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Book Reviews

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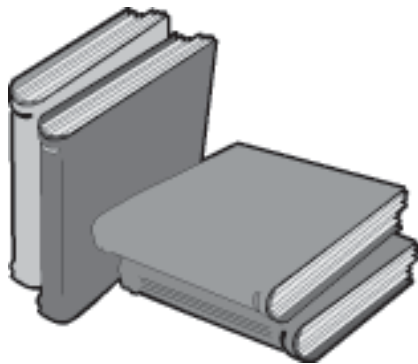
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Book Reviews

Here you will find information about interesting books on the immigration experience, genealogical manuals, books on Swedish customs, and much more. We welcome contacts with SAG readers, suggestions on books to review perhaps. If you want to review a book yourself, please contact the Book Review Editor, Dennis L. Johnson at <1_viking@verizon.net> or Dennis Johnson, 174 Stauffer Road, Bucktown Crossing, Pottstown, PA 19465, so he knows what you are working on.

Swedes in Augustana

The Creation of an Ethnic Identity: Being Swedish American in the Augustana Synod, 1860-1917, by Dag Blanck, 256 pp, ill., Hardcover (cloth), 2006, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, Ill., \$55.00 plus shipping.

As a young Swedish American growing up in Minneapolis, I was certainly aware that my parents and all my grandparents were Swedish, yet any sense of a Swedish American ethnic identity was embryonic at best, and largely submerged within me by my absorption with being an American. This was reinforced by the patriotic nationalism associated with the major event of my teenage years, World War II. My parents, like most second generation Swedish Americans, were more concerned with my assimilation into my peer group than they were with any strong interest in Sweden. This was not difficult, since my school classes included many different ethnic backgrounds, but the majority of my classmates were of Scandinavian, if not Swedish, heritage.

In retrospect, more was there than was readily apparent to my young eyes, then much more concerned with my own future than my ethnic past. My mother's mother lived with us part of each year during those years, read her Swedish language newspaper faithfully, but spoke with little affection about the country of her birth. She was deeply religious, however, and spent much time read-

ing her Swedish Bible. Born in Småland in 1867, she grew up in a large farm family and attended her parish church, becoming a child evangelist. By age 16, she had joined the local and newly permitted Evangelical Free Church not far from her home, no doubt to the consternation of her family. By 1890, she left for America, where she married, raised a large family on farms in Iowa and Minnesota, and remained with the Free Church all her life.

My mother, her eldest daughter, married a Lutheran Swede, however, and our family grew up in Lutheran churches, which for Midwestern Swedes were nearly all Augustana Synod. I was confirmed in an Augustana Synod church in Minneapolis, the large Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church of Pastor Reuben K. Youngdahl, a member of a prominent Swedish American family with roots in Dalsland, birthplace of several of my own ancestors. Although bearing little distinction for me at the time, my ethnic identity was clearly a product of being Swedish American in the Augustana Synod, the focus of this book published sixty years later by Dag Blanck.

My own family history was brought into much sharper focus by Dag Blanck's new book which is a scholarly attempt to examine the history and influence of The Augustana Synod of the Lutheran Church in creating and establishing the Swedish American identity in the U.S. The Synod was founded in June of 1860 in Clinton, Iowa, and included thirty-six Swedish and thirteen Norwegian Lutheran congregations with nearly 5,000 communicant members. By

1870, the Norwegian congregations left the Augustana Synod to form their own Synod, and the Augustana then became entirely Swedish. This independent Lutheran Synod survived for over 100 years, eventually joining in 1962 with most other Lutheran synods in the U.S. to form The Lutheran Church in America. The new church organization included United Lutheran Church in America, The American Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Augustana Synod, and the Suomi Synod (Finnish Lutheran Church in America).

In his book, Dag Blanck looks at the period from the founding of the Church in 1860, on the eve of our Civil War, to the year 1917 when the U.S. entered World War I. This was the period of the greatest migration of Swedish people to the U.S. and particularly to the many midwestern states: Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, and the Dakotas. In the first few decades of this migration, nearly 35% of these immigrants belonged to churches within the Augustana Synod, and during the rest of the great migration period membership remained about 20 per cent. By 1910 about 47 per cent of these Swedish immigrants lived in Minnesota or Illinois, the remainder distributed among many other states.

The first chapters of Blanck's book describe the setting in Swedish America for the development of the Augustana Synod and the Swedish American identity. The circumstances leading to the founding of the Synod and the individual pastors involved are explained in some detail, and the education of young peo-

Book Reviews

ple in the Synod is described. A full chapter is devoted to the development of the Swedish American tradition at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL. After a chapter on identity formation in Swedish America during the period and the influence on education of the Augustana Synod, Blanck then describes the formation and influence of the Augustana Book Concern, publisher of many Swedish and Swedish American books, textbooks, and religious books during this period. In his concluding chapters, the author interprets how the past was put to use in creating a Swedish American history.

The book also touches on the Synod's relationship with other Swedish American organizations in America, both religious and secular. These included the Mission Covenant Church, the Evangelical Free Church, and various non-Swedish denominations that established within their organization Swedish-language services and conferences. Secular organizations included the Vasa Order, the Svithiod Order, the Viking Order, Scandinavian groups, and the once numerous Swedish language press in America.

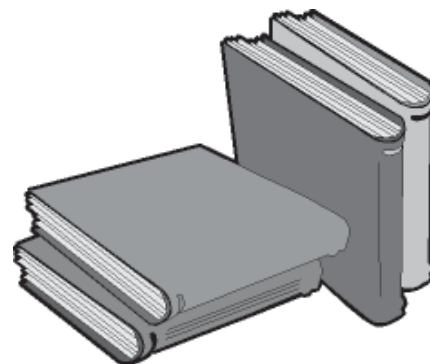
During the life of the Augustana Synod, it became a national church body, provided services to individual congregations, sent missionaries to various locations and overseas, established social service agencies and institutions, and founded several colleges and a seminary. The Synod had grown to include about 423,000 members in 1,269 congregations served by 1,393 ordained ministers by the time of the merger in 1962.

(More recently, many former Augustana members met frequently, leading to the founding of a new Augustana Heritage Association at Rock Island, IL, in the year 2000. The Association now meets annually to "define, promote, and perpetuate the heritage of the Evangelical Lutheran Church" and to assist in identifying

and remembering the values and commitments of that church body.)

In his Epilogue, Blanck summarizes in compact but insightful fashion the principal themes of the book: how was the Swedish American ethnic identity created, what did this identity consist of, and why did it develop? He has focused primarily on the role and history of Augustana College as the principal institution for the conveyance of Swedish American culture, a college created by the largest single Swedish American organization in America, the Augustana Synod. He traces the evolution of the college since its founding and the evolution of the student body first from those immigrants born in Sweden to the succeeding generations of Swedish Americans. He points out how their needs changed over time from the early necessity to assimilate into the American mosaic of cultures to the later need to recall and recreate the memory and traditions of Swedish culture. These memories and traditions exist down to this day even unto the fourth and fifth generation, as a way of distinguishing Swedish Americans from all the many other hyphenated Americans making up our population in the 21st century.

This well-documented, scholarly work of social history will be a valuable addition to the literature in ethnic identity for all academics and researchers in this field, as well as being of great interest to those interested in tracing the foundations of their own Swedish American identity. In my own case, it helped me understand better my own strong interest and participation in things Swedish American. In my native Minnesota, being Swedish American is still as commonplace as mashed potatoes and matters little to all but a core of rabid enthusiasts. Living in Philadelphia, however, having Swedish roots puts one in perhaps one of the smallest ethnic minorities in the



area and has no doubt enhanced my strong interest in my own ethnic identity. For this greater appreciation, I am grateful to the author.

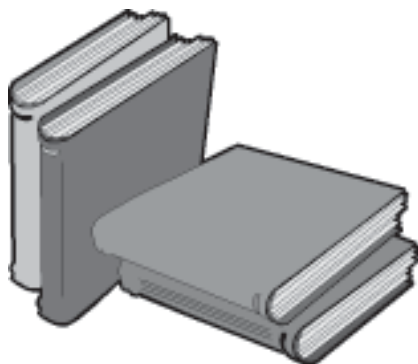
Dennis L. Johnson

A Florida Pioneer

The Adventurous Life of Josef Henschen, Swedish Immigrant in the 1870's, by Rebecca Weiss, Lulu Press, 2006, 162 pp., ill., Softcover, Amazon.com, \$15.95 plus shipping.

When thinking about Swedish pioneers in the United States, Florida is not one of the first states that comes to mind. However, Rebecca Weiss, a great-grandniece of Josef Henschen, has written a book that charts the life and conditions encountered by the brother of one of her own Swedish ancestors. Josef Henschen was leader of a small group of Swedes who settled in the semi-tropical and sparsely inhabited wilds of central Florida seeking their own fame and fortune. Josef settled in Orange and Seminole Counties, the area that was to later become part of the metropolitan area of Orlando, Florida, a city that is now widely known as the home of Disney World.

Unlike most 19th century Swedish immigrants to North America, Josef Henschen did not leave Sweden to escape poverty or the lack of opportunity. In 1871, Josef was a young medical student with a bright future, studying at Uppsala University in Sweden. He was born in 1843, the



Book Reviews

third son in a family of six with an older sister, Maria, and four brothers, Johan, Wilhelm, Esaias, and Salomon. His father, Lars Henschen, was born in Blekinge and was descended from an Andreas Henschen who had immigrated from Germany in 1620. Lars Henschen had been a county judge, a lawyer, and in 1853 became a member of Parliament. He married Josef's mother, Augusta Munck af Rosenschöld, a noblewoman from an important family. The family had lived most of their lives in Uppsala. Josef's mother died in 1856, when Josef was only thirteen years old.

Despite the opportunities available to the children of Lars Henschen in Sweden, three of the sons soon decided to travel to America. Daughter Maria remained in Sweden to live a long and exceptional life, and youngest son Salomon (great-grandfather of the author) finished medical school to have a distinguished career in Sweden. The oldest son, Johan, died at 17, probably of tuberculosis. Two brothers, Esaias and Wilhelm, began studies in philosophy at Uppsala, and Josef began studies in medicine but, unlike Salomon, was not to finish. Wilhelm finished his studies in the late 1860's to receive a doctorate in philosophy and a teaching job at Uppsala. Adventure called, apparently, and he left Sweden in 1870 to buy some land near Lake Jesup, Florida, possibly inspired by Frederika Bremer's descriptions in her book, *Homes of the New World*. He soon went to New York, however, where he became involved in persuading Swedes to come to the U.S. to settle in Florida.

Wilhelm, now William, had met an investor, Sheldon Sanford, who had

purchased over 12,000 acres of land in Seminole County, Florida, and needed workers to plant, tend, and harvest orange trees on his land. Dissatisfied with local workers and friction between white and black employees, Sanford began looking elsewhere for good workers. William Henschen offered to bring in Swedish workers for these new orange plantations, and the idea of hard-working, honest, and able Swedes sealed the deal. William returned to Sweden and recruited some fifty workers, 32 of whom would go to work for Sanford in Florida, the others elsewhere. Accompanied by his brother Esaias, and a maiden aunt named Sofia, William brought the workers to Florida, where he delivered the workers and set up his own homestead. Conditions were hard, however, and many of the Swedes did not honor their terms of employment. Their contract called for them, in return for passage from Sweden, to work one year without pay. After that year they would be paid and also able to obtain five acres of land for themselves. Most, however, left Mr. Sanford's employ to find their own land in Florida.

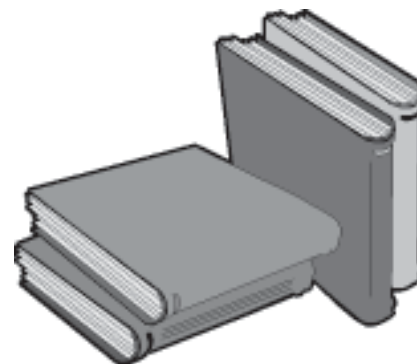
By summer, Sanford asked William to return to Sweden for more workers, those with particular skills and some women to work as cooks. This he did but on his return by way of New York, he fell ill. He then cabled his brother Josef and asked him to bring about 35 more Swedes to Florida. Josef finally agreed and, with some difficulty, succeeded in recruiting the desired workers. He left Sweden with these workers in October of 1871 accompanied by Williams's wife, Hanna, and her baby, and also an artist friend Hasse Bergman. They traveled via Scotland to New York, then the Swedish workers, Josef, and his group went to Florida by ship. Josef joined William at their house near Lake Jesup, then by January of 1872, left with Hasse

to go exploring in Florida on foot. (Hasse had painted a watercolor of Williams's Florida homestead, used for the cover of this book.)

All three brothers were now in Florida, but William soon returned to New York with his family and Sofia. He divided his time between New York and Florida until about 1875, serving for a short time as secretary to Swedish inventor John Ericsson and editing a Swedish language newspaper. By 1875 he had become a Methodist minister, moved to Chicago and taught at the Swedish Methodist Theological Seminary, and edited their newspaper. He retired in 1911; he and his wife Hanna had seven children and many grandchildren. Esaias lived for a time in Florida and married a Swedish girl, Emelia Magnusson. They later also lived in St. Augustine where he served as a justice of the peace. They returned to Sweden in 1879, where they had two daughters, two grandsons, and several great-grandsons. Esaias became the director of a bank in Uppsala, and died at age eighty-two. Their father, Lars Wilhelm Henschen, died in 1885, after a long and distinguished career in medicine.

The remainder of this book, exhaustively researched by Rebecca Weiss, chronicles the life of Josef, the brother who chose to remain in Florida and make his life there. Josef, who saw his first trip to America as a temporary adventure and as a help to his older brother, never returned to his studies in Sweden. He apparently fell in love with Florida and lived there for over sixty years until his death in 1930. He became a leader of the small colony of Swedes in central Florida called the Upsala settlement and helped organize the New Upsala Lutheran Church. He became a citizen in 1879, and was appointed a postmaster soon after. He had completed his five-year obligation to own his homestead land, raising cattle and growing oranges.

Book Reviews



Josef was becoming more prosperous and had acquired several servants from Sweden. In December, 1885, he married Carolina Svensson, from Karlskrona, Blekinge, who had appeared in Florida under unknown circumstances.

About the same year Josef, with three partners, invested in a new railway to be built between Sanford and St. Petersburg on the west coast of Florida. Named the Orange Belt Railway, the new line was completed with some difficulty and soon went bankrupt, leaving Josef deeply in debt. He spent much of his life trying to recover from this bankrupt venture and lived in poverty for many years. Josef had invested over \$40,000 in this railroad. In spite of this debt, he, Carolina and their two daughters were able to visit Sweden in 1888 and spend time with old friends and relatives there. They returned to Florida, where they had a third daughter in 1889 and a son, Harald, in 1891. Carolina died in 1905. Josef had originally lived two years at Round Lake near Lake Jesup, then moved to Lake Maitland where he lived from 1873 until 1887. Two years after his marriage, he moved to a new home in Oakland,

just south of Lake Apopka, where he lived until his death in 1930. These homes were all fairly close together in an area that is now a northern suburb of Orlando. In his old age, Josef was a respected member of the Swedish American community in this area and is generally credited with naming the city of St. Petersburg, the terminus of his ill-fated railway venture.

In her fascinating and detailed account of the life of this Florida pioneer, Rebecca Weiss has drawn heavily on correspondence written mainly to a close friend of his youth in Sweden, Knut Ångström, (son of the Swedish scientist Anders Jonas Ångström, namer of the Angstrom unit used in the measurement of the wavelength of light waves and other forms of radiation). Also used were letters from Josef Henschen to his father, Lars, and to his brothers. These letters are mostly quoted in their entirety and organized by the author in chronological sequence. Supplemented by other sources, personal research, and interviews with other descendants of the Henschen family, Rebecca Weiss provides a very interesting and detailed insight on the life of this early Florida pioneer.

The book is enriched by over thirty family and other collected photographs of Josef's family and the locations referred to in the book.

A *Florida Pioneer* is a historic treasure for the State of Florida and for all those interested in the history of the small but significant group of hardy Swedes who carved out a life in Florida long before air conditioning and modern conveniences made the climate of the state as comfortably habitable in the hot, humid summers as in its long popular winter climate. Readers will be especially intrigued reading the many letters of Josef Henschen, recounting in his own words (as translated from Swedish by the author) the living conditions encountered as a pioneer and his descriptions of the challenging life he found for himself in Florida.

Dennis L. Johnson

New and Noteworthy

(short notes on interesting books and articles)

In the *Swedish American Historical Quarterly* 1/2007 there is an interesting article by Roger McKnight, called *Night Buckets and Trick-or-Treaters: Notes on Swedish-American Inmates at Minnesota State Prison 1858-1914*. This article deals in detail with the Swedish-American inmates of the prison in Stillwater. Not all Swedes conformed to the ideal picture of the Swedish immigrant: honest, sober and hard-working. Some ended up in prison for various reasons. The author has found that during the period of 1858 to 1915 there were 335 inmates with a Swedish background. The first entered the prison in 1867, a *småläanning* named Swan Johnson from Nicollet County, who had, in a state of hallucination, decapitated his nine-year old son, to improve his life in heaven. Swan was later transferred to an insane asylum. The last Swedish-American to enter the prison in 1914 was Frank Oscar Anderson, born in Närke, now of Carlton County, who was described as "33 years old, a Lutheran, a moderate drinker, single, uneducated and muscular". He had stolen a certificate of deposit, and then bought himself a horse and buggy. Of all the cases that resulted in prison sentences, murder and manslaughter constituted 10.7%, assault 15%, larceny 38%, burglary, embezzlement etc. 10.7%, sexual crimes 8.3%. There is no list of names for the inmates, but the article is good reading, and a remainder that not all made good in America.