

9-1-2007

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Recommended Citation

Thorsell, Elisabeth (2007) "News from the Swenson Center," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 27 : No. 3 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol27/iss3/6>

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News from the Swenson Center

The 2007 Conference and 25th Anniversary

During the middle of October 2007 I had the opportunity to visit the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center in Rock Island, Illinois. I was able to spend some time doing research in the Swedish-American church records and newspapers.

At the end of the week I was able to take part of the seminar "Friends and neighbors? Swedes and Norwegians in the United States," organized by the Swenson Center. This seminar had attracted a lot of people, more than 120 individuals had registered for it, many more than for any previous seminar. The Swedish-American Historical Society was also one of the organizers.

The first part of the seminar was a lecture on Friday evening, the O. Frithiof Ander Lecture in Immigration History. Dr. Thomas Treadway, President Emeritus of Augustana College, talked about "Pinching Pennies in the Provinces: The Mid-Century Finances of an Immigrant College," which mainly was the story of how Augustana survived during World War II and the 1950s.

Early next morning Professor H. Arnold Barton from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill., opened the morning session with "Norwegians and Swedes in America: Some comparisons," followed by a number of interesting lectures by Odd Lovoll from St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., Terje Leiren from University of Washington, Seattle, and Jørn Brøndal from the University of Southern Denmark in Odense, Denmark.

After a coffee break it was time for Mark Granquist, from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., and Ingeborg Kongslien from the University of Oslo, Norway, to give their views on the interaction between Swedes and Norwegians.

By then it was time for a nice

buffet lunch and you could hear from the sound level that many found old friends and visited with them. A number of people formed a little SAG corner and talked about old times in Salt Lake City.

The last session of this educational day comprised three more lectures. These were held by Philip Anderson of North Park University, Chicago, Byron Nordstrom of Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn., and Ann Legried of University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg, Missouri.

Afterwards concluding comments were given by Larry E. Scott of Augustana College and by Dag Blanck, Director of Swenson Center.

As a member of the audience, I found many things interesting, like Byron Nordstrom's talk about the Swedes and Norwegians in Willmar, Minn., and Ann Legried's about the Orphan Asylums, but some of the subjects of the lectures were a bit too

scholarly, and also difficult to hear, due to the poor acoustics in Wallenberg Hall.

It would also have been fun if someone had given a lecture on the Ole, Lena, and Sven jokes, as they might give another picture on how Swedes regarded their Norwegian neighbors, and vice versa.

It is to be hoped that the lectures will be published in the not too distant future, so both those in the audience and those who could not attend, can take part of all this information.

In the evening buses took the conference attendees to Steventon's Restaurant in LeClaire, Iowa, for the Anniversary Dinner to celebrate the Swenson Center's 25th year.

An important part of the evening was the very excellent food, and nice companions at the table, some old friends, and some new ones too.

Elisabeth Thorsell



Dr. Thomas Treadway, president emeritus of Augustana College, was one of the speakers. (Photo by Christina Johansson).