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Book Reviews

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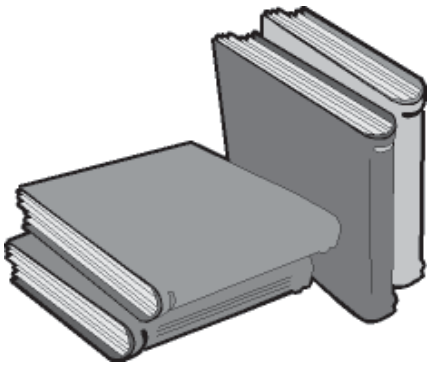


Here you will find information about interesting books on the immigration experience, genealogical manuals, books on Swedish customs, and much more. We welcome contacts with SAG readers, suggestions on books to review perhaps. If you want to review a book yourself, please contact the Book Review Editor, 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.

Coming to America

A Day in Castle Garden, by Louis Bagger (reprint), Park Genealogical Books, Roseville, MN, 2005, softcover, 26 pages, Prairie Echoes Press, P.O. Box 130968, Roseville, MN, about $7.95 plus postage. **www.parkbooks.com/**

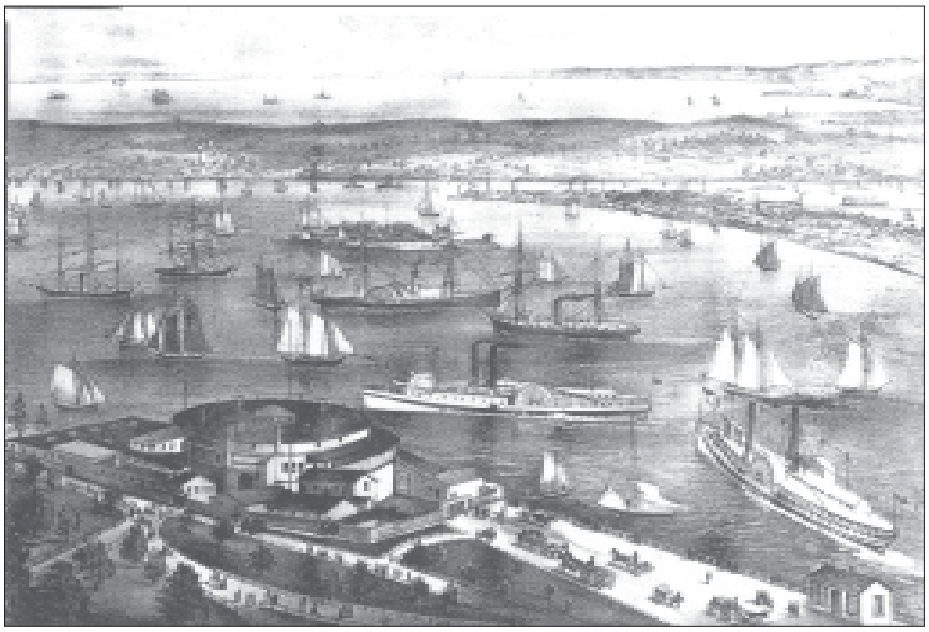
Immigrants arriving through the port of New York from the middle of the 19th century until the 1890's began their first day in America at Castle Garden. A former music hall located at the tip of Manhattan Island, Castle Garden became the reception center for immigration procedures and was the first impression of their new land for many new arrivals. This little volume is a reprint of an article first written for *Harper's New World Magazine*, Vol. 42, Issue 250, published in March 1871.

Most immigrants from Sweden entered the United States through the Port of New York and, until the 1890's, would have passed through Castle Garden on their way to their final destination in America. (Castle Garden by the 1890's was replaced by the reception center on Ellis Island, partly to avoid problems of pickpockets, thieves, and others taking advantage of new arrivals and partly to isolate any communicable diseases from the general population.) This article by Louis Bagger for *Harper's*, describes a typical day in Castle Garden in 1871, a time when large numbers of Swedes were coming to this country. While a large variety of countries of origin were represented on this day, the author makes a number of comments about the Swedes and other groups, which are of interest to the reader.

Included also are about ten sketched illustrations showing the interior and the exterior of Castle Garden and various impressions of immigrant groups, families, and others who were part of the scene at the time. The sketches are not attributed, but form very strong images of conditions and typical incidents occurring in the building as part of this entry procedure for many of our ancestors some 136 years ago.

After a description of Castle Garden and its grounds, the author describes the steps in the processing of arrivals in some detail, interspersed with anecdotes about individual immigrants and his own observations or opinions about various immigrant groups. Language problems, the exchange of money, ascertaining the actual destinations of people having only a name of a place but no state, ticketing for rail travel, and the various frauds and opportunists eager to victimize the green arrivals are all vividly pictured.

Among groups described by Louis Bagger are the Swedes, who are "an excellent class of people," . . .but smell of leather, salt herring, onions, and perspiration . . .often difficult to deal with . . .once they assimilate, . . . become hardy laborers and honest citizens, finding their way to Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota . . . and soon become settled down as thrifty farmers." Others such as Germans, Irish, and English



Castle Garden during its time as an immigrant reception place. The circular building to the left was the reception hall.

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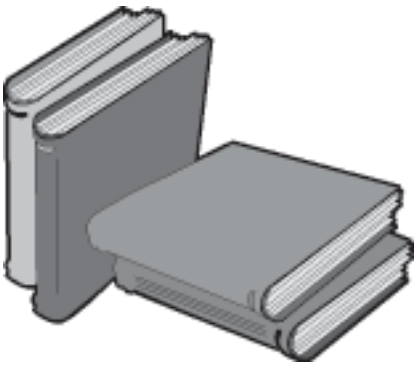

are also characterized by the writer in both flattering and not so flattering terms.

This reprint is a valuable addition to the collection of all those interested in the immigrant experience which may have been a part of their own ancestor's arrival in America as well as a glimpse into the attitudes of the writer of that period about Castle Garden and the many peoples he observed as they were sharing in this immigrant experience.

Dennis L. Johnson

Canadian pastors and their wives

Bread to Share, Stories about Saskatchewan's early Lutheran pastors and their wives, by Lois Knudson Munholland, Houghton Boston, Saskatoon, Canada, 2006, Softcover, Ill., $30.00 Canadian, plus shipping, from Three West Two South Books, Box 483, Strasbourg, Saskatchewan, SOG 4VO, Canada

Saskatchewan, Canada, is a large province lying just north of North Dakota and Montana in the U.S. The province is just west of Manitoba and is three times the land area of Minnesota, yet has about one fifth as many people. Summers in Saskatchewan can be very hot, with warm summer winds blowing from the U.S. to the south, but winters can be bitterly cold with temperatures remaining below zero degrees F. (-17 C.) for weeks at a time. The Southwest is mainly a plains region, with the north and west being arboreal forest, part of the Canadian Shield. Rainfall is mainly in the summer months, and varies from 12 to 18 inches annually.

Originally lightly populated by several tribes of Native Americans, the region was first explored by Europeans in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. A Hudson's Bay Company fur trading post was established in 1774, but not until the 1850's was the area explored by scientific expeditions. By the 1870's, Canada formed the Northwest Territories to administer the central provinces, and by the 1880's the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway opened the area to settlement. A Dominion Land Survey divided the territory and free land was then given to willing settlers. Protests by Native Americans were largely quelled by 1885, and Saskatchewan became a province in 1905.

Canada's Homestead Act gave settlers a quarter of a mile square to settle on, and added a second piece the same size on establishing a homestead. This amounted to a total of about 80 U.S. acres, sufficient for the non-mechanized family farms of the late 19th century. The immigration peaked in about 1910, and a fairly prosperous agricultural society was established on these prairie lands despite initial problems of distances to towns, backbreaking labor, and sod houses. The population of Saskatchewan grew fairly rapidly through the first half of the twentieth century, and then slowed after the 1930's farm depression. It remained fairly stable after 1940, peaking in about 1986 at just over one million people, and then fell slightly to the present population in 2006 of about 985,000.

The immigrant settlement patterns were very similar to that of many Midwest states in the U.S., although occurring several decades later than, for example, Minnesota. Many settlers came directly from Europe, others from the U.S. or Eastern Canada seeking better circumstances in a "second migration." By 1880, most farmland in Minnesota was claimed already, and later immigrants had to move to the Dakotas, Canada, or the Pacific Northwest. As in other locations in North America, the homesteaders seeking family farms arrived first, then small towns with services to provide these settlers followed. Ethnic groups often settled in clusters to form ethnic communities, which soon turned to establishing churches as soon as their basic needs of shelter and crop raising were met. These new churches on the frontier needed trained pastors to serve these embryonic congregations, and the calls went out to their respective denominations.

Among these prairie pioneers were many Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes, most of whom were of the Lutheran faith. The first generation usually spoke only their native language, and expected worship services in their own tongue. Most of the pastors who responded to these calls were also of the same nationality, being trained in seminaries sometimes in Europe, but more often in the newly established Lutheran colleges and seminaries in the U.S. Those not born in Europe were usually the children of immigrants and also spoke their parents' language.

In her book, *Bread to Share*, Lois Munholland has assembled brief biographical sketches of some 58 of these early Lutheran pastors who responded to the needs of new Lutheran congregations formed on the Saskatchewan prairie. Most of the pastors profiled in this book were ordained between 1896 and as late as 1936, but mostly in the first three decades of the 20th century. In many cases, a church on the Saskatchewan prairie was their first call, although some served elsewhere for some

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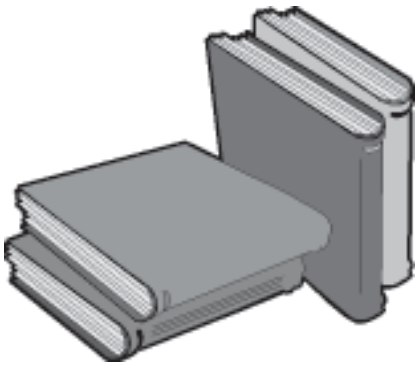

years before coming to Saskatchewan. Of the 58 pastors, eight were born in Canada, 17 in the U.S., 12 in Norway, 12 in Germany, 1 in Sweden, and 6 elsewhere. In terms of national heritage, 29 were German, 25 Norwegian, and four Swedish.

The small number of Swedish pastors in the group probably reflects the patterns of settlement, being several decades later than the greatest period of Swedish migration into the farming lands of Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas. This pattern is also apparent in the overall ethnic makeup of Saskatchewan today. In 2001, the Canadian census lists the largest ethnic group in the province as German (28.6%), followed by English (24.5%), Scottish (17.9%), Irish (14.5%), Ukrainian (12.6%), French (11.4%), Native (10.6%), Norwegian (6.3%), Polish (5.3%), Métis (4.2%), Dutch (3.3%), and Swedish (3.1%). (This is not a precise proportion, since 25% of the respondents identified themselves as only Canadian in this census). Most of the groups other than the Germans and Scandinavians were not Lutheran, however, so the proportion of Lutheran pastors is roughly consistent with the population figures.

Pastor Munholland has clearly engaged in a labor of love in the enormous task of collecting all the biographical information about these early pioneer pastors. It is neither her first effort nor her last. She earlier completed a book about Lutheran congregations in Saskatchewan that have closed up until 2003, titled *Pulpits of the Past*, and is now working on Volume 2 of *Bread to Share* which will chronicle additional pastors who served during this period in Saskatchewan. Most notably, her book also includes with each biography a biographical sketch of the pastor's wife, an essential partner in these early congregations. A pastor's wife, although not compensated, was expected to be part of the team and worked equally hard in serving the congregation in many ways. She was often organist, choir director, Sunday school teacher, and had other church duties while busy raising their own children almost single-handedly while the pastor traveled to serve several outlying churches or preaching locations. The author's profiles also include a list of the couples' children and their chosen careers.

While few of these pioneer pastors were Swedish, they all shared in common the hard lives of their congregations as they built their lives, churches, and communities in a new and often harsh landscape. Most were of the generation of my own parents or a little older, a generation which saw the radical transformation from a horse and buggy life with no easy communications to the advent of technology in the form of the automobile, the telephone, electric power, mechanized farming, and a slow rise in prosperity and comfort. Because of the low population density in the farming areas, many of the pastors served as many as three or four churches miles apart, and also met groups at several "preaching points" with no church, but in homes or commercial buildings. Travel in the winter was hard and meeting all these demands was difficult, yet their dedication to serving their congregations was inspiring. Frequently, a pastor would hold services at one church on Saturday evening, at another on Sunday morning, and at still a third on Sunday night.

It was interesting to note that most of the pastors were trained in U.S. seminaries and colleges, among them St. Olaf in Northfield, MN, the Lutheran Seminary in St. Paul, MN, Augustana in Rock Island, IL, Augsburg in Minneapolis, MN, Gustavus Adolphus in St. Peter, MN, Concordia in Springfield, IL, and several others depending on their nationality and synod. In these years, synods ignored the boundary between Canada and the U.S., with the Ohio Synod LCA, Augustana Synod, Missouri Synod, and others all represented in Saskatchewan. A few were trained at seminaries in Canada, such as a new Lutheran Seminary in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The pastors themselves also served where called, frequently taking churches in the U.S. before or after service in Saskatchewan. A few remained in Saskatchewan for their entire careers, or served in other Canadian provinces.

Since the decades of these pioneering pastors, the province of Saskatchewan, like much of the U.S. and Canada, has continued to evolve. Formerly agricultural states and provinces have diversified their economies and industries, and farm populations have fallen sharply with the rise of mechanization and the consequent increase in size and reduction in total number of farms. Small towns once spaced at ten mile or so intervals to suit horse and buggy travel have withered, replaced by larger communities 24-50 miles apart responding to the speed of auto travel. One-room schools (over 5,000 in the province as late as 1940) have all but disappeared, and even many former consolidated schools which replaced them are facing imminent closing. Agriculture has fallen to seventh place in the Saskatchewan economy, after services, mining and petroleum, education/health/social services, wholesale and retail trade, transport and communications, and manufacturing. Over half the people now live in the ten largest cities and the largest, Saskatoon, Regina, and

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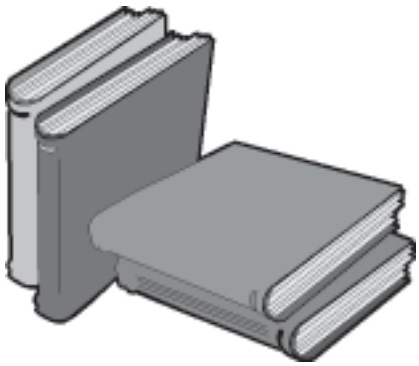

Moose Jaw, continue to grow at the expense of rural areas and small towns.

The world of the people described in *Bread to Share* no longer exists in Saskatchewan. Lutheran congregations also changed over the years, with many smaller rural churches closing or joining with others to form larger congregations. Still, many Lutheran churches and congregations in the province remain strong and vigorous today. Pastor Lois Munholland has given an important gift to us all in charting the lives and conditions encountered by the pioneering Lutheran pastors and their families early in the 20th century in this prairie province in the heartland of North America, whose provincial motto is "The Strength of Many Peoples."

Dennis L. Johnson

Swedes in South Dakota

History of the Swedes who settled in Clay County, South Dakota and their biographies, by August Peterson. 1947, 383 pages, list of biographees. Reprint by Dalesburg Scandinavian Association. Price **$25 + postage, handling and maybe sales tax.** Can be ordered from Dalesburg-Hub City Historical Society, 30493-464th Avenue, Centerville, SD 57014-6403, or by e-mail from Ron Johnson at <rjohnson@bmtc.net>

This is a very nice book, which was started by the original author, August Peterson (1869–1950), already in the 1930s, when many of the first settlers were still alive. He wrote many biographies for the local newspapers on most of the 242 earliest Swedes that filed claims for land in Clay Co.

"The emigration of Swedes between the end of the Civil War in America and up to the turn of the century, has made its impress upon all the Northwest; but certainly upon Clay county, Dakota, because this became one of the largest settlements of Swedes in the Dakotas. The Swedes of Clay County soon adapted themselves to the country of their adoption, and today – 75 years after the first Swedes settled in the county – they can say with Col. Hans Mattson:

'They have furnished strong hands, clear heads, and loyal hearts to the Republic. They have caused the wilderness to blossom like the rose;– they have planted schools and churches on the hills and in the valleys; they have honestly and ably administered the affairs of town, county, and state; they have helped to make wise laws – for themselves and their fellow citizens; they have sanctified the American soil by their blood, shed in freedom's cause on battlefields – (in three wars) –, and as truly love America and American institutions as deeply as do the descendants of the Pilgrims, the starry emblem of liberty meaning as much to them as to any other citizen.'

"The Swedes who came to Clay county and filed on government claims were conservative, both in politics and in commerce. They were trained in frugality and industry and relied upon the free institutions under which they had cast their lot. They were slow and orderly rather than swift and violent in their methods, and all agree that they readily assimilated and assumed American customs and modes of thought with few exceptions.

"The first years after they settled here on their claims they had a hard time to exist, and especially was that true with those who had families, and most of them had. The present generation does not begin to understand how they managed to exist, because living conditions were radically different. The husbands had to seek work on railroad construction in adjoining states, and with wives and children left home alone, this was not a pleasant situation. Then the grasshopper infestation in the 70's, was another heart-rending experience, and a number of single men and a few families left the settlement, never to return. Those are people whom the writer finds it almost impossible to get data about. They managed to make "proof" and obtain patents from the government on their claims; borrowed, or had borrowed all they could and left the country for good. It is a notable fact that during one period most of them who remained here did for the simple reason they lacked the means whereby they might have returned to their homeland. About 30 of the 236 original claim takers left the county and the settlement for parts unknown, believing they could find better homes elsewhere."

The biographies are very interesting and give information on where people were born, many in Svärdsjö (Dala.), but also many other parts of Sweden. The names of the family are mentioned as well as what happened to the children in many cases. Also when children of one early pioneer married the children of another pioneering family, there are cross-references. The information on the places of birth might be wrong as in the case of Peter J. Johnson, who is said to have been born in Sävsjö (Jönk.), but according to Emibas was born in Vikingstad (Östg.), but mostly it is possible to trace these early settlers in the Swedish records.

Elisabeth Thorsell