

3-1-2016

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### Recommended Citation

Huntsha, Lisa (2016) "The 200th Birthday of Tuve N. Hasselquist," *Swedish American Genealogist*. Vol. 36 : No. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol36/iss1/4>

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# News from the Swenson Center

## The 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Tuve Nilsson Hasselquist

By LISA HUNTSHA

### Life in Sweden

Tuve Nilsson Hasselquist was born March 2, 1816, at Hasslaröd in Osby parish in Skåne, Sweden. His father was Nils Tuveesson (b. 9 July 1776 in Hasslaröd) and his mother was Sissa Svensdotter (b. 24 Aug. 1782 in Ebbarp, Osby). Father Nils was a devout, successful farmer and sent Hasselquist to Kristianstad to be educated, where he assumed the family name of Hasselquist. He continued at Lund University, graduating in 1835. He struggled with student life, but completed his theological studies and was ordained in the Church of Sweden.

Gradually, Hasselquist was influenced by the religious awakening at the time. He became a reformer, defended the Free Church movement (churches separate from the government), and advocated for the separation of church and state. He became a strict Pietist (a Lutheran movement that stressed personal faith and devotion), a powerful speaker, and a temperance advocate. His reputation for radicalism began to precede him as he moved to preach at new parishes.

### Emigration and life in Galesburg, Illinois

In 1849, Hasselquist met Lars Paul Esbjörn for the first time, just as Esbjörn was about to leave for America. Esbjörn – who established the first church for Swedish immigrants in Andover, Illinois, and was later the first president of Augustana College – remembered Hasselquist, and invited him to come to Galesburg, Illinois, to start a congregation. Hasselquist accepted this call easily, perhaps because of his dislike for the

State Church of Sweden. He left for America in August of 1852 with 60 others.

### *Hemlandet*, 1855-1914

The need for a Swedish-American newspaper was felt as early as 1853. When no one else wanted the job, Hasselquist took on the task himself, traveling the country to obtain subscribers, buying a printing press, and finding a Swedish typesetter. Esbjörn and Hasselquist wanted informed citizens and Swedes were highly literate. On January 3, 1855, *Hemlandet, Det Gamla och Det Nya* (*The Homeland, the Old and the New*) was born.

*Hemlandet* became one of the most influential Swedish-American newspapers. It served not only to shape the Swedish-American political opinion (it was important in the elections of 1852 and 1856), but also to spur continued immigration. Hasselquist himself forwarded copies of each published issue to households and libraries in Sweden, which encouraged

further migration and the establishment of Swedish immigrant communities in the United States.

### The birth of the Augustana Synod

In 1860, a meeting of Scandinavian church leaders organized the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod. Hasselquist became the first president and was tasked with strengthening the powers of the synod and ensuring its future.

### Conclusion

At the time of T.N. Hasselquist's death in 1891, he still held the office of president of the college. Though the synod had requested that he retire, his stoic, stubborn disposition would not allow him to do so. During his time as president, he increased buildings, income, and educational standards for the college. For all his lasting impact, he was a forceful, domineering figure in the college's history. He can be remembered as having an iron will not easily bent.

