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Literature

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Literature

Swedish Place-Names in North America. By Otto Robert Landelius. Translated by Karin Franzén and edited by Raymond Jarvi. Published for the Swedish-American Historical Society by the Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL 1985; xvii + 372 pps., \$24.95.

Anyone who remains dubious of the extent of the Swedish presence in America must be impressed with the vastness of the evidence Landelius has mustered. From Alabama to Wyoming, from Alberta to Nova Scotia the Swedes have left their labels across the continent. And we know that some of the heaviest concentrations of Swedish settlement are in places not identified by Swedish names — Rockford, Minneapolis, Jamestown and Worcester.

The volume is organized by states and provinces; 41 of the 50 states are represented, and 11 Canadian provinces. It is hardly surprising that Minnesota requires 55 pages, and New Mexico only one short item — Dahlia. Among the at-first-glance unexpected facts is that Massachusetts has but one listing — Nilsson Street in Brockton, although of Brockton's 63,000 people in 1930 7.3% were Swedish. The differences, of course, are because Massachusetts was settled and named long before the Swedes arrived, whereas Canada and the states of the Middle West awaited the newer immigrants to name their towns and lakes.

The author-compiler does far more than list place-names. He associates places with people, and he may devote a paragraph or a column to the reason for the name. For example, the Halland Settlement in Iowa, though not named on maps, is described as a center of Swedish communities (Stanton, Nyman, Wallin, Essex) founded by Pastor Bengt Magnus Halland. Governor Printz Bridge in Pennsylvania commemorates the oversize governor of the Swedish colony on the Delaware from 1643 to 1653. Jenny Lind is remembered in seven sites; the name Anderson appears 38 times, Olson or Olsson 37; and so to Wallin eight times and Hafstrom once. Often the reason for a name at a particular place is difficult to explain, as with Bernadotte, Illinois, or it may be of half-forgotten origin, as Johnson Gorge, Alaska or Swede Gulch (four times) or Krusenstern Lagoon. Some of the names are distorted by abbreviation such as Linko, Ontario, for Linköping. Vinland comes once, and Vikingaborg once, but there is no other references to the Viking background. Swede or Sweden occurs 110 times; Stockholm, Saskatchewan rates a column and a half of history, and it is one of the twenty namesakes of the Swedish capital.

Landelius himself has not visited America, but for 25 years he assembled material from books and letters, including a large correspondence with postmasters. This helps to explain repeated references to the founding and abandonment of post offices. Population figures are given occasionally but not regularly. Frequent citations mention E. Gustav Johnson, Vilhelm Berger, Helge Nelson, Ernst Skarstedt and Nils William Olsson. Peculiar is the almost complete disregard in the notes of the *Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* (or *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*), although the author would have found there more accurate information concerning Peter Hammond (I. N. Lovel, "Hammond, Louisiana, and Its Founder," *SPHQ*, Vol. XVIII, pps. 221–226), and on John Hanson (Sten Carlsson, "John Hanson's Swedish Background," *SPHQ*, Vol. XXI, pps. 9–20). The notes, therefore, are interesting but not always the best possible. Proofreading is inadequate and spelling is sometimes careless — as for example, Klinkenström for

Klinkowström.

Many odd items are discussed, like the variation and meanings of Murderkill Creek in Delaware, the meaning of tungsten (*tung* meaning heavy and *sten*, meaning stone), which appears as a place-name nine times; the name of Galva, Illinois, which not everyone realizes is an anglicization of the Swedish city Gävle; Longacre in Pennsylvania, which is more Swedish than apparent; Palm Valley, Texas, which is related, not to palm trees, but to the large family of Anna Palm, who arrived in Texas 1848. The book abounds in interesting tidbits of information — and some of the names are literally Poignant!

FRANKLIN D. SCOTT
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