

# SWEDISH-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Established to Record and Interpret the Swedish Presence in America*

Newsletter /March 2010

## Coming Events

### *Detroit weekend, Fall conference in Chicago are planned*

The Society is planning a Spring weekend Apr. 23-25 to celebrate the Swedish-American presence and contributions in the Detroit area. On Saturday, participants will tour Cranbrook, where Swedish sculptor Carl Milles and Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen lived, worked and created works of art, followed by a visit to Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum. The weekend will include lunch at the Ford museum and two dinners, Friday at IKEA and Saturday at the Swedish Club of Metropolitan Detroit in Bloomfield Hills.

Friday night, local residents will talk about the area's Swedish history. Speaker at the Saturday dinner will be Marion Marzolf, author of *Shuttle in Her Hand*, a novel to be published by the Society this summer (*see story on page 2*). Full program details and registration information have been mailed to members, with a deadline of Apr. 7 for signing up.

In the Fall, the Society and five other groups will sponsor a conference Nov. 5-6 at North Park University in Chicago, "Contact, Conflict and Confluence," marking the 150th anniversary of the Augustana Lutheran Church and the 125th anniversary of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Co-sponsors are the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center and Augustana Heritage Association, in conjunction with Luther Seminary, North Park Theological Seminary and the Commission on Covenant History.

Formed in 1860, the Augustana Synod was the largest Swedish-American organization in the United States until the merger in 1962 that resulted in the present Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Covenant Church was organized in 1885 as the Mission Covenant Church. Both shared roots in Swedish life and a common history in North America as immigrant denominations. Each ultimately followed their own trajectories as they found their way in American life through the generations.

Conference organizers are Philip Anderson, Dag Blanck and Mark Granquist. Program details will be announced.

### Johnson is awarded Sandburg Medal



Ronald J. Johnson, pictured with his wife, Janet, on Nov. 14 was awarded the Society's highest honor, the Carl Sandburg Medal. *Story on page 3.*

## SAHS Quarterly

### *Volumes 1 through 56 now available online*

Digitization of the first 56 volumes of the *Swedish Pioneer/Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, 1950-2005, is complete, and the full 221 issues are now accessible to researchers and anyone else interested on the Society's web site, [swedishamericanhist.org](http://swedishamericanhist.org). The 1969 and 2003 indexes are also available. Information can be called up by volume, article, name or subject. The year-long project was the work of Kajsa Anderson.

The forthcoming January 2010 issue of the *Quarterly* will feature an article by Marion Marzolf, "The Swedish Presence in Twentieth Century Weaving." Planned by editor Byron Nordstrom for the April issue is an article by Brian Magnusson on Swedish-American artist Olof Granstrom.

## *Society to publish its first novel this summer: 'Shuttle in Her Hand'*

The Society this summer will publish its first novel, *Shuttle in Her Hand*, by Marion Marzolf, retired University of Michigan professor and active weaver. The novel describes the early life of a young woman in Sweden, her emigration and subsequent life as a weaver in the U.S. It combines weaving lore and Swedish-American history as it moves from Rättvik to Grand Rapids, Mich., to Chicago, spanning the 1930s to the 1960s.

Here is how she describes her book:

"The single immigrant woman who successfully survives in a new life in America seems to be missing from our fiction. At least in the Scandinavian immigrant stories I read in college, the female characters were mostly dependent and longing for their old homeland. And yet in the immigration history books (editor's note: like Joy Lintelman's *"I Go to America"*) we read that a number of female immigrants came to America on their own, young, unmarried and unspoken for. I knew that strong, venture-some immigrant women existed, because my Swedish-born grandmother was one of them."

Marzolf taught journalism, American and Scandinavian Studies at Michigan from 1967 to 1995. Since her retirement, she has developed a specialty in writing about weaving and its revival in modern America. She is the author of three books of journalism history, including *Up from the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists*, and co-author of *Fascination with Fiber: Michigan's Handweaving Heritage*. Her article, "The Swedish Presence in 20th Century American Weaving," will appear in the January issue of the Society's *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*.

## *Safstrom, Seeger join board of directors*

Two new, first-time directors were elected to the board Nov. 14 and five others were reelected: Kerstin Lane (honorary Swedish consul general for Illinois), Eloise Nelson, Donald Ahlm, Christina Johansson and Kevin Proescholdt, who also was reelected board chair.

The new directors are Mark Safstrom, a doctoral candidate in Scandinavian studies and Swedish teaching assistant at the University of Washington, and Mary Seeger, retired academic dean and professor of modern languages at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Mich.

Safstrom is a 2002 graduate of North Park University in history and Swedish. Honors include an American Scandinavian Foundation fellowship in 2007 and a Swedish Women's Educational Association (SWEA) scholarship in 2009. He was nominated by students for a UW distinguished teaching award in 2008.

Mary Seeger has been a life member of the Society since her graduate school days. She received a B.A. in German, magna cum laude, from the University of Minnesota in 1961 and a doctorate in German philology from the University of Wisconsin in 1970. She was a Fulbright Scholar in Germany in 1991 and has translated a book of German immigrant letters. She is also a student of detective fiction, especially Scandinavian, and has had articles in the *Armchair Detective* and other publications.

### Books by members

## *'I Go to America' is finalist for Minnesota award*

The Society's 2010 dividend book, *"I Go to America": Swedish-American Women and the Life of Mina Anderson*, by **Joy Lintelman**, is a finalist in the annual Minnesota Book Awards competition. The winners will be announced by the awards sponsor, Friends of the St. Paul Library, at a reception April 17. Another Society book, *Swedish-American Life in the Twin Cities*, was a finalist in an earlier competition.

**Ralph Ekwall** of Omaha is the author of *Tina, an Immigrant's Story*, chronicling her journey from Vadstena to America, struggle to learn English and find employment, her romance and marriage to Ernest Ekwall. It moves from Rockford and Galesburg to Topeka, Kansas, and then Nebraska. The book is available from Willard Books, Omaha.

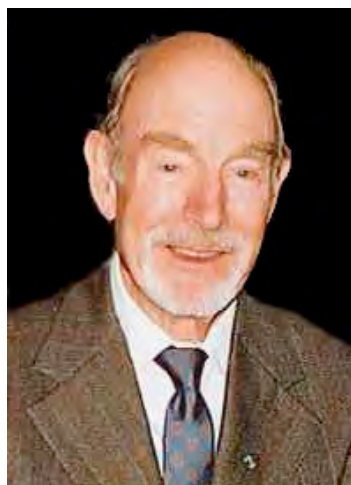
**Lilly Setterdahl** of East Moline, IL, recently honored by the Bishop Hill Society of Sweden as recipient of its 2009 Olov Isaksson Prize, is the author of *Growing Up in Sweden in the Shadow of World War II*, available through Amazon.com. She was honored by the Bishop Hill Society for her extensive immigration research with her late husband, **Lennart Setterdahl**, and her research articles and books.

*Colonial Records of the Swedish Churches in Pennsylvania, Volume 5, The Parlin Years*, by **Peter S. Craig**, editor, and **Kim-Eric Williams**, assistant editor, has been published by the Swedish Colonial Society. In all, eight volumes are planned. For a review of the latest in the series, see the *Swedish American Genealogist*, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, September 2009.

## *Society celebrates an artist, honors two long-time leaders at Fall dinner*

The Swedish-American Historical Society's fall dinner meeting Nov. 14 at Chicago's Swedish American Museum

celebrated the work of the well-known Swedish artist Anders Zorn, who made seven trips to America between 1893 and 1907, painting three U.S. Presidents as well as dozens of the country's prominent business and civic leaders of the time.



Arnold Barton

The dinner also honored two long-time leaders of the Society, H. Arnold Barton, former editor of the *Swedish-American*

*Historical Quarterly* (1974-1990), and Ronald J. Johnson, a director since 1994, chair of two major fund drives, former chair and currently vice chair of the board.

Following a performance of music from Dalarna by Mary Allsopp (violin) and John Hall (nyckelharpa), the authors of the Society's 2009 dividend book, *Zorn in America*, William and Willow Hagans, gave a slide-show presentation of Zorn's life and work in America. At the close of the meeting, they autographed copies of their book.

Society president Philip J. Anderson announced that, at the annual board meeting earlier in the day at North Park University, Barton was named Editor Emeritus of the *Quarterly* and will be so identified in future issues.

Kevin Proescholdt, board chair, presented the Society's highest honor, the Carl Sandberg Medal, to Johnson. In 1980 and again in 1984, Johnson received Nils William Olsson Research Fund grants from the Society for his continuing work in Swedish-American history and genealogy involving Vista, a small settlement in Waseca County, Minn. He is currently working on an updated, expanded version of his 1976 book, *Vista '76: 120 Years of a Scandinavian-American Community*.

Johnson, a resident of Madison, Wis., is the seventeenth recipient since 1978 of the Sandburg medal, previously awarded to Vilas Johnson, Conrad Bergendoff, Selma Jacobson, Franklin D. Scott, Nils William Olsson, Wesley Westerberg, Sten Carlsson, Emeroy Johnson, Emory Lindquist, Nils Hasselmo, Arnold Barton, Eric Lund, Ulf Beijbom, Philip Anderson, Eloise and LeRoy Nelson.

### The Carl Sandburg Medal



### Volunteerism in action

## *Helping provide water in rural Ethiopia*

In February, longtime Society member LeRoy Nelson accompanied a group sponsored by Water 1<sup>st</sup> International, a Seattle-based non-profit organization, on a tour of water projects it funds in Ethiopia. His daughter, Stephanie, is the group's donor relations manager; his son-in-law, Chris Brown, its videographer.

LeRoy writes: "We were hosted by Water Action, an indigenous NGO that provides safe, sustainable water sources in remote rural communities, along with sanitation and hygiene training. We visited four villages in the Oromia region, 60 to 80 miles west of the capital, Addis Ababa. Two have completed water projects and now enjoy the benefits of clean, safe water close to their dwellings.

"In a village just beginning its work, we helped the women carry water from a muddy, unclean stream where animals were also drinking. Women and girls are the water carriers, while the men work in the fields and the boys herd goats and cattle. The funds provided by Water 1<sup>st</sup> pay for the piping, pumps and generators, and the farmers provide the labor, committing several hours a week to dig trenches and construct a reservoir. A major benefit is the children are able to attend school free from arduous water-carrying.

"My main observation from the trip is how incredibly primitive the lifestyle is on these farms. A Swedish connection with the project is SIDA, an international aid organization based in Stockholm, that also provides funds."

## In memoriam

### *Nancy Kahlich, former Society archivist, dies*

Nancy Strand Kahlich, Society archivist and curator in the early 1980s, died Oct. 17 while vacationing in Key Largo, Fla. "She died doing what she loved best: traveling, being near the ocean and enjoying the company of good friends," said her daughter, Susie. "After watching a spectacular sunset on the beach, she died peacefully in her sleep."

Her initial interest in Sweden began as a small child listening to stories from her parents, her mother from Overkallix in the north, her father from Hässelholm in the south, who both immigrated in 1928, met here, married and became citizens. They did not, however, teach her Swedish, which she learned and in which she became fluent during a year at the folkhögskola in Markaryd at age 20 and then working for two years in Gothenburg.

It was her wish to have a Viking funeral and beach bonfire party, and on Nov. 7 her family and friends celebrated her life with a lakeside ceremony and party at the Jarvis Street beach in Rogers Park.

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Society director Ellen Rye writes: "The world of Swedish-American genealogy lost one of its leading researchers when **Peter Stebbins Craig**, 81, slipped away peacefully at his Washington, DC, home on Thanksgiving Day. As a child, Peter listened to his great-grandmother, Martha Yocum, talk about how her family's roots went back to *Nya Sverige*, the Swedish colony established in the Delaware River Valley in 1638.

"Peter tucked the stories away, never forget them. He went on to Oberlin College and Yale Law School, then moved to Washington, where he worked for many years in such positions as legal counsel for the U.S. Department of Transportation and for the Southern Railway. After discovering that doing genealogy only as a sideline doesn't really work well, Peter retired in 1987 at age 59 and immersed himself in researching the Swedish roots his great-grandmother had talked about."

His two books, *The 1693 Census of the Swedes on the Delaware* (1993) and *The 1671 Census of the Delaware* (1999) are definitive works. He died just a month after receiving the first Lifetime Achievement Award of the Swedish Colonial Society.

## Board member Leslee Schiller is mourned

Leslee Ann Schiller (nee Strom) of Chicago, a Society board member since 2005, died Feb. 13 at age 66, three weeks after being diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer. A retired Evanston elementary school teacher and private school (North Park elementary) principal, she was a graduate of North Park Academy and College.

Her grandparents were all from Sweden and one, Ben Nelson, was responsible for establishing the Swedish Corps of the Salvation Army on the East Coast and in the Midwest in the 1890s. A resident of the North Park neighborhood, she is survived by her husband, Walter; a son, a daughter and three grandchildren.

### *Society receives \$51,000 in gifts, grants in 2009*

The Society enjoyed a very successful year in 2009 with gifts and grants totaling \$51,000. And 2010 is underway with a \$1,000 program grant from the Detroit Swedish Foundation, formerly the Detroit Swedish Council.

The \$51,000 received in 2009 consisted of a \$5,000 bequest from the late Dagmar Olsson, widow of Society founder Nils William Olsson, and four major gifts:

> \$19,000 from the American Swedish Institute of Minneapolis to finance publication of the Society's 2009 dividend book, *Zorn in America*. This represented major gifts to ASI from Gerald "Bud" Pearson and Barbro Osher for its 2008 Zorn exhibit and the book.

> \$15,000 from the Osher Pro Suecia Foundation for digitization of the *Swedish Pioneer/Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*.

> \$10,000 from Ronald Johnson of Madison, Wis., which will pay for publication of the Society's first novel, *Shuttle in Her Hand*, next summer.

> \$2,000 from the American Union of Swedish Singers, whose archives were located at the Society's archives until their transfer last year to the Swenson Swedish Immigration Center at Augustana College.

In contrast to some lean years in its early history, the Society today has a healthy endowment that ensures its existence for many years to come. This is due in large part to two large bequests--\$108,000 from Lloyd Nelson of Minneapolis in 2001 and \$145,000 from Herbert Madison of Washington, DC, in 2004--as well as the support of members in annual appeals and anniversary fund drives.