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A New Way to Discover Chicago's Swedish Heritage:

A Guide to Using the St. Ansgarius Episcopal Church Records Digital Collection

BY CHARLES HEINRICH

St. Ansgarius Episcopal Church was founded by Swedish and Norwegian immigrants in the year 1849 in the city of Chicago, Illinois. St. Ansgarius was the first ethnic Swedish church in the city. The city was not even 20 years old, yet enough Swedes had settled in Chicago to make such a parish feasible.

While the Norwegian contingent would eventually break away to form their own parish, St. Ansgarius functioned as a center for Swedish-American life in Chicago throughout much of the city's early history. In Chicago's Near North Side, the neighborhood around St. Ansgarius came to be known as "Swede Town" (present-day River North) with over 10,000 Swedish-born immigrants living in the area by the 1890s.¹

Thanks to grants from Swedish Council of America and the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, North Park University's F.M. Johnson Archives has digitized the records of St. Ansgarius. Genealogists and historians can now discover a wealth of information through the church's baptismal, marriage, death, and parish records. Using the collection, you will be able to trace the members and activities of this important Swedish-American church.

The following guide will help you navigate the parish records to aid in your own genealogical research.

1) Accessing the Collection

You can find the collection on North Park University's archives website:

<http://library.northpark.edu/archives>

If you click on the "Swedish American Archives of Greater Chicago"

button on the bottom of the page, you will be taken to a page that displays a button to the St. Ansgarius records and two other related collections.

Alternatively, if you type into Google "St. Ansgarius records," the collection will be the first link displayed!

2) The Home Page

You can use the *Browse* menus to narrow your search.

The "Browse all items in the collection" link will display all 10 surviving St. Ansgarius record books for you at once.

The "Browse by decade" menu will display records that have information covering that particular time-period: for example, selecting "1860" will show all the documents that have records for the 1860s (such as the 1849-1865 Parish Register).

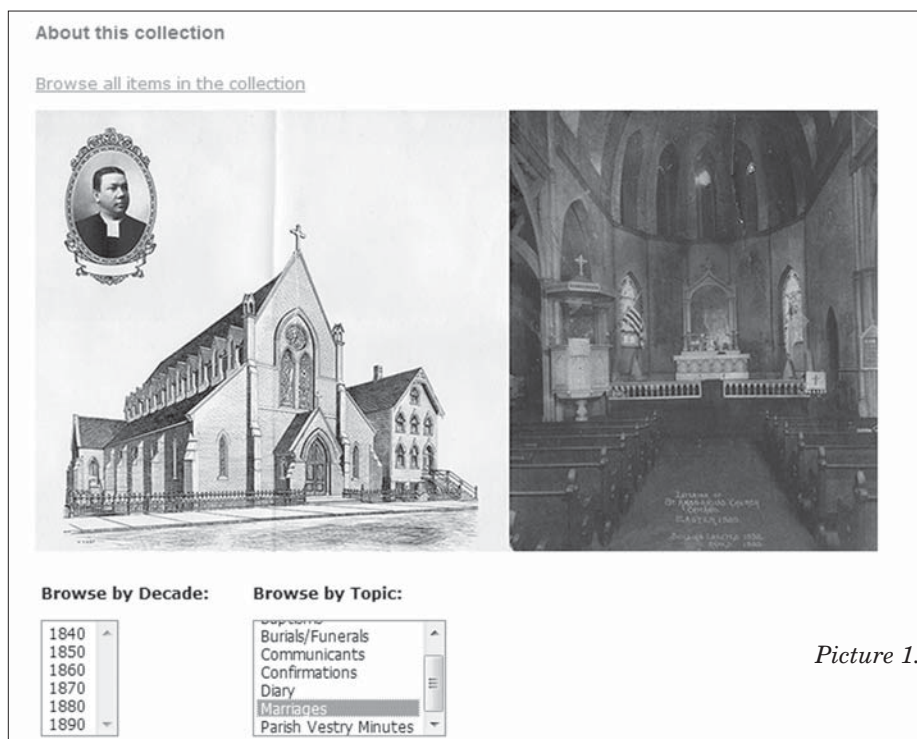


The "Browse by topic" menu allows you to focus on one type of record that you are interested in. For example, if you are curious to see who was a member of the parish at a certain time, clicking on the "Communicants" option will show you all of the records containing lists of parish communicants (documented parishioners who had received the sacrament of Confirmation). Likewise, "Baptisms" will display baptismal records, "Burials" will display burial and funereal records, and so on.

See picture 1.

3) Reading a Digital Document

Once you have selected a document you wish to read, you can move the image within the display window with your mouse, either by clicking and dragging on the image itself, or



Picture 1.

the red square in the upper-left corner. You can enlarge the display window using the arrows underneath the image.

Here is a quick guide to some of the functions on the reading page:

- A: Previous/Next Page:** Use these buttons to turn the pages of the digital document.
- B: Zoom Bar:** Click on the + or – buttons, or drag the blue square, to your desired zoom level.
- C: Full-Screen:** This makes the page take up the entire computer screen.
- D: Fit to Height/Width:** These buttons will automatically zoom in to fit the height or width of the display window.
- E: Download:** This brings up a menu to download the document to your computer. You can either download a single page at various sizes, or the entire document as a PDF through the “All” option.
- F: Thumbnails/Content:** By default, a document displays thumbnails of two-page “spreads.” Clicking on a spread will take you to that image (you can turn pages this way also).

Clicking on the “Content” tab reveals the structure of the document. Each object has its own structure depending on the makeup of the document: that is, lists of names might be organized alphabetically (as in this picture), or baptisms might be arranged chronologically by year.

We hope you are able to make use of and enjoy the St. Ansgarius Records. By publishing them online, we hope that more people will have a new avenue to explore the life of Swedish-American immigrants in the city of Chicago.

Endnote:

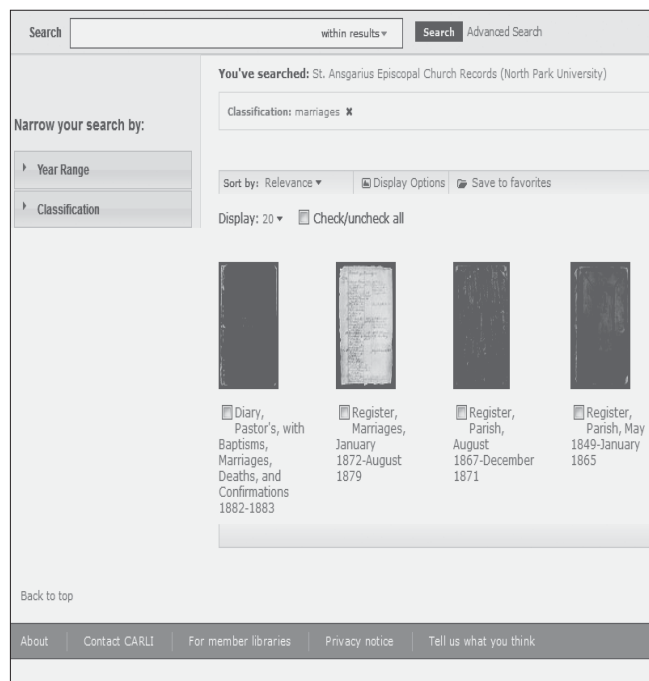
- 1) Ulf Beijbom, “Chicago’s ‘Swede Town’: Gone but Not Forgotten,” *Swedish Pioneer Historical Society*, XV:4 (October 1964): 144.



Mr. Unonius's Memoirs are well worth reading.



Gustaf Unonius (1810-1902). He immigrated to the United States in 1841, eventually settling at Nya Upsala (Pine Lake), Wisconsin. Unonius was the first graduate of Nashotah House Theological Seminary. Bishop Jackson Kemper ordained him to the Diaconate on May 14, 1845, and he was subsequently advanced to the priesthood. He served a number of parishes in eastern Wisconsin and Illinois, and was founding rector of the Swedish Episcopal Church of Saint Ansgarius, Chicago. He returned to Sweden in 1858, but was not accepted as a priest by the Church of Sweden. Instead he became a customs officer and retired in 1888. He died on October 14, 1902, in Hacksta, (Uppl.).



Picture 2, shows an example of the “Browse topic” search.



Picture 3 shows an example of the shortcuts, described above.