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# Swedish Parish Archives in North America

Lars-Göran Johansson\*

For most of the researchers who visit our Swedish archival institutions the parish records of the National Church of Sweden constitute the most desirable source material concerning the Swedish people in times gone by. The unity which exists between church and community, made manifest in the Church law laid down in 1686, and further developed during more than 300 years, has given Sweden, as well as Finland, a relatively continuous, unified and embracing total overview of the population in each of the more than 4,000 local congregations. The clerical records dealing with births, marriages and deaths, as well as the lists of people who moved into or out of the parish are not unique. They exist and may be found in most other countries with a Christian and church tradition. On the other hand they are remarkable in that they record all citizens from the cradle to the grave, even those who belonged to other confessions or abstained from churchly activity. It was not until 1991, when the keeping of population records was transferred to a civil administration, that the question of membership in a religious body became relevant.

The most unique aspect of the continuous record keeping of the Swedish people was the household examination roll (*husförhörslängd*), which in 1895 became the parish register (*församlingsbok*). In order to control the knowledge of, and the insight, into the Christian faith, and to insure the parishioner's staying with the heritage of the unadulterated Lutheran orthodoxy, the household examinations came into being in the 18th century aimed at the populations of the parishes. During the 19th century the clergy was required to check the reading and writing ability of every parishioner, as well as the more mundane aspect of the citizen, such as the vaccination for smallpox. By analyzing the data to be found in the household examination rolls the modern researcher has been able to examine the individual in an older culture and at various levels analyze the societal changes which have taken place. The emigration phenomenon was such a change.

## The Swedish Parishes Abroad

The parish recordkeeping as it applied to Swedish national congregations abroad was conducted in a slightly different manner, particularly as it dealt with parishes in

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foreign capitals and port cities in Europe and elsewhere in the world. The foreign parishes carried on a more independent and freer existence than in Sweden, due mainly to the necessity of depending on voluntary assistance which provided spiritual and social support to Swedes abroad as well as sailors who temporarily visited the congregations. It was therefore not practical in these non-territorial parishes to pursue a regular pastoral control of members, who sometimes spread over a large geographical area or sporadic visitors, such as seamen and merchant traders. The system of keeping household examination records was therefore not practiced generally but was instead converted to a simpler form of keeping a membership record. It should be noted that membership was voluntary and was primarily organized to strengthen the ties to the home country. Only in a few places in South America and Australia did the Swedish parishes abroad serve a greater proportion of Swedish immigrants.

### Swedish Emigrants in Neighboring Countries

Most of the approximately 150,000 emigrants who left Sweden in the latter part of the 19th century to settle in European countries, primarily Denmark, Norway and Germany, chose, as soon as possible, to be assimilated in their new homeland. The national Lutheran Church existed even here and the cultural and linguistic differences were not that great. Another important reason which prodded the swift integration was the fact that the Swedish emigrants were spread out over large and heavily populated areas. Enclaves of concentrated Swedish population have only been found in the North German city of Kiel. Marriage to partners of the native population smoothed the way for assimilation in the new country. The need therefore to maintain one's ethnic as well as religious identity by founding new Swedish church bodies was not very great. Church congregations established through the initiative of the immigrants themselves took place on only one continent - North America.

### Emigration to North America

During the years 1850-1930 a little more than 1,300,000 Swedes departed from their country to settle in the United States and Canada. The first larger group, consisting of approximately 30 persons left in 1845 and was made up principally of farmers and craftsmen, led by the liberally leaning Peter Cassel, a farmer from Kisa in southern Östergötland. The following year the well-known religious mass movement began, mainly from Hälsingland, Västmanland and Dalarna, under the leadership of the prophet and religious dissident Erik Jansson. In the beginning of the 1850s people in the parishes of Småland became victims of the so called "America fever," an episode which propelled Vilhelm Moberg to write his masterful

tetralogy of the exodus of peasants from eastern Småland to settle in the “new land.”

The real mass emigration began in earnest, however, toward the end of the 1860s in the wake of a catastrophic crop failure and culminated during the long drawn out agricultural crises of the 1880s. The emigration continued unabated and dramatically during the beginning of the birth of the emerging industrial towns and cities at the turn of the century, reaching another peak in 1923 as a result of the after effects of World War I. With the advent of the Great Depression in 1929 emigration was halted, bringing an end to the mass movement westward.

Swedish immigrants first arrived in the Middle West, later moving to other parts of the West, ultimately having an impact on the large and medium sized cities. Already by 1910, when Swedish America had reached its zenith in numbers and territorial spread, 65% of the first generation of Swedes had settled in cities or more densely populated areas. By 1930 that figure had risen to 75%. This demographic movement and regrouping toward the coastal areas of America and the more populous centers should be kept in mind when one attempts to track the immigrants and their archival deposits.

### The Churches of the Immigrants

Already in 1841, Gustaf Unonius, the failed University of Uppsala student and adventurer, had arrived at his settlement of Pine Lake, or New Upsala, as he called it, in the State of Wisconsin. The harsh life of the wilderness tired Unonius and he decided to study for the priesthood in the Episcopal Church. In May of 1849 he organized in Chicago, together with 34 other Swedes and Norwegians, the first Scandinavian congregation since the time of the Swedish churches on the Delaware in the 17th century. There being no orthodox Lutheran denomination, Unonius' St. Ansgarius Church was for several years the only spiritual home to which the newly arrived immigrants could turn. In order to preserve the spiritual heritage from the homeland Unonius followed the ritual of the Swedish Lutheran State Church whenever he conducted the service in Swedish. The violent cholera epidemic which struck Chicago at this time forced Unonius, however, to spend more of his time on practical and humanitarian problems than on his liturgical refinements. In 1852, tired and worn out, he left for Sweden with his family for a salubrious and much needed vacation.

In 1850, Lars Paul Esbjörn from Delsbo Parish in Hälsingland, the first Swedish Lutheran clergyman in America, had founded the first Swedish Lutheran church in the community of Andover in Illinois. In 1853 a low church evangelical clergyman



Photograph courtesy Swedish Emigrant Institute

*The church in Andover, Illinois, founded by Lars Paul Esbjörn, also known as The Jenny Lind Chapel, since the famous singer gave money for the construction of the first sanctuary.*

Tuve Nilsson Hasselquist from Osby in Skåne founded the Swedish Lutheran church in Galesburg, IL, followed in 1853 by the coming of Erland Carlsson from Älgult in Småland, who organized the Swedish Lutheran congregation in Chicago named *Immanuel*. In Galesburg Hasselquist had also founded the first Swedish language newspaper in America entitled *Heimlandet*.

Esbjörn, Hasselquist and Carlsson were all evangelicals, who believed in spiritual rebirth and regeneration and preached individual freedom and personal responsibility. At times all three had been in strong opposition to the stagnant Swedish State Church and its authoritarian and conservative bishops. They were also strong proponents of sobriety and temperance. These ideals melded very well with the social patterns in America. When Unonius returned to Chicago in 1853, after his furlough in Sweden, he discovered that his parish work almost lay in ruins. A disappointed man, he returned to Sweden in 1858 together with his family and settled down in Grisslehamn as a customs collector. He is supposed to have uttered the famous statement toward the end of his life that he had made two major mistakes in his life - emigrating to America and returning to Sweden. In the 1860s he wrote his famous two volume work, *Minnen*, depicting his seventeen years in America.



Protokoll.

Åt Lager-Sockenstämma, hällen med Svenska  
Evi. Skottiska församlingen, i New-Sweden,  
Jefferson Co. Iowa den 29 October 1862.

Mötet öppnades med Sång och bibeltarmå  
samt bön af en församling.

Församlingen hade föret blifvit bekörigen  
kalla, och wän stämmerligen församla.

- § 1<sup>e</sup> Församlingen började med att inläsa  
Protokollets sekreterarens Johan Lundahl  
som genast intog sin plats.
- § 2<sup>e</sup> Församlingen beslöt, att den allmänna Guds=  
Tjensten skulle börjas precis kl. 10  
Hvarje Söndag. Ewen fördes anmärkning  
öfver det offki. ord han hörd sig  
Nämligen - att en hop människor sandlasti  
på kyrkogården, utafnön kyrkogrängarna  
att ställa samlat under gudstjänsten  
för att om nöjendigt kunna förbehålla  
dessa st. an. afse på beslutet, någon af stället  
Församlingens medlemmar & kyrk. utskottet  
Dem för. till. Sådant. för sig skyldig
- § 3<sup>e</sup> Beslutades genom omsejdi öppnarskommit  
Att. pastor. Håkans, Olson. Skulle tjena  
såsom församlingens lärare, anu ett år  
Eft. Samma. Öre villkor som föret.
- § 4<sup>e</sup> Skottläranen M. Hunter, åtog sig att  
Lura kyrkofångon, till. 2000  
Eft. Samma. Öre villkor som föret

Photograph courtesy Swedish Emigrant Insuute

Page from the minutes of the meeting of the parish council (sockenstämma), held 29 Oct. 1862 in the  
Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Sweden, IA (First Augustana Church, Lockridge, IA).

During the 1850s approximately fifty Swedish Lutheran congregations were organized in the fertile Mississippi Valley and in the cities on the east coast containing heavy Swedish populations, in all totalling 5,000 members. During the first few years the congregations were affiliated with The Synod of Northern Illinois, a body which also included American, German and Norwegian church bodies. After a theological schism at the seat of learning in Springfield, IL, the newly appointed professor Lars Paul Esbjörn and his Scandinavian students withdrew from the multinational synod and in 1860 joined a Swedish-Norwegian denomination in America, The Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The religious body took its name from the Augsburg Confession in order to underline the fact that it accepted the unadulterated spiritual heritage dating back to the Protestant Reformation. Instead of accepting an archbishop appointed by the State a chairman or president was elected in a democratic manner with time limited tenure. Instead of dioceses the huge American continent was divided into regional conferences. Despite the fact that the Norwegian immigrant churches withdrew from the synod ten years later, the Augustana Synod remained the dominant organization. In 1870 a little more than 20% of the approximately 100,000 Swedish immigrants belonged to an Augustana parish.

Even though the establishment of Lutheran parishes dominated the ecclesiastical map in Swedish America during the 1850s, there were Anglo-Saxon denominations which could offer the newly arrived Swedes both spiritual advice in their own language as well as social help. Already in 1845 Olof and Jonas Hedström, brothers and fellow converts to Methodism, had organized a Scandinavian mission for newly arrived immigrants in New York as well as a frontier settlement in the city of Victoria in western Illinois, where immigrants were warmly recommended to go. Jonas had also in Victoria, not far from the Erik Jansson settlement in Bishop Hill, founded the first Swedish Methodist congregation in America. Even Baptists, through the medium of the early pioneer, Gustaf Palmquist, had in Rock Island, IL been able to establish the first Swedish Baptist church in America in 1852.

The second major schism within the Augustana Synod occurred in 1885 when reborn Christian immigrants with the historic background of the Swedish Mission Covenant in Sweden, decided to fuse about fifty congregations into a new denomination called The Swedish Mission Covenant Church. These four named church bodies not only served as the backbone of the spiritual life of Swedish America, but also the center of Swedish American culture and national consciousness. A little more than 2,500 parishes, affiliated with the four denominations, came into being during the years before the early 1930s which signaled the end of the immigration era. The formation of new congregations spread like a wildfire throughout the continent and after the year 1900 was also to include Canada.

As time went on there developed internally among the churches as well as externally with the host of secular societies an intense competitive spirit. During the height of the flowering of Swedish America in the beginning of the 20th century it is estimated that of the 1,300,000 Swedish immigrants 20% of the population belonged to the Augustana Synod, each of the other three denominations, Mission Friends, Baptists and Methodists had 3%. Other church bodies such as the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Free Church, a break-away group from the Mission Covenant, each with 3%, giving a total of approximately 35%.

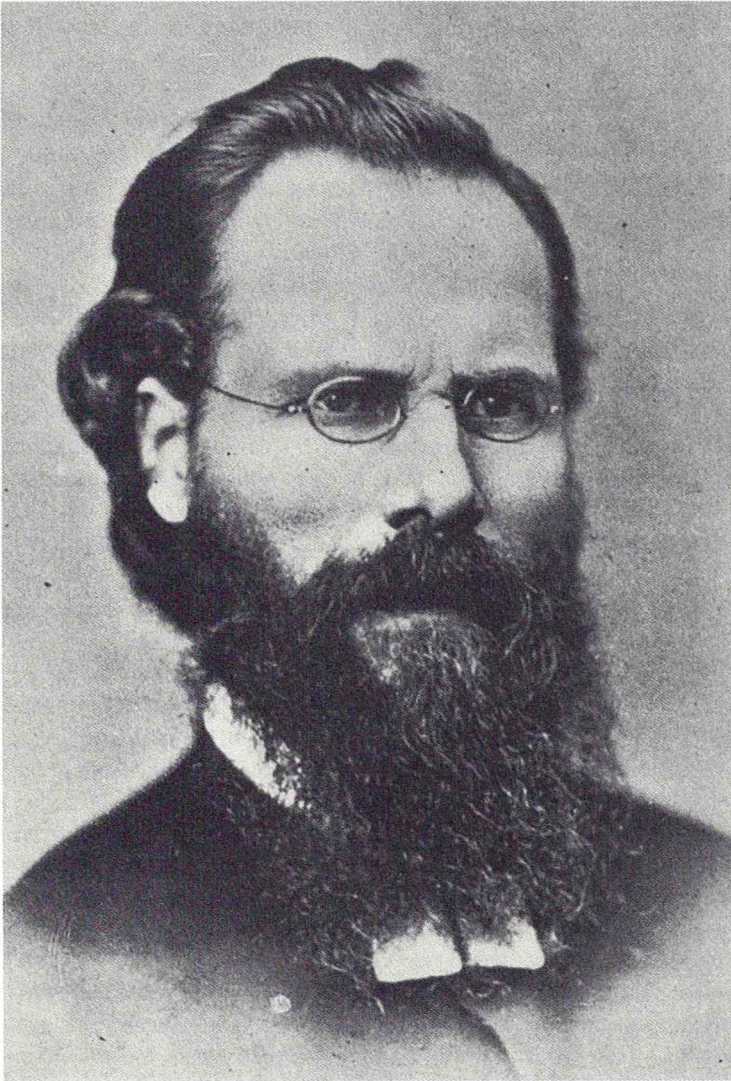
As a rule, the affiliation with a Swedish immigrant church group was greater in rural areas than in urban centers. In Karl Oskar's and Kristina's new homeland, Chisago County in Minnesota, 63% of the population during the years 1885-1905 were members of one of the nine Augustana parishes in the area. If one includes the non-church members who belonged to secular societies it is estimated that the number of Swedish immigrants who belonged to some form of organization were about a half million, or 40-50% of the Swedish population in the 1930s. The number of unorganized Swedes, therefore, would seem to amount to more than half of the first and second generation.

### Parochial Recordkeeping

Within the Augustana Synod there followed with the early emigration of Swedish clerics to America a desire to hew to the same church recordkeeping as in the homeland. The experience of the parish recordkeeping in Sweden, where the practice was legally binding and tied to a geographical area, was believed to be equally appropriate in a new environment. The oldest extant parish records from Minnesota, for example, show a fully developed household examination system as in the homeland. The pastor of the newly formed congregation in Chisago Lake (Ki-Chi-Saga in Indian parlance), Eric Norelius from Hassela Parish in Hälsingland, divided the congregation into numerical districts (*rotar* in Swedish), which radiated from the church center. During the fall season, after the harvest, he travelled in his parish, examining his parishioners in the same manner he had observed as a child in his home parish in Sweden. The highest political organ within the parish was given the same name as in Sweden - *sockenstämma* (parish council).

It was quite natural for the pioneer clergymen to adopt the uniform cameral system which prevailed in Sweden. The newly arrived members had, as a rule, with them from Sweden the official exit permit (*utflyttningsbetyg*) and other documents which were familiar to a pastor coming out of the Swedish State Church and which he recognized and could transfer to his own parochial records on the American side. Still the system was not very adaptable to such a different country as the U. S. A.





Photograph courtesy Swedish Emigrant Institute

*Eric Norelius from Hassela Parish in Hälsingland was the first pastor in Chisago Lake, which under its Indian name, Ki-Chi-Saga, figures as the Minnesota home of Karl Oskar and Kristina, characters in Vilhelm Moberg's emigrant epic.*

Even though most of the immigrants emotionally had close ties to the “church of their fathers,” they experienced the pastoral examinations as bureaucratic coercion and a relic of an old and paternalistic society. Additionally the parishioners could re-

side far from each other, making it almost impossible for the pastor to gather them together for an examination. Contrary to the situation in the homeland the new Lutheran congregations on American soil labored in direct competition with other ethnic Swedish churches. Augustana parishes therefore had to offer just as attractive conditions as for example the Baptists and Methodists.

At a general conference held in 1855 by the Lutheran parishes in Chicago and in the Mississippi Valley it was decided that all of the parishes should keep uniform records with special attention being given to confirmands, records of births, marriages and deaths, as well as books of minutes of the church councils. Additionally special records were to be kept concerning the economic development. In 1857 uniform rules were adopted regulating the conditions in the congregations. Article No. 3 which dealt with parish recordkeeping, became the norm for most of the Lutheran parishes, particularly after 1860 when the Augustana Synod was founded.

The simplified membership rolls with printed columns and English text, which came into being at this time, retained two columns from the earlier household examination rolls, among these the column marked "Knowledge" (which included reading, reciting and understanding). In a democratic society on the fringe of cultivation there was no need to record such items as wealth, occupation or social status. Hence these columns were eliminated. The columns that do occur in the membership books were as follows:

1. Number (the membership number)
2. Residence
3. Communicant, male or female (those permitted to receive Holy Communion)
4. Name
5. Born and baptized, when and where
6. Confirmed (date)
7. Knowledge (ability to read and understand)
8. Received (date of affiliation with the congregation)
9. Number of certificate (refers to the number of the exit permit - *flyttningsbetyg*)
10. Arrived in America (where from and date)
11. Arrived in the community of the local parish (where from and date)
12. Married (date)
13. Removed (where to and date)
14. Deceased (date)
15. Dismissed (date)
16. Remarks

Sid no 21.	Patent no 2.		Christendoms Kanskap		Fam. hushåll. Ort		
Åttor					Fidelly	Dop	
					År	Dato	Storfamilj
<del>Wallerius, Peter</del>							
Peter Dahlström	1				1823	10	Bastard
<del>Anders Dahlström</del>	1				1839	27	Bastard
<del>Jens Henningsen</del>	1				1836	8	Bastard
<del>H. Anders Berg</del>	1				1839	19	Hög
<del>Dr. Albert Constantin Laurentius</del>	1				1861	3	Chicago Lake
<del>Peter Svensson Edleström</del>	1				1810	26	Bastard
<del>H. Anders Sjögren</del>	1				1835	7	Narkals
L. Sjögren	1				1842	2	Högby
" Peter	1				1844	10	"
<del>Johannes Andersson</del>	1				1812	2	Ålgårdså
<del>H. Anders Christens Gunnar</del>	1				1834	12	"
<del>J. Anders Ullrich</del>	1				1842	28	"
<del>Dr. Mathilda</del>	1				1844	7	"
<del>J. Anders</del>	1				1859	3	Chicago Lake
<del>" "</del>	1				1860	13	"
<del>Dr. Anders</del>	1				1861	26	"
<del>" Lovisa</del>	1				1862	24	"



30

	Antagna	Aflyttade från	
	Antagna	Aflyttade från	
År	År	År	
Antal	Antal	Antal	
År	År	År	
1857	Boltongs 1857 $\frac{32}{10}$		
1857	Boltongs 1857 $\frac{14}{4}$		Död i kriget 1864
1853	Boltongs 1854 $\frac{13}{5}$		Flutar till Rådet
1850	Göteborg 1855 $\frac{26}{9}$		
1854	Boltongs 1857 $\frac{24}{8}$		
"	Boltongs " "		1966 G rej m & utskän
"	Boltongs 1860 $\frac{29}{4}$		Meddelan N <sup>o</sup> 6 1867
"	" " " "		
1853	Traneberg 1855 $\frac{26}{9}$		
1857	" 1859 $\frac{26}{6}$		
1853	" " " "		
"	" " " "		Död

Of the columns enumerated above numbers 5,9 and 10 are of particular interest. Exit permits from Sweden as well as between various Augustana congregations were immensely important as legitimation for entrance into a church. So long as the clergy was recruited from Sweden, it was relatively easy to interpret the information and thus record the correct date of birth and the exit parish in Sweden. A definite improvement in quality can be seen in the emigration data of the 1870s compared with the data from the 1850s. The divergencies as compared with Swedish source material sank from 41% to 27% from the 1850s to the 1870s. Around the turn of the century when the synod's pastors were trained in the United States, the precision with which the data was entered in the parish registers deteriorates. Often the cleric was satisfied by only recording the county (*län*) or province (*landskap*) or maybe only with the word "Sweden." Another important factor which reduces the quality of the entered information was the circumstance that about half of the members received in a certain congregation did not present an official document but proffered the desired information orally.

Despite these incongruencies it is clear that the membership registration of the Augustana Synod churches is, when it comes to quality and content, foremost in completeness and compares most favorably with the parish registration in the homeland. The Swedish Mission Covenant in the United States and its congregations adopted a similar membership registration when it came to content and columnar organization of its church books. The Mission churches, which usually insisted on a personal conversion for membership, were able to attract single persons and women as members to a higher degree than the Augustana Synod.

Despite theological differences, both Augustana and the Mission Covenant churches saw it as a natural thing to stick to the use of the parish concept as used in the homeland. Even though new mission churches were created in Sweden toward the end of the 19th century, the sister congregations in the United States still maintained the practice of referring to the Swedish parish when recording the birth place and exit information. The Baptists followed a different route, particularly as it dealt with the custom of baptism. Since its members did not accept the rite of infant baptism, the immigrant, upon arrival in America, would supply the name of the Baptist church in Sweden, where he or she had been baptized as an adult as his point of origin. The membership lists, therefore, provide much less personal information. To partly compensate for the sparse details available it is necessary to go to the minute books of the congregation, where the church leaders have thoroughly recorded the life and background of the applicant, in order to assure themselves that he or she passed muster. Common to all four denominations were not only the membership lists, but also documents like books of minutes, ministerial records dealing with births, marriages, deaths and confirmations as well as



other churchly acts shedding light upon voluntary social work, missionary activity abroad, etc. Toward the end of the 1960s the Swedish American parish archives became the object of the most important external field project in the history of the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö, a project which has provided researchers a most important source for a better understanding of the history of the immigrants and their descendants.

### The Microfilming Project in North America

Between the years of 1968 and 1978 the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation in Sweden contributed almost a million *kronor* for the purpose of inventorying and microfilming the Swedish American church archives. At the end of the project a limited microfilming of Swedish American secular societies was also finished. The work and progress of this giant undertaking has been spelled out in various annual reports and newsletters. In September 1995 the total number of films covering parish archives amounted to 1,651 representing 1,710 archival entities or parishes. The distribution may be seen in the box below.

During this period another 300 archival entities were visited but unfortunately its documents had been dispersed. The project, which toward the end also included Canada, ended in California in 1979. The field work carried on by the Swedish Emigrant Institute had taken a total of eleven years, a short time interval, when one considers the small personal resources (usually someone employed in the field) and the enormous area covered.

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Parishes</b>
<b>Augustana</b>	<b>1848-1967</b>	<b>1,054</b>
<b>Mission Covenant</b>	<b>1868-1947</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>Baptist</b>	<b>1852-1928</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Evangelical Free</b>	<b>1872-1913</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Methodist</b>	<b>1846-1910</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Episcopal</b>	<b>1785-1849</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Other</b>		<b>5</b>

The field work was organized based upon the areas where the Swedes settled. "Swedish" states like Minnesota and Illinois demanded, naturally, a greater input of time and resources than states with limited Swedish immigration such as Montana

or Idaho. The task was carried out by the Swedish Emigrant Institute's field archivist, Dr. Lennart Setterdahl in close cooperation with the leader of the project, Prof. Ulf Beijbom. At least one letter per week was exchanged between the two of them during this time. The project leader also visited the area being microfilmed once a year to establish contacts, consult with his field man as well as give presentations and lectures over the radio and TV. A minimum of time and money went into the administration of the project, yet the effectiveness was maintained at a high level which won great respect and much laudatory praise. Usually it took at the most one month from the time a letter of introduction was sent to the head of a congregation until Lennart Setterdahl appeared in the locality ready to begin his work. Despite the fact that Setterdahl handled more than 6,000 volumes of parish records, not one tome was lost, evidence for the fact that the project could be completed in a highly satisfactory manner. The field work consisted of the following steps:

1. Mapping of the archives to be investigated
2. Contacts with the affected authorities, parish leaders, etc.
3. Mailing of letter of introduction
4. Conducting a personal inventory of the archives
5. Microfilming of the records at the archives by Setterdahl (a small segment was microfilmed externally by a commercial microphotography firm)
6. The microfilmed records were restored to the archival entity

The most impressive aspect of the microfilming project were the long and arduous journeys by car. A glance at the map will show that we are here talking about an inventoried area similar in size to the European continent. It is estimated that Setterdahl travelled more than 600,000 miles (100,000 metric miles) under the auspices of the Swedish Emigrant Institute, a feat unique in the area of archival service, and probably unrivaled anywhere.

This project, supported by the Wallenberg Foundation, was the largest ethnic archival investigation ever attempted in the United States and Canada. For a long time the activity went virtually unnoticed but slowly it came to be recognized by sundry archival institutions as well as by universities and the mass media. Ulf Beijbom and Lennart Setterdahl have lectured on the project on several occasions both in Sweden and North America. In 1990 Lennart Setterdahl was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Göteborg for his outstanding work of preserving the archives of the Swedish element in North America. After having served the Swedish Emigrant Institute for 27 years as a researcher and field archivist on both sides of the Atlantic Lennart Setterdahl died in May 1995. With his demise

the most comprehensive inventorying and microfilming of the archives of any immigrant group on the North American continent came to an end.

The most important reasons for zeroing in on the Swedish American parochial archives were:

A. No other form of organization had gathered more Swedish immigrants (already by 1870 it is estimated that every fifth Swedish American belonged to the Augustana Synod).

B. Foremost in the Augustana congregations, but also in other denominations, the practice of using the Swedish system of keeping parish records, thus producing our primary historical source for researching Swedes in North America.

C. The parochial archives had, with few exceptions, been preserved, but at the same time they were threatened by dispersion or destruction with time as the Swedish American ethnicity weakened and mergers of churches and denominations began accelerating. Thus in 1962 the Augustana Synod ceased to exist as a church body when it became a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Augustana parishes attracted, as stated earlier, most of the Swedish Americans who affiliated with a church body (in 1962 it had 630,000 baptized members). Their congregations were also the best recorded. During the latter years of the project other Swedish American church archives were also filmed - the Swedish American Mission Covenant, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopal and the Evangelical Free Church. Almost 100% of the Augustana and Mission Covenant congregations have been microfilmed, the figure for the other denominations being approximately 50%. About 8,000 parish volumes have been filmed.

The project was initiated by the need of Swedish emigration scholars to have available primary source materials. The Swedish American parish membership lists could provide researchers with exact demographic and social information. The minute books constitute an unfolding source of inestimable value. The continual story of the membership lists complement the U.S. Federal censuses, taken every ten years, as well as the Swedish population material. This has been demonstrated by Ulf Beijbom in his doctoral dissertation, *Swedes in Chicago*, as well as other critical studies, where the filmed material from Swedish American parishes without much difficulty could be tied to source material in Sweden. The microfilm project can truly be termed a transatlantic bridge which unites at least three million Swedish Americans with their roots in Sweden.

The membership lists provide a wide array of demographic and social approaches. Within the research project dealing with Swedish America after 1860 at the Univer-

sity of Uppsala Prof. Hans Norman, as an example, could use the microfilms for his major study of demographic nature. In the United States Professors John Rice and Robert Ostergren used the microfilmed material for their much noted research of Swedish American settlements, their segregation and local recruitment. All in all it can be said that the material has been tested in a large number of studies and even in the daily activity of the Emigrant Institute it has been demonstrated as having a very high value as a primary historical source.

The greater portion of the film negatives of the Augustana parishes have as of today been brought over to Sweden and are on deposit at the District Archives in Göteborg (*Göteborgs Landsarkiv*). Other film negatives are to be found at the headquarters of the various Swedish American denominations. In the House of Emigrants in Växjö there is at least one copy of every filmed church archives, for some parishes (as in the Middle West) there are additional copies. Each parish archives consists of one or more films (at the beginning of the project several archival entities were placed on the same roll of film). The archives have generally been filmed with the church minutes coming first, followed by the membership lists, then the ministerial acts - births, marriages, deaths and confirmations. At the end may be found other related matter, such as congregational accounts and micro-filmed church histories. The span of time covered begins with the inception of the parish up to approximately the beginning of the 1930s. A limited registration of the names has been done, mainly through private initiative. The biggest and most comprehensive study has been done on computer by Bertil Grundström of Tranås, Sweden. He has created a data base named SAKA SWEDEN, which contains 175,000 entries from sixteen of the most populous "Swedish states." Additionally a Finnish Swedish genealogical group in Stockholm has registered a little more than 15,000 members.

A complete assortment of the microfilms are to be found at the House of Emigrants in Växjö and at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center in Rock Island, IL. A limited number of films are also on deposit at the Emigrant Register in Karlstad, Sweden. Interlibrary loans can be requested by archival institutions and university libraries but not public libraries.

Registers of films based on state, name of community and name(s) of parish(es) in that community can be found at the House of Emigrants in Växjö and the Swenson Center in Rock Island, IL. Additionally the registers have been put on microfiche at Svensk Arkivinformatiön in Ramsele, Sweden. Indexes of the geographical areas involved have been published twice, the last time in 1992 as Publication No. 5 in *Meddelanden från Svenska Emigrantinstitutet*.

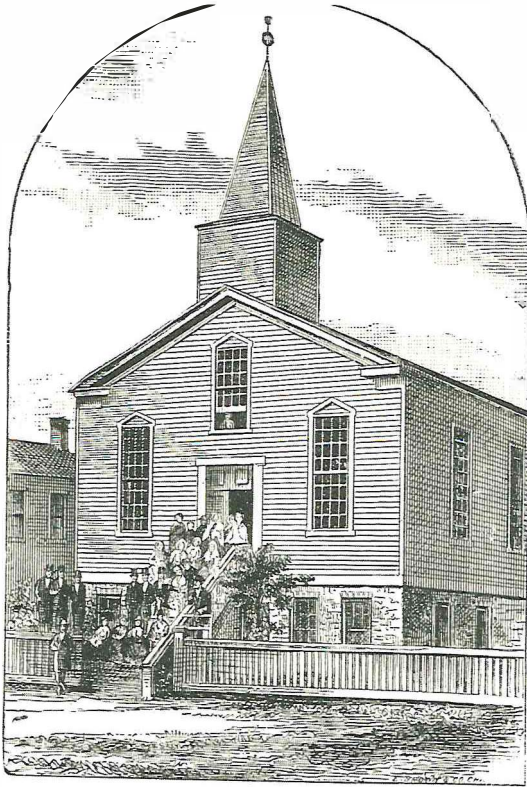
Information concerning the Swedish American parish archives has been given to the Swedish National Data Base and should appear on a CD-ROM disk in the near future.

## Sources

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The first edifice of the Immanuel Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chicago.