in the United States.

In the House of Emigrants the Institute realized its dream of having highly desirable quarters for its archives and library. The American inventory project as well as the microfilming which followed, was made possible by grants from the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation of Stockholm. This project became the focus for much of the activity in the U.S. and Canada. Already by 1968 church minutes and membership records of 73 Swedish American church parishes in Minnesota had been inventoried. This project, begun by Hans Norman, an Uppsala historian, was continued the following year by myself. By the time I left for Sweden I had engaged Lennart Setterdahl to continue the registration. During the decade which followed Setterdahl continued and completed one of the most gigantic ethnic archival projects in North America. Approximately 2,000 parish and organizational archives had then been registered and microfilmed.

The American project in the Swedish settlement areas also stimulated a number of other activities. Thus a large collection of printed works began to arrive, the excerpting chore was intensified and the archives were enlarged with a section set aside for photographs and voice tapes.

In 1969 Sten Almqvist initiated a research project called "Emigration to the Antipodes," i.e. Australia and New Zealand, and in 1972 O. R. Landelius, a Swedish writer, donated the first portion of his valuable book and manuscript collection dealing with Swedes abroad to the Institute. This was followed after his death in 1977 by the remainder of his collection. The Landelius collection has thus become the greatest single book collection in the Institute's library holdings. In 1974 three other valuable collections came to Växjö, the archives of the Swedish American author and poet, Arthur Landfors, the Cappelin Collection, containing the J. A. Edman diaries from the Gold Rush in California and Bertil Woller's Collection of material on Swedes in Russia.

The first step in the organizing of a microfilm center in southeastern Sweden was started in 1976, when the microfilmed parish records for the *län* of Kronoberg were purchased. These records reach back as far as records were kept and date until the present day (i.e. the time that they are still confidential, roughly seventy years). By 1981 the goal had been reached, where genealogists, visiting the Institute, could have the use of the microfilmed records of the entire Diocese of Växjö. This has been a great boon to researchers, not least to the visiting Swedish Americans, who have thus been able to discover their roots, thanks to the microfilms deposited at the Emigrant Institute.

In 1976 the registration process was extended to the provinces of Öland and Västergötland and the Institute was in the vanguard in opening the excerpting centers in the county libraries of both Borås and Skara. In 1977 a fortuitous cooperative venture was inaugurated between the Institute and an American couple, Ed and Gerda Sundberg, residing in Watsonville, CA, who had organized their "Ribbons of Memories" project dealing with a series of interviews with Swedish Americans and preserved on tape.

In addition to the major mile posts reached in the development of the Institute archives, there has been a continuous flow of lesser, yet very valuable private collections, which have come to the Institute. The excerpting and the registration activities have been going on apace, and now include a detailed index to each of the archival items, as well as a personal name index to the approximately 100,000 references in the literature. A new grant from the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation in November 1979 made it possible to buy literature and microfilms in the U.S., including 150 microfilmed Swedish American newspapers as well as microfilms of the United States Census from 1850 to 1900 for those counties possessing heavy Swedish immigration.

The constitution guiding the foundation of the Emigrant Institute defines the purpose of the Institute's archival policy as follows: "to advance scholarship at various levels in the history of emigration and to achieve this purpose, to organize archives, indexes and a library of various source materials." This rather general goal has given the Institute relatively free hands in dealing with Swedish emigration during the period of 1845-1930, which was directed mainly to the North American continent. For this reason, this segment of Swedish emigration has had a certain priority, which fortuitously occurred at the same time as an intensive interest in emigration to America occurred at the University of Uppsala, where during the entire 1960s, The Institute of American History developed the most ambitious history project dealing with emigration in all of Europe. The director of the Emigrant Institute was himself an integral part of the Uppsala project and could therefore be helpful in channeling some of the desiderata regarding service and source materials, which proved to be of great benefit to the research program.

Modern research in emigration history has focused mainly on the demographic and social aspects of the emigration phenomenon. This research depended often on population statistics and economic data. Also narrative accounts as documented in the contemporary press regarding emigration were also deemed valuable. But this type of source material was not easily worked and sometimes defied the attempt at unlocking its secrets. Parish records, passenger manifests, census returns and newspapers could serve as sources only after a laborious excerpting procedure. This procedure could be done exceptionally well at a specialized institution such as the Emigrant Institute.

The collection of private source materials in the Institute's holdings has been of great help in providing an individual centered complement to the many statistical tables. Historians, influenced by ethnology and sociology, were no longer

strangers to such items as America letters, autobiographies, diaries and interviews. The contemporary historian began paying more attention to the special areas in America dealing with Swedish immigration. Not only the rural areas, typified by Moberg in his tetralogy, but also the urban and the industrialized areas of cities caught their attention. This mood, therefore, became the catalyst which triggered the pioneering project of the Emigrant Institute in registering and microfilming the archives of the Swedish American church parishes and secular organizations.

The academics dealing with the phenomenon of emigration history were interested in major population migrations and in constructing descriptive models for the proper understanding of emigration as a social movement and as one of the most powerful forces in history. Most historians were, however, conscious of the fact that studies on the macro level often were suspended in midair, without the individual contact on the micro level. This concept underlined the private story of the emigrant as mirrored in the Institute's source material.

The donation which Vilhelm Moberg made to the Emigrant Institute, comprising all of his research material for his emigrant novels, has assured for the Emigrant Institute the role of linking its function with the individual emigrant and the conditions which produced him. The America letter, the emigrant diary and other personal documents would become more important in the development of the archives than the enormous statistical series. Thus the Institute was in an excellent position to link up with the important research being done on the local level. The Emigrant Institute thereby functioned not only as a service institution for the professional scholars at the university level, but could also be of help to the amateur doing research on his family or for the local history project. This development has been quite obvious in recent years with the diminishing level of activity in emigrant studies at the universities and the increased level of interest in genealogical research which lately has expanded with an explosive force.

Genealogists on both sides of the Atlantic have become increasingly interested in the unique series of microfilmed Swedish American parish records and the indexes which combine Swedish and American source material. The House of Emigrants has become the place where Swedish Americans search for their "unknown family" and their roots. The research areas of the Institute are more and more being used and the stream of incoming inquiries has become more and more difficult to handle. This amateur interest in the research possibilities of the Institute can be interpreted as the final positive answer to the question whether the creation of the archives was indeed meaningful. At the same time it should be noted that the modest resources of the Institute are being strained to the limit. It is therefore sometimes difficult to live up to the expectations of the general public.

One of these demands deals with inter-library loans of microfilms. The Institute has been forced to restrict these loans for the following reasons: 1) The Institute only possesses one copy of each microfilm series; 2) The Institute has

no funds for postage, and it would be counterproductive to charge for services of this type; 3) The Institute has no funds for replacing or repairing damaged films or their cardboard boxes. For these reasons, all inter-library loans have been restricted to provincial archives and university libraries in Sweden. The same rules apply to the books in the library.

This means of course that research at the Emigrant Institute must be done by personally visiting the center. Here is located a research room with microfilm readers in addition to a special index room, where the collections can be consulted easily. Both an archivist and a librarian are on hand to give assistance in procuring the needed research material. Thus the Emigrant Institute functions very much like a provincial archives. Additionally the guests of the Institute have the opportunity of viewing the exhibits, which give a visuality to the source materials on deposit in the center.

Briefly I wish to describe below the main series available in the House of Emigrants which deal with emigration research, as well as the source materials available in Sweden. This description will give the reader a compressed view of the most general aids in following up Swedish emigration research.

Swedish Parish Records

From the beginning of the 18th century, in some cases going back to the 17th, the population of Sweden has been recorded in parish records of one form or another. For the emigration scholar, the household examination rolls (*husförhörslängder*), in which the entire population was recorded, as well as the exit permits, are the most interesting. Nearly all of the emigration statistics build on these primary sources. Since the exit permit rolls have been in use since the beginning of the emigration era, this material is usually the starting point in any genealogical study. The individual who moved from a parish was obligated to procure an exit permit (*flyttningsbetyg*), and this fact was duly noted in the exit permit roll (*utflyttningsslängden*). This notation referred to the more detailed information in the household examination roll, where the fact of emigration is also recorded. The exit roll as well as the household examination roll, therefore, give us the most detailed information concerning the emigrants. Of these two sources, the household examination roll is by far the most reliable. It was not until 1885 that the exit permit became obligatory in the procurement of the emigrant contract in a Swedish port. Even so, not all emigrants obtained an exit permit, with the result that the individual's emigration was not noted in the household examination roll until after the emigrant had left, or if he disappeared altogether, his name was entered in a special roll of absconded parishioners (*obefintlighetslängden*). Thus emigration research cannot be based solely on the exit permit roll.

Since the parish record material for older periods is spread out at seven provincial and two city archives, and since after the turn of the century the material is spread out in thousands of parish offices throughout Sweden, it is primarily the microfilm which gives us the possibility of overlooking the gigantic

source material we are dealing with. The parish records have been microfilmed up to the time that they are confidential (roughly seventy years from a person's birth). As already stated, the Emigrant Institute has purchased the greater portion of the material which deals with the Diocese of Växjö, i.e. the main portion of the three *län* which comprise Småland, Jönköping, Kalmar and Kronoberg. Emigration from a great majority of these parishes has been mapped with the help of an index card marked "A", with space for information from the exit permit rolls as well as the household examination books. The result of this excerpting has been a chronological, sometimes alphabetical index of names, as a rule brought forward to the end of the microfilming project, but in some instances running well to the end of the emigration era or approximately 1930. These excerpts have been done either at the Institute or by provincial researchers throughout the country.

Passport Journals

In connection with our first wave of emigrants 1846–1853, the Swedish authorities became interested in a statistical survey. The Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics (*Statistiska Centralbyrån*, formerly known as *Tabellverket*), demanded in 1856 that the various *län* governments should furnish emigrant lists to the central authorities. The emigration going back as far as 1851 was to be covered in these passport journals.

Already during the 17th century it had been obligatory for a foreign traveller to arm himself with a passport, usually furnished by the *län* administration. The traveller's name, age, occupation and place of abode was to be noted in the journals. Notations concerning accompanying relatives were, however, very sketchy. Neither can one judge from the character of these passport journals if the emigrant departed from Sweden for business or personal reasons.

Based upon this rather meager material the statisticians now began to gather in the name lists from the *län* administrations with the emigrant's name, age, civil status, occupation, parish where he lived and his destination. Even though these statistics were complemented with material from the parish offices, the whole exercise proved to be a gigantic failure. According to the official Emigrant Commission, which was to produce a report much later, it was found that based upon this material, the unregistered emigration during the 1850s amounted to as much as 119% of the registered portion.

Only the passport journals for the *län* of Gävleborg and Västernorrland have been accessioned on microfilm. Our earliest organized emigration, that of the *erik janssonists*, is to be found in this material. The reports from the *län* authorities consisting of the passport journals for 1851–1860 have been excerpted and indexed alphabetically, thanks to the efforts of the Statistical Bureau in Stockholm and the provincial archives in Göteborg. This index is to be found in the Emigrant Institute. An American copy is also to be found in the library of Nils William Olsson in Winter Park, Florida.

Summary Census Report

The passport journals ceased to exist in 1860, when it no longer was necessary to obtain a passport. From this year on the emigration statistics were based upon the summary census lists which the various parish offices were required to keep and forward to the Central Bureau of Statistics. When emigration suddenly boomed after the Civil War in 1865, it was decided that the summary census reports for that year (1865) also should be accompanied by a "specific index of all those persons, who were known to have left Sweden for foreign parts during the five years of 1861–1865 by name, occupation and age, and that, from that time on, each year's summary census report was to account for the changes within the parish population." Beginning in 1870 a specially printed form was to be used for these name lists, now to be complemented by also entering the civil status of the emigrant. Beginning in 1875 the parish clergymen were also to register the immigrants into the parish.

From 1861 we thus possess a uniform national emigration statistic based upon the exit lists. As a consequence this material is just as reliable or unreliable as the exit permit lists themselves. Emigration scholars have checked the accuracy of these sources and have found that in general they check out positively by comparing the material in the forwarded name lists with the exit rolls. The older lists are less reliable and the emigration to our neighboring countries — Denmark and Norway — is often poorly documented.

It is of course obvious that the value of this source material is to a great deal dependent upon the person who kept the records. Even an orderly person may have skipped a name on the lists or copied the name of an emigrant incorrectly in transferring his material to the form to be forwarded to the Central Bureau of Statistics. As a matter of fact, the scholar should always go back to the primary source for verification. At the same time it must be admitted that the emigrant lists give us information speedily and present an excellent survey of the material. Since these lists have been microfilmed, they can be consulted without having to visit the archives of the Bureau of Statistics. Certain portions of the material, such as lists for the *län* of Uppsala, Södermanland, Östergötland and Stockholm, have been copied and alphabetized by the Bureau.

Swedish Ships' Lists

In 1869 His Majesty's Government proclaimed that emigrant agents would have to submit lists of those persons who had signed emigration contracts in Swedish ports for America to the police authorities in such ports. These lists were to contain the number of the contract, the name of the emigrant, his parish of birth, his age, sex and date of departure from Sweden. In the city of Malmö the occupation of the emigrant was also noted.

This registration was an attempt to protect the emigrant as well as to control the emigrant traffic. Today we are fortunate to have at our disposal research material, which is relatively independent and separate from the ecclesiastical emigration statistics. These ships' lists date from 1869 in Stockholm and Göte-

borg and from 1874 in Malmö. Lesser series are also extant for the cities of Helsingborg, Kalmar and Norrköping. In addition there are ships' lists and emigration contracts also for the ports in the neighboring countries of Denmark and Norway, which were used by Swedish emigrants. The material in Göteborg is deposited in the provincial archives of that city, whereas the lists for Malmö and Stockholm are to be found in the respective archives of those cities. The material has been excerpted and alphabetized up to the 1890s. Copies of all these indexes are to be found in the Emigrant Institute. At the present time the rest of the material is being excerpted.

The Uppsala project dealing with emigration history has compared the 1874 ships' lists with the name lists submitted by the parishes to the Central Bureau of Statistics. According to the name lists a total of 3,380 persons emigrated to America in that year, whereas a total of 4,736 travelled to America according to the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian ships' lists. This computerized test shows therefore a discrepancy of 29% between the two sources.

Berit Brattne has demonstrated that the emigrant agents felt compelled to report all emigrants for fear of losing their licenses to operate. The detailed information contained in these ships' lists is sometimes unreliable. This is probably due to the fact that it was generally based on oral information submitted by the emigrant. Even if he or she carried an exit permit, one must assume that a harried emigrant agent preferred to get the oral information, rather than having to consult a written document. This procedure could account for both misunderstanding and scribal errors.

The ships' list material is our only source material which states the destination of the emigrant. Chicago and New York are most often cited as the ultimate goal of the emigrant, which obviously does not really help the scholar. In all probability the emigrant travelled farther afield from these major transit points once he arrived, but where? Thus when smaller places are indicated, such as Andover, IL, Vasa and Lindstrom, MN or Lindsborg, KS, the chances are greater that this information is closer to the truth. In many instances the ships' lists can furnish the bridge between the port of embarkation and the destination in America. The researcher can thus proceed to the next stage.

Swedish American Church Archives

The most complete Swedish American source material is to be found in the church, which with a few exceptions kept records of their parishioners, minutes of their parish meetings and financial records. Generally speaking it can be stated that the parish records of the churches within the Augustana Synod come closest to the norm of the Swedish State Church whereas the Swedish Mission Covenant, Episcopal, Baptist and Methodist churches, in that order, were less interested in statistical records. This does not mean that it is not worth while to examine the records of a Methodist church as an example, but one has to accept the fact that there will be fewer entries concerning the emigrant's home parish in Sweden and there are also more chances for error.

Beginning in 1968 the Emigrant Institute has to date registered and microfilmed approximately 1,500 Swedish American church archives in states and counties with heavy Swedish populations. The archive indexes as well as the microfilms are to be found in Växjö. Thus the most important source material for emigration research has been concentrated to one place. Earlier one would have had to traverse an entire continent to gather such material. Almost all of the Swedish centers in the United States and Canada are represented in this material, which touches the lives of several million emigrant descendants. The oldest membership roster filmed is that of the Methodist church in Victoria, IL, dating to 1846. The main part of the material in this series covers the period 1880–1930. The last mentioned year is usually accepted as the final year of emigration as well as for the microfilming.

A typical Swedish American parish record should give (at best) the following information: The number of the church member on the roll, his address (mainly in the cities), his or her sex, name, date of birth as well as place of birth, date the member arrived in America and from which place in Sweden, notation concerning his exit permit, date of enrollment in the parish, notations concerning confirmation, marriage, departure from the parish, excommunication, death and sometimes general information. On the other hand there will be no information on the member's occupation, probably due to the fact that the church sought to stress equality. As in the Swedish household examination rolls, the members were listed by families, including also unconfirmed children (especially in the Augustana Synod). A special list of unmarried members is to be found at the end of the record book. At their best the entries in the American parish record are on the same high level as is to be found in the Swedish State Church.

When the Augustana Synod was founded in 1860 it was agreed that the keeping of church records was to be a duty tied to the clergyman's office. There is no doubt but that the Swedish model was in the minds of the founders. The constitution and by-laws set up for congregations in 1857 specified that special rolls were to be maintained for ministerial acts within the church, such as baptisms, marriages, confirmations and burials. Such records are to be found in most of the church archives.

Back of this zeal to keep track of the parishioners was not an edict put forth by some central administrative body, but it was a practical means of keeping records of the members in each parish. Without recourse to a system of order, the clergyman could not have collected the church dues and offerings and neither could he have planned for religious and social services. He also wished to check the churchliness of his parishioners and see to it that no one strayed from the fold or joined another church or some other denomination. For this reason the Augustana Synod also adopted the practice of the Swedish State Church of issuing exit permits. When a member moved, the permit was used as a card of admission to the next Augustana parish. During the 1880s these churches were to be found in all areas of Swedish settlement. By that time the Augustana Synod had become a kind of people's church among the emigrants.

An inventory of the entire church archive material has been done for all of the preserved records up to 1930. The different archival series and their characteristics and time frame have been entered on a special inventory form. The historical, demographic and socially most interesting material has been filmed, in other words the main series of minutes of parish meetings, membership rolls and the various ministerial acts. Sometimes other material, which has seemed especially worth while, has also been filmed. The microfilmed material has been assigned the signum "F" on the inventory form.

Organizational Archives

The most dependable source material dealing with the fates of the emigrants in America can be gleaned from the records of the national organizations which were created within the emigrant enclave. The milieu of the cities was particularly beneficial to the formation of ethnic groups. As early as 1836 the Swedish Society (*Svenska Societeten*) was founded in New York. It was in the cities that the national orders were founded, groups like the Vikings, Svithiod and the Order of Vasa with lodges everywhere in the areas of Swedish settlement. These societies and mutual aid associations were seen as blue and yellow life preservers in an uncertain urban setting. A host of these organizations saw the light of day up to the time of the beginning of World War I, constituting a veritable flora, now difficult to assess and chart, since most of these groups have now folded and disappeared.

If all of these organized Swedish Americans had been recorded in record books and on membership rosters and if this material had been preserved, we would indeed possess a valuable genealogical source. We know that these organizations kept more or less complete files of their members, but these rosters were often lost with the demise of the organization. Despite this, the Emigrant Institute has been fortunate to microfilm many of these membership registers which emanate from Swedish American societies in Illinois, Minnesota, on the West Coast and even in Vancouver, BC. Most of these organizations maintained membership registers with information concerning members' names, ages, the date of admission to the society, local address and in some fortuitous cases, the place of origin in Sweden and time of emigration. The membership rosters of the various lodges of the Vasa Order have proved to be most valuable and are often more complete than the church rolls. By 1979 approximately 50 of the 275 lodge archives in the Vasa Order had been filmed through the efforts of the Emigrant Institute. It is earnestly to be hoped that the filming of this valuable material can proceed before the material is destroyed because of the discontinuing of the lodges. Since a member of a secular society or organization often did not belong to one of the Swedish American churches, the organizational archives constitute a valuable complement to the Swedish American church records. The methods used in the filming and inventorying of the organizational archives are in the main similar to those used for the filming of the church records. Minutes from chapter and lodge meetings as well as membership rosters have been filmed.

Tapes and Interviews

Oral history has during the 1970s more and more been noted by historians. Earlier these scholars were very skeptical about oral source material. This type of history seldom provides precise data. What is told is sometimes difficult to document from written sources. On the other hand, the interview is superior to the exact source material when it comes to attitudes, experiences and emotions created by such events as for example emigration. No written source can bring back alive a milieu which has disappeared, or how a tool was used, or how social intercourse was conducted better than the person who was an eyewitness to the happening.

The interview can also add to more concrete source materials, such as information concerning a series of America letters, or a group of photographs from relatives residing in the U.S. In many cases the interview with a returned emigrant can become a primary source. Only he who experienced the difficult decision to emigrate or felt the emotions that surged within him at the time of departure can relate how it felt to emigrate. Few written sources can come up to the immediacy of the interview or express the intensity of this occurrence.

The exact source material can give us sparse information about the exterior characteristics of the emigrant's age, sex, civil status, occupation and place of settlement. But what do we know how he experienced the prairie, the flea infested lean-to shelter, the social intercourse with the neighbors, with whom he could not converse or the plight of the industrial laborer in an urban setting? Bits and pieces of the complicated reality which faced the emigrants can often come to light in written narratives like America letters or the pioneer diary. In the tape section of the Emigrant Institute archives one can listen to thousands of voices who have been able to transmit to us the often complex and difficult emigrant experience.

Because interviews take much time and therefore are very costly, it has not been possible for a small institution like the Emigrant Institute to really cover this important facet as well as we would have liked. Thus we have been only partially successful in capturing some of this oral material, which unfortunately is shrinking very fast. A major effort has been done in the *län* of Kronoberg and on Öland, as well as in connection with the field work carried on by Lennart and Michael Setterdahl in the U.S. A number of local historians, foremost of these Sven Adolfsson in Vederslöv, have on their own interviewed persons with keen memories of the emigration era and have generously supplied the Institute with these tapes. Ed and Gerda Sundberg of Watsonville, CA, mentioned earlier, have for many years taped and interviewed persons of Scandinavian origin, mainly in California, Oregon and Washington.

America Letters and Diaries

The registration carried out by the Emigrant Institute has had as its first tangible result the identification of a number of private archives. In one way one can describe this registration as the very air the institution breathes. Were this part of the Institute's activity to cease, chances of finding new sources would evaporate into thin air. The emigrant epoch is so close to us that letters, pictures and documents from the emigration days are still to be found in wellnigh every family collection.

These private archives can be viewed as a parallel case to what I said earlier regarding the still living oral tradition. Those persons responsible for the Emigrant Institute's archival registrations attempt at all times to map the extent of those private archives which deal with emigration. This can often be done at the same time as the interview. Thanks to the assistance of the local history societies and local emigration research centers, it has been possible to carry on on a continuing basis a check of what is to be found in the various villages. Nowadays the Emigrant Institute is so well known that fortunately more and more keepers of emigrant archives come to us offering either to donate the material to the Institute or to allow us to copy the material.

The Institute has always followed up the registration of the collections with a request that the material be provided to the center either in the original or by means of copies. In this manner our most successful archival series, that which consists of private and personally oriented archives has been formed. We thus have in the Institute approximately 20,000 America letters, and with a great deal of certainty the largest collection of emigrant diaries. These private collections also contain large runs of photographs, both of people and places, in addition to different types of documents and official papers dealing with emigration.

Practically all Swedish families harbor America letters in their homes. The America letter, in addition to the statistical source material, is often our sole clue when it comes to researching the fate of the emigrant. Unfortunately the typical America letter gives very little concrete information. The writer concentrated mainly on his health, the weather and on general conditions. If one were to make a general judgment on these letters, there is a tendency for the emigrant to be overly optimistic and to embellish his narrative. One did not wish to discuss bad news. Often America was described in deceptive colors. The reason for this was to impress relatives and friends to join them. Much of the typical America letter deals with asking questions about conditions in Sweden. The most interesting aspect of many of the letters from a genealogical point of view is the date of the letter, the signature and the address of the sender.

Sometimes the writer was carried away by his enthusiasm and would write copiously about the family, the conditions at his place of employment, his longing for Sweden and his hopes for the future. Occasionally we have encountered whole series of America letters, where the kernels of fact in each letter can be linked together to create a total picture of a pioneer fate. Sometimes a single letter can become the missing piece in a puzzle, when combined with other

letters in collections of neighbors or relatives. These missing pieces may tell us the identity of the letter writer or perhaps describe the milieu in which he or she lived. Only rarely does the letter lead us directly to the place where descendants of the correspondent reside. But it can sometimes be placed in juxtaposition to the American sources described earlier, such as a parish register, an exit permit or a ship's list. The America letter is foremost to be considered as a complement to the statistical material.

The Emigrant Institute contains the largest collection of America letters in Sweden. The Nordic Museum (*Nordiska Museet*) in Stockholm, as well as the Emigrant Register in Karlstad also possess large collections of these documents. These imposing archival collections, nevertheless, contain but a fraction of the total of this tidal wave of emigrant letters, the largest such correspondence in Swedish history. One can almost say that the phenomenon of emigration split the Swedish nation in two parts, each part sitting down to write letters to the other part. This situation is quite unique inasmuch as the correspondents of this enormous material came from the depths of the masses themselves.

It has been said that the average emigrant wrote four letters annually home to Sweden. At the beginning of the present century there arrived in Sweden on an annual basis several million America letters. According to the unique statistics kept by the Royal Danish Postal Service, a total of 1,800,000 letters were received during one year from America. Compared with Sweden, Denmark was not an important emigration country. Thus only a tiny percentage of this gigantic correspondence which flowed across the Atlantic and which bespoke the strong ties that linked Sweden and the United States, has been preserved in the archives. It is certain that there yet remains, probably hundreds of thousands of these letters in private hands. This is one reason why the Emigrant Institute is anxious to inventory as completely as possible this valuable genealogical asset.

Diaries kept by the emigrants are some of the rarest and most living documentary evidence which we possess. It is of course obvious that most of these diaries and journals are to be found in America, but often returning emigrants took them home with them. The Emigrant Institute has been successful in gathering in approximately 75 of these diaries and now has in its archives the originals and copies of these valuable documents. Yet this number must be only a small part of the total of the material harbored in Swedish homes today, not to mention what is still reposing in Swedish American homes in America.

When a diary or journal arrives at the Institute it is considered to be a very valuable addition to our collections. Back of the diary is usually an exciting emigrant fate. It was true then, as it is today, that only seldom does the hand that steers the plow or wields the axe take pen in hand to record his experiences. Many of the diaries in our collection have been written by clergymen, journalists and other intellectuals, but the main portion of them have been penned by ordinary emigrants.

As an example I should like to mention the diaries of Andrew Peterson, kept from 1854 to 1898 in Waconia, MN. This series of diaries is to be found in the

collection of the Minnesota Historical Society and were used by Vilhelm Moberg in 1948, when he was doing his research for his tetralogy, *The Emigrants* and were crucial to his documentation of the pioneering experiences in Minnesota. A copy of this rare document is to be found in the Emigrant Institute. A remarkable counterpart to the Peterson diaries is the journal of Sven Samuelsson, a farmer in Åkerby in the emigrant parish of Ljuder, written by him during his life time and which mirror the conditions in the home parish of Karl Oskar and Kristina during the entire emigration era. A copy of this document is also to be found in the Emigrant Institute.

The largest run of diaries which the Institute possesses came to us in 1973 when Anna Cappelin of Malmö deposited the diaries of J. A. Edman, a distant relative of hers, who had been a gold miner in California. The journals span the years 1857-1900 and contain almost 3,000 pages and describe in detail the difficult days in California.

A diary of this type gives us a living description of experiences and living conditions during a long interval of time. The Edman diaries are often packed with details concerning the workaday world.

What is of special significance in reading a diary is the impression of the immediacy of what is described. It is a subjective narrative, which contrary to the America letter, is not written for a certain forum, but instead represents the thoughts and the meditations of the author himself. The America diary can be seen as a document, framed in time, often free of embellishment and artificial additions.

Printed Source Materials

The printed works dealing with emigration and Swedish pioneers is much larger and inclusive than most people think. One of the most impressive productions was the literary works by the emigrants themselves. The first hint of this flora, most of it written in Swedish, is to be found in the bibliography written by Fritiof Oscar Ander in 1956. *The Cultural Heritage of the Swedish Immigrant*, which contains several thousand titles. A complete bibliography, yet to be written, would probably contain at least 15,000 entries. If one looks at the Swedish American newspapers and journals alone, their number ranges between 1,200 and 1,500 titles. Thus this literature is far greater than earlier supposed. The rivalry among collectors for these rarities is great, since the emigration theme and the section dealing with Swedes abroad have become popular collection specialties among bibliophiles around the world. Despite the competition and high bids, the Emigrant Institute has, despite its limited resources, been able to amass a collection over the past fifteen years, which today ranks as the second largest in Sweden. Our total holdings contain about 25,000 titles. However, both the library at Augustana College at Rock Island, IL and the collection at the Minnesota Historical Society are probably larger than the Institute's. The holdings of the Royal Library in Stockholm are also larger. The interesting thing about this collection is that it is based upon an agreement made in 1859 by the

Royal Library and Tuve Nilsson Hasselquist, the founder of the Swedish American newspaper, *Hemlandet*, and the first president of Augustana College, that the latter send home to Sweden a copy of every Swedish imprint in America.

The Institute has also endeavored to include in its collection items, which today are almost impossible to procure, such emigrant guides, pamphlets, broadsides and copies of Swedish American newspapers. If it proves impossible to obtain the originals, we have been able to get the material, either via microfilm or by xerox copying the items. We are also attempting to map the enormous collection of articles, essays, studies and narratives found in various Swedish American journals and annuals.

Despite the fact that it is chiefly the interest in Swedish America which has dictated the profile of the Institute, we are also fortunate to have in our holdings valuable literature concerning Swedish activity in other lands than the United States and Canada. Another field is the subject of immigration into Sweden. Another topic we are pursuing and building up is the subject of Scandinavians in America. A representative collection of American local history, foremost then the county histories for those areas of heavy Swedish settlements, is also being assembled.

The Swedish American press is probably the most important narrative source for the emigration scholar. The newspaper *Hemlandet* was founded already in 1855. Following in its footsteps have been about 1,200–1,500 newspapers and periodicals in the Swedish language. Many of these were news sheets and were published once a week. Additionally there were a number of society and organizational bulletins, newsletters and monthly periodicals. In this enormous literary production one can find every point of view portrayed.

The greater portion of this material is now deposited at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL or at the Royal Library in Stockholm. In recent years the most important of these newspapers have been microfilmed.

A Swedish American newspaper allows us to examine every nook and corner of Swedish America. Politics, organizational life, church activities, business news, entertainment and cultural material are mixed with historical essays, travelogues, serials, personals and much advertising. The genealogical items are especially important, articles dealing with birthdays, marriages, death notices, biographies and advertising for lost emigrants. So far no systematic registration of the contents of the newspapers has been done, a task which would keep the staff of the Emigrant Institute occupied for decades. An index would be desirable in order to have access to the abundant genealogical information hidden in this material.

The Emigrant Institute and its Future

The fact that the Emigrant Institute has been able to grow and prosper so swiftly in such a short time is mainly due to the contacts it has had with all facets of emigration research, foremost then with the Department of History of the University of Uppsala. The Institute has been most fortunate to be able to place its research results directly into the hands of the professional scholars. This has brought about a situation that academic research has dominated the activities of the Institute, in the eyes of some, far too much. The Uppsala project is now finished and one can then question whether the Emigrant Institute now will become less university oriented. Everything points to the fact that the high academic level will be sustained. The university activity in Växjö is nowadays well established and the Emigrant Institute is considered to be a valuable ingredient in the research program going on at the University of Växjö. The collections in the archives and library of the Institute, as well as the enormous wealth of contacts, mean that for a long time the Institute can furnish source materials for highly qualified research.

Having said this I do not mean to imply that the professional research will become so top heavy, that it will stifle the ambitions of the amateur scholars who are interested in conducting research. The development of the Institute has shown that the ground rules laid down by the foundation guiding the Institute, which specified that close contacts shall be maintained with local historians, genealogists and other interested laymen, has never collided with the Institute's academic striving. Here, as elsewhere, modern historical approach, beamed as it is at mapping social forces, has admitted its dependence upon the support of the lay people. The archives and the library of the Emigrant Institute would today be of miniscule proportions if emigration research, much of it thanks to the Institute, had not become something of a popular movement. For this very reason the Institute has at all times sought to spur the interest in establishing study circles, lecture series, exhibits, genealogical research and other avenues by which the House of Emigrants can reach the general public. The fact that since 1968 more than a half million persons have visited the House of Emigrants from every corner of the globe is the best proof of the widespread popularity which the Emigrant Institute enjoys.