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News from the Swenson Center

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New Book Acquisitions at the Swenson Center

By Susanne Titus

Leap of Faith: a Trans-Atlantic Wartime Love Story (2012) by Erik Petterson.

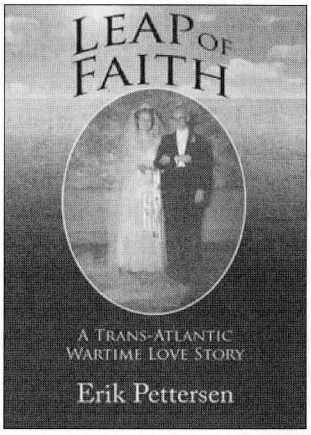
April 9, 1940, was the day the Nazis occupied Norway. On that same day a young Swedish nurse received a letter that would change her life. The letter included a marriage proposal from the man she loved. He was a Norwegian living in the U.S. *Leap of Faith* describes their love story, and Ingrid Sillén's brave war-time journey and the life she found in America.

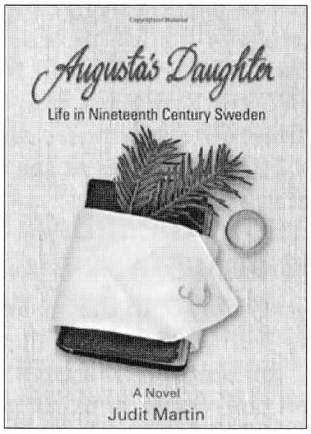
Augusta's Daughter (2012) by Judit Martin.

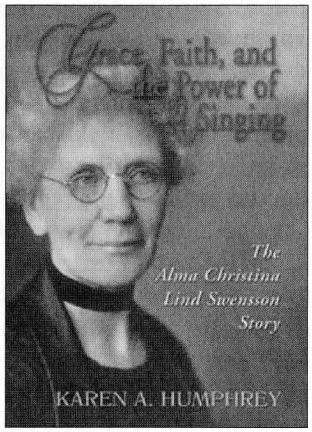
Nineteenth century peasant life in Sweden was difficult. People lived in the shadow of the all-powerful parish church. When it became known that Augusta Torsdotter's daughter Elsa-Carolina was born out of wedlock, both of their lives were changed forever. Elsa-Carolina soon moved to America. However, at the age of 94 she returned to Sweden to come to terms with her childhood.

Grace, Faith, and the Power of Singing (2012) by Karen A. Humphrey.

Just like many nineteenth-century women, Alma Christina Lind Swensson found herself on America's frontier. She was born in Sweden, but grew up in Moline, Illinois. At the age of 20 Alma was newly married and came to the Swedish town of Lindsborg, Kansas. She was very musically talented and used that talent to build an unusual community. Her friendliness enabled her to reach out to people. Her faith helped to carry her through good and bad times.







Early Education for Swedish Immigrant Children

Many Swedish immigrants were laborers in the Old Country and their children were often expected to follow in their footsteps. The education of their children largely consisted of preparing them for their occupation. To them, education was not the same as going to school; education was integrated into other aspects of family and community and rooted in traditions of language and faith.

In the New World, education took on a different meaning. School was often seen as a means to teach immigrant children how to be an American citizen. As the American school system became compulsory and unified, religious education and Swedish language instruction became difficult to obtain for immigrant children who could not attend parochial schools. Students learned English and studied subjects that were unrelated to their old, assumed occupations of the Old Country.

Education also had the effect of assimilating Swedish immigrant children through contact and communication with other ethnic groups. John Dewey, a well-known school reformer, remarked that through American education, immigrant children "lose the positive and conservative value of their own traditions . . . they even learn to despise the dress, bearing, habits, language, and beliefs of their parents."

The traditions of language and faith, however, were still a large part of immigrant children's education, taking place at home, in church, and through Sunday school. This multifaceted education served the purpose of fostering a new, Swedish-American, identity in immigrant children, while maintaining Swedish language and religious education traditions.

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