

3-1-2005

## Book Reviews

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

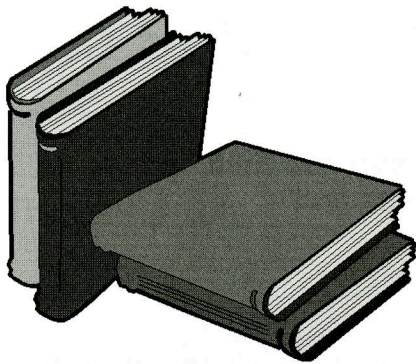
---

### Recommended Citation

(2005) "Book Reviews," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 25 : No. 1 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol25/iss1/14>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@augustana.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@augustana.edu).



# 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 <djohnson@2vikings.com> or 2407 Hunsberger Drive, Limerick, PA 19468, so he knows what you are working on.

## Along the River

***Upper Mississippi, A Wilderness Saga***, by Walter Havighurst. Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., New York, 250 pp., Illustrated by David and Lolita Granahan, 1937

While prowling the nethermost shelves of the Library at the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia recently, I happened across this older book. The title caught my eye, and the green fabric covered binding reminded me of books I had read as a boy in Minnesota. The author's name meant little to me, but curiosity caused me to flip the pages and then to read the table of contents. It was written during the depression years just before World War II, and described the lands where I had grown up. I was only five years old when Walter Havighurst completed this historical work, part of a planned series by various authors on the rivers of America.

Older books often fascinate me, because they not only tell you about the world, but the world as seen through eyes of another time, another generation. I proceeded at once to read this book; no, I devoured it from cover to back almost without pause. I have never yet read such a beautiful, poetic description of a place and a time. The place was the upper basin of the Mississippi, including the present states of Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin, all west of the Great Lakes. The time was the period from the first pioneer settlements to the time when land settlement by im-

migrants was largely complete, from about 1830 until the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Swedes and Norwegians are the principal characters chronicled in this volume, although the author makes it clear that many other groups also took part. He talks about the first to arrive, such as Norwegian Cleng Peerson (born Klein Pederesen), who tramped most of the country alone, then returned to Norway to recruit settlers to bring to America. In 1825, on the little sloop *Restaurationen* by way of Rochester, N.Y., he led some 50 people to the Fox River settlement in Illinois. More Norwegians were led in groups to Koshkonong and Muskegon, Wisconsin. Groups of Swedes, Danes, and Finns soon followed, to begin other settlements in the territory. By 1846, Eric Jansson brought his first 400 followers to found Bishop Hill in Illinois, and in 1850, the wealthy Norwegian Nils Otto Tank brought his followers to found Ephraim ('very fruitful'), on another Fox River in Wisconsin. These visions, like many other Utopian communities of the 19th century, were soon to dissolve in discord. Their disillusioned members left for independent family owned homesteads, free of communal and doctrinal restrictions.

Havighurst then turns to the flood of individual homesteaders who struggled to establish themselves on the great prairies where no roads existed; only the rivers served for travel. These settlers fought loneliness, grass fires, locusts, and blizzards, building communities, roads, churches, railroads, grain elevators, schools, and even colleges for their

descendants. The author paints vivid word pictures of individual settlers and families to describe their struggles and their accomplishments, their songs, poems, dialects and slang, weddings, and funerals.

The Epic of Lumber is the next subject, describing how mainly Swedes and Norwegians worked the big pine woods north of the prairies "to the world's end" to supply timber for a growing America. From the winter logging camps where the white pine was cut and dragged to the water's edge, to rollicking nights in the bunkhouses, the colorful slang of Bull Cook, Sky Pilot, Logging Berries and Ground Hogs, the spring drive of logs to the great sawmill towns downriver, danger, mutilation, or death in working the big timber; all are woven into a word picture of this era. The Epic of Lumber spanned barely 60 years, until the big woods were cut over completely and the lumberjacks who survived became farmers, or moved west to Washington and Oregon.

In his last section, Havighurst describes "The Prairie Mind," the idea that the people who struggled and conquered this unmarked wilderness gave a new harvest of people with the imagination and determination to make new conquests in later challenges; men such as John Muir, naturalist, Thure Kumlien, expert on birds, Charles Lindbergh, aviator, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, arctic explorer, Carl Sandburg, poet, Sinclair Lewis, novelist, Ole Rølvaag, novelist, Thorstein Veblen, economist, and many others. These were all men with the Prairie Mind, each finding their own frontiers to conquer, an

# Book Reviews

overwhelming number of these men being Scandinavian.

By today's standards, this book would be judged sorely lacking in political correctness, with little mention of women, Native Americans, social concerns, or conservation of resources. What it lacks can be forgiven, for it is the beauty of the prose and the vividness of the descriptions of pioneer days which gives this book its worth. This is not the work of a historian, a scientist, or a scholar of migrations. It is the work of an artist in words, who uses words like colors to paint a picture of a world gone by, but still deeply embedded in the memories of so many sons and daughters of the Upper Mississippi's pioneer days.

This is the third book written by Walter Havighurst, author of nearly 40 books between 1935 and 1982, most of them essays in American history. In 1954, he wrote *Annie Oakley of the Wild West*, the basis for the musical and movie, *Annie Get Your Gun*. Havighurst was born in 1901 and grew up in Wisconsin and Illinois, son of a prominent academic family. After an early life as a seaman on the Great Lakes and the oceans, he studied at Ohio Wesleyan, the University of Denver, and at King's College, London. He received a master's degree from Columbia University in 1928, and spent most of his career on the faculty of Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Havighurst retired in 1989 and died in 1994. He left \$6 million to the University to establish a charitable trust "to fund and promote educational projects for building cross-cultural understanding" between the people of the United States and the Soviet Union.

**Note:** This book may be hard to find, although it may still exist in some public libraries. I saw a used copy listed on [www.alibris.com](http://www.alibris.com), for \$3.75. Other used book sites may have it. For students of literature,

and of America, it is well worth the search.

Dennis L. Johnson

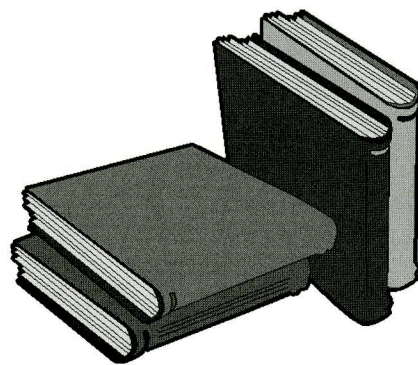
## Swedes of Today

*Modern-Day Vikings, A Practical Guide to Interacting with the Swedes*, Christina Johansson Robinowitz and Lisa Werner Carr, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME, 2001. softcover, 197 pages. Available at Amazon.com, \$17.13 plus shipping.

Despite half a lifetime of involvement in Swedish American organizations and events, six trips to Sweden in the past 30 years, and quite a bit of contact with friends and relatives in Sweden, I still have much to learn about the cultural differences between "them" and "us." I have all Swedish ancestors: three grandparents were born in Sweden and the fourth was born in the U.S. a year after his parents came from Sweden. When we fly SAS, the flight attendant usually speaks to me in Swedish first, then quickly shifts to English when I reply, so I obviously look like a Swede. Yet the differences are great, as I have slowly been made aware over the years.

I wish I had read *Modern Day Vikings* years ago. Then I would have made fewer mistakes and understood better the differences between Swedes and Swedish Americans like me. This book is not only for those interested in tracing their roots in Sweden, but for tourists and other visitors. Business people especially, who in today's global economy may find themselves living and working in Sweden for a time, will find it very helpful. The authors are a good team for this work, one having been born in Sweden and the other Swedish American, both now living and working in the U.S.

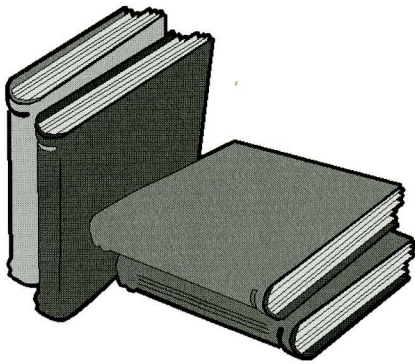
After explaining the history of



Sweden from the Vikings to the welfare state, a brief explanation of the Swedish Model helps the reader understand Sweden today and the attitude of Swedes toward government and toward each other. Subsequent chapters debunk widely held stereotypes about Swedes (such as the four S's; spirits, sex, suicide, and socialism), help explain Swedish national pride, and relations between the individual and the group. The historic notion of "*lagom*" is explained, the idea of just enough and not too much in all things. Revealed also is the concept of "*jantelagen*," or an attitude of keeping people in their place, an idea which seems to be lessening in the younger, more global generation. The obsessive quest for equality above all among Swedes, only dimly understood by most Americans, is given its due. The Swedish penchant for non-verbal communication and their reverence for silence, nature, and holidays is brought into focus by numerous anecdotes and insightful examples.

Swedish customs that may be misunderstood or improperly observed by Americans are explained with humor and perception, especially the many unwritten rules that deal with the wearing of shoes in private homes (or not), toasting and the customs of social occasions, even the rules of coffee, dining, and drinking. Swedes are far too gracious and polite to point out to you any violations, but you can be sure they will be mentioned after you have departed.

A final chapter dealing with customs in the workplace should be read by all Americans who plan to work



# Book Reviews

in Sweden. Competitiveness must be repressed, at least outwardly, and take place only in the more subtle Swedish ways. You will learn that consensus rules, how to be a collaborative manager in a flat organizational structure, attitudes toward deadlines, and many tips on communicating and getting things done. American workplace methods will often be received in an other than gracious manner or, at best, misunderstood.

The authors have made this book not only very informative, but also highly entertaining and a pleasure to read. It became apparent to me after reading *Modern-Day Vikings* that while vestiges of many Swedish cultural characteristics remain subliminally imprinted in my own personality, two generations of life in America have made me much more American than Swedish. I am not sure that this has been an improvement.

Dennis L. Johnson

## A Pastor and His Wife

*Pioneer Missionary, Lars Petter Lundgren and His Wife Alma*, by Bruce William Anderson, 2004, 282 pages. (For ordering information, see end of review).

Most immigrants from Sweden began new lives on a clean slate when they settled on the prairies of the Midwest in America. No services were available, but they were free to create new lives and new commun-

ities with few constraints on their dreams. Basic needs came first: food, water, shelter, and planting crops. Next came a schoolhouse for the education of their children, and soon after, a church. Pastors and missionaries followed close in the tracks of these pioneers, seeking to tend to their spiritual needs. Initially they came from Sweden, but soon new colleges and seminaries founded in America began to be the source of these pastors. They were primarily Lutheran, but sometimes Free Church or Mission Covenant pastors with roots in Sweden.

This book is the story of one of these early Lutheran pastors, born in Sweden, but one of the early graduates of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, and of the Augustana Lutheran Seminary in Rock Island, Illinois. Lars Petter Lundgren, grandfather of the author, was born in Sweden in 1851, in Essunga parish, Skaraborgs län. He was orphaned at age 6, and in 1867, at age 16, decided to come to America. His goal was Carver County, MN, where some of his cousins lived. After a dozen years working at various jobs, he enrolled at Gustavus Adolphus College in 1880 and later completed seminary in Rock Island, IL. He was ordained in 1892, and took up his first parish in Kittson, MN, in the Red River Valley of northwestern Minnesota, in July of the same year.

Many Swedish Americans have traced their roots in recent years, and quite a few have written and published their family history or a biography of one or more of their ancestors. Most are of limited general interest, primarily to the direct descendants or relatives of their subjects, and are not widely read. *Pioneer Missionary* is exceptional in its portrayal not only of the life of Pastor Lars Petter Lundgren, but in the rich detail with which it describes pioneer life on the prairies

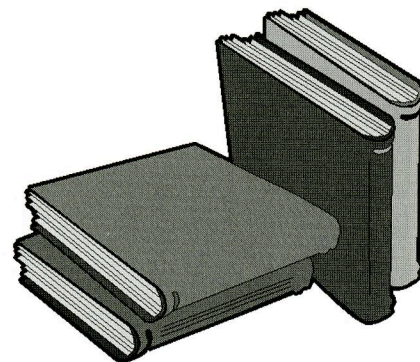
and in the small towns of the Red River Valley of Minnesota. The flat farm lands and rich soil of this area, once the basin of the great glacial Lake Agassiz at the end of the last ice age, were quickly settled by immigrants in the 1870-1900 period. The Red River flows north through Lake Winnipeg and into Hudson Bay, and the rich land extends into Canada west of present day Winnipeg. These lands today are some of the most productive in North America, despite harsh winters and frequent spring floods.

The first chapter of the book consists primarily of family histories of the author's grandparents, their family, and Lars Petter Lundgren's education and family life. Included with this section are several autobiographical sketches which Lars, as a pastor, had occasion to write to further his career. These are given in both the original Swedish and in English, and provide an insight into his life not usually available. Most immigrants did not write their own autobiographies, and their lives must generally be reconstructed by their descendants from other information.

Pastor Lundgren, after a long pastorate in the Red River Valley, retired due to ill health at age 72, moving to Minneapolis where he died in 1926. His widow and family moved to Chicago to live with a daughter, where the author was born. Bruce Anderson grew up on the south side of Chicago, studied at IIT and at Northeastern University in Boston, MA. After a career as a mechanical engineer, he is now retired and lives in Niles, Michigan.

After a brief chapter about Northwest Minnesota and the Red River Valley, the author goes on to describe the early parishes in the area where his grandfather played an important role in founding, organizing, and reorganizing over fifteen parishes. From his home base, Grace Lutheran Church in Hallock, MN, Pastor

# Book Reviews



Lundgren helped organize, founded, and even designed churches in surrounding communities, including in Kennedy, Strandquist, Newfolden, Roseau, Lancaster, Lake Bronson, Argyle, Karlstad, and other towns. Each location and its history is briefly profiled, and vivid descriptions of the hardships of winter travel to serve these scattered congregations by horse and buggy help create an image of the life of a frontier pastor.

The final chapter deals with the role of Pastor Lundgren in the Red River District and Conference of the Augustana Lutheran Church, the synod of most Swedish Lutherans in the upper Midwest. Pastor Lundgren also served several missions in North Dakota across the Red River, and in southern Manitoba, Canada.

The entire book is rich in historic photographs, documents, and descriptions of the communities served by Pastor Lundgren, and with articles and testimonials written about him by church leaders and friends over the years. The author has done a thorough job of documenting and footnoting all his sources, and a complete index makes it easy to locate references to particular places and people.

*Pioneer Missionary* not only presents the life of this truly exceptional church leader, but gives to readers a broad view of the settlement of the Red River area, the religious life of the pioneer Swedish immigrant families, and conditions of life on the prairie at this point in the history of these Swedish American settlements. Researchers interested in these particular communities will find a wealth of information in the material compiled by Bruce Anderson and in the sources that he has provided. And above all, the reader will come to appreciate the strength and importance of the church in the settlement of these new communities as the Lutheran Church reinvented itself in the new land.

This book may be ordered from the author, contact Bruce W. Anderson, 1213 Lykins Lane, Niles, MI 49120, e-mail <andersbj@mindspring.com> \$20.00 including handling and U.S. shipping.

Dennis L. Johnson

## Rev. Björk and his wife

*The Faces of New Sweden, Erik Björk, Christina Stalcop, & America's First Portrait Painter*, by Hans Ling, Swedish Colonial Society, Philadelphia, 2004. 86 pages, Softcover, \$20.00 plus postage and handling. (See end of review for ordering information.)

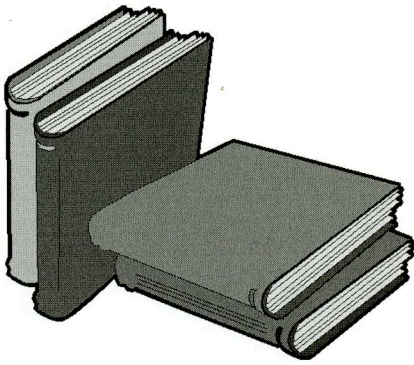
In 1638, the sailing ship *Kalmar Nyckel* brought the first group of Swedes and Finns to the New World, landing in what is present-day Wilmington on the banks of the Delaware River. Further voyages by the *Kalmar Nyckel* and the ship *Örnen* (*The Eagle*) in the next few years increased the settlement to over 400 Finns and Swedes. This was the first European colony on the Delaware, established two generations before the arrival of William Penn.

For the nearly 100 years of its existence, the Swedish Colonial Society has been dedicated to charting the history of this settlement and of the descendants of these colonists in America. A number of books about New Sweden have been published by the Society, including several by the distinguished Dr. Amandus Johnson, founder of the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia.

*The Faces of New Sweden* is the product of persistent research by Hans Ling of Uppsala, Sweden, in tracing his own family history and attempting to unravel the mystery of a tiny silver cup made in 1720,

which he had inherited. The cup bore an inscription in memory of Christina Pettersdotter Stalkop, who died in 1720 in Falun, Sweden. Christina Stalkop, born in Pennsylvania in 1685, was his *mormors mormors mormors farmor*. Ling contacted the Swedish Colonial Society by e-mail in 2001. He was seeking the location of two paintings of Christina and her husband, Erik Björk, which he thought might still be in the possession of Holy Trinity Church in Wilmington, DE. The paintings were not at the church, but the Colonial Society did put him in touch with another descendant, Larry Stallcup of Virginia Beach, VA, who is an expert on the Stallcup family genealogy. Through the assistance of Peter Craig, Colonial Society Historian, he was also able to confirm in the records that the paintings he sought had at one time been given to the church in Wilmington, but their current whereabouts were unknown.

Hans Ling turned his search for the paintings to Sweden and soon found two pairs of paintings of the couple, one in the Nordic Museum and one other pair in private hands. Subsequent research in tracing the chain of ownership of these paintings and under what circumstances they were painted resulted in the findings chronicled in this book. Erik Björk was one of three newly ordained pastors sent by Karl XI to serve the Swedes on the Delaware, arriving in June, 1697. Most of the colonial Swedes had been in America for over fifty years, and their children and grandchildren now made up most of the settlement. Erik set about to hold services, organize the by now somewhat neglected congregation, and



# Book Reviews

build a church. This he completed in July, 1699. He also assisted in the construction of Gloria Dei Church in Philadelphia, completed soon after in 1700.

Erik Björk became good friends with Peter Stalcop and in 1702 married his daughter Christina. They lived for a time on Peter Stalcop's farm, and in 1710 moved into a newly completed pastor's house near the church. By 1708 Erik Björk had petitioned Karl XII for permission to return to Sweden but it was 1714 before Erik and his family could return to take up a new pastorate in Falun, where he served until his death in 1740. He was buried next to his wife Christina, who had died at age 34 in 1720. The couple had six children in America, and four more in Sweden, six of whom survived. Before leaving America, Erik and Christina in 1712 received three visitors from Sweden who stayed with them in their newly completed parsonage. Rev. Andreas



*Erik Björk.*



*Christina Stalcop.*

Hesselius had been sent to replace Björk as the second pastor to New Sweden and Rev. Abraham Lidenius was to be his assistant. Accompanying them was Gustavus Hesselius, younger brother to Andreas, an able portrait painter trained in Sweden and London. Within two years, Eric Björk and Christina, with their children, returned to Sweden and his new pastorate in Falun.

Research by Hans Ling, assisted by Peter Craig and Larry Stalcup in America, confirmed the remarkable story of the origins of the paintings of Erik Björk and his wife Christina now in the Nordic Museum (*Nordiska Museet*).

The book also establishes that Gustavus Hesselius was the painter of these portraits and that he was the first portrait painter in the Philadelphia/Wilmington area. Hans Ling in this book details the ancestry of the subjects of the paintings and their lives in America and Sweden and a great deal about the paintings themselves. Further, he describes the ancestry and life of Gustavus Hesselius, the painter, and of the remarkable Hesselius family in Sweden. Illustrations in color are included of the now restored paintings, the silver cup linking Hans Ling

with his American colonial ancestor, and the people who were involved in this quest.

Hans Ling is currently the Legal Advisor to the National Heritage Board in Stockholm, and lives with his family in Uppsala. The book was translated and edited by the Rev. Dr. Kim-Eric Williams of West Chester, PA, Archivist and Senior Deputy Governor of the Swedish Colonial Society. There are two introductory articles by Dr. Peter S. Craig of Washington, D.C., Historian of the Swedish Colonial Society. Sources are thoroughly documented in the Bibliography, and an Index of People and Places makes the book easy to use as a reference.

This fascinating book illustrates well the rewards of patient, dogged research and inquiry as well as the interweaving of the lives of the colonial Swedes with their contemporaries in Sweden. While doing so, the book also portrays the conditions of everyday life in New Sweden and contrasts them with the lives of many of the clergy and the educated class in Sweden at the time of Karl XI and Karl XII. Students of the history of New Sweden and of this time period will find this book a useful and welcome addition to their collection and many others will find this story a valuable lesson in historic research.

To order: contact American Swedish Historical Museum, 1900 Pattison Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19145, e-mail address:

<[shop@americanswedish.org](mailto:shop@americanswedish.org)>

*Dennis L. Johnson*