

# SWEDISH-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Newsletter / November 2014

Fall tour a hit

## *Historic Bishop Hill captivates SAHS group*



**By Ronald J. Johnson**

Twenty-eight members and friends of SAHS came from Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota for the Society's Fall Tour of Galesburg and Bishop Hill, Illinois, on the weekend of Sept. 19-20.

On a glorious, end-of-summer afternoon, tour participants drove to the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site in Galesburg to visit the birthplace and boyhood home of the great Swedish-American poet, author, biographer, editor, journalist and folk singer. When SAHS was founded in 1948 as the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, Carl Sandburg became its honorary chairman, so the tiny house near the railroad track, the little museum and the Remembrance Rock under which the ashes of Sandburg, his wife and two daughters are interred had a special resonance for members of the group.

In the evening, Society-member John Norton led participants on a tour to Knox College's historic Old Main, the site of the fifth Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858. After a social hour and dinner in the college's Lincoln Room, three nineteenth-century "dairy maids" from the Bishop Hill Heritage Association filtered history lessons through a pailful of laughter in dance, dialog and song, preparing us for the next day's visit to the historic, communal Swedish settlement.

Tour members caravanned in the morning to the Bishop Hill Museum at the south entrance to the village. Here, as at the Sandburg site, an excellent video provided background and introduced us to the focus of the museum,

in this case, the remarkable paintings of Olof Krans. An immigrant who grew up in the Bishop Hill Colony in the 1850s, the sign-painter in his later years captured scenes of colony activities from his childhood memories as well as a striking array of colony personalities portrayed in his unique, self-taught style. The museum displays a large and well-presented collection of these paintings by the nationally and internationally acclaimed folk artist.

Founded in 1846 by the "wheat-flower Messiah," Eric Janson, the Bishop Hill Colony triggered a great surge in early Swedish emigration, attracting around 1,000 followers to the would-be utopia on the prairie, which also led to wider Swedish settlement in northwestern Illinois. Here, Janson's adherents foreswore private property to live together in large quarters, eat together in the colony dining rooms, worship daily for hours in the colony church, work the fields in large parties, tend animals and found industries and businesses that made the village a center of economic activity for the region in the 1850s.

Today, seventeen buildings remain from the Colony's heyday, maintained by the Bishop Hill Heritage Association (BHHA), the Bishop Hill Old Settlers' Association and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The highlights of the town are the Colony Church, with its original walnut pews for 1,000 worshippers, and the beautifully restored Steeple Building from 1854. Following our visit to the museum, BHHA Administrator Todd DeDecker greeted the group for a tour of the Steeple Building. After lunch, he also led us on a walking tour of  
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## Kerstin Lane is awarded Society Sandburg Medal

Kerstin Lane was awarded the Society's Carl Sandburg Medal May 3 for her service to the Society, the Swedish-American community and the community at large. President Philip Anderson presented the medal at the Society's spring dinner at the Swedish Museum in Andersonville.



A 1974 Swedish immigrant, she became the first salaried executive director of the museum and saw it grow from a rented storefront with 1,000 square feet of space to a building of its own with 24,000 square feet, serving thousands of visitors annually. She is a former honorary consul general of Sweden for Illinois and was the 2011 Swedish Vasa Order Swedish-American of the Year.

Kerstin is a long-time board member of the Society and has also been active in SWEA (the Swedish Women's Educational Association), the North Park University Center for Scandinavian Studies, the Swedish Council of America and the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce.

### Annual meeting

## *Two new directors elected to Society board*

Two new directors were added and two returned to the board after a one-year hiatus at the Nov. 1 annual meeting at North Park University. The new directors are David M. Gustafson, Mundelein, IL, and Lynn Gullickson Spencer, Skokie, IL; returning are William Beyer, St. Paul, and Mark Granquist, Northfield, MN.

David Gustafson (D.Min., Fuller Theological Seminary; Ph.D., Linköping Universitet) is associate professor of mission and evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Theological Seminary in Deerfield, IL. He has taught courses at Augustana College, North Park Seminary and the University of Houston. His dissertation was titled "D.L. Moody and Swedes: Shaping Evangelical Identity among Swedish Mission Friends, 1867-1899."

Lynn Spencer has master's degrees from Indiana University, Northwestern and Wheaton College. She currently works part-time as a music librarian at North Park, a catalog historian at the Wilmette Public Library, and a licensed clinical professional counselor. Her husband, Stephen, is theological and cataloging librarian at the North Park University Brandel Library.

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### People

## *Philip Anderson delivers 2014 Ander lecture*

Society president Philip Anderson delivered the 2014 Ander lecture in immigration history at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center of Augustana College in Rock Island on Oct. 18. His topic was "Voluntary Religion and the Swedish Immigrant Experience." The lecture, presented annually by a prominent scholar in the field, is named after Dr. O. Fritiof Ander, a leading immigration historian who taught at Augustana from 1938 to 1968.

**Kevin Proescholdt**, Society board chair, is the author of two recent articles in magazines marking anniversaries: "First Fight: Bud Heinselmann and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, 1964-65," on the opening battle in the 15-year fight to preserve the Boundary Waters, in *Minnesota History*; "50 Years of Wilderness: America's Love Affair with Wild Places," on the 1964 Wilderness Act, in the Izaak Walton League of America's *Outdoor America*.

Society stalwart **John Weborg** is the subject of a ten-page cover story in the October *Covenant Companion* magazine, "Being John: John Weborg loves trains, shuns computers and brings theology to life for a generation of Covenanters." John and his wife, **Lois**, have been regular attendees at Society events for many years.

**Bruce Karstadt**, president and CEO of the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis, has been elected a board member and secretary of the Association of Midwest Museums.

### Book notes

## *David Edstrom biography is 2015-16 dividend book*

The Society's 2015-16 dividend book for sustaining members and above is *A Man Triumphant: The Divided Life of David Edstrom*, by Rolf Lundén, a biography of the Swedish immigrant sculptor (1873-1938).

Edstrom came to America with his parents at age 7 in 1880. He lived in Ottumwa, Iowa, from 1882 to 1894, when he became a hobo before returning to Sweden for art studies. In 1900, he moved to Florence for further study. He also spent time in Paris, where he became a member of Gertrude Stein's circle.

He returned to the U.S. in 1915 and became one of the founders of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He died in Los Angeles in 1938 after two marriages, "one to the daughter of a Swedish official who wore men's attire," and another to Cora Downer, who Stein described as the bride of "the fat Swedish sculptor who married the head of the Christian Science Church in Paris and destroyed her."

## *Digitization of St. Ansgarius Church records being explored*

The Society's Swedish-American Archives of Greater Chicago under archivist Anna-Kajsa Anderson in recent months has:

–Taken steps to make accessible the records of historically important St. Ansgarius Episcopal Church, founded in 1849 by Gustaf Unonius.

–Digitized five more Society books, bringing the total now available online to twelve.

–Added links to volumes published by the predecessor Swedish Historical Society of America (1905-1934) and to many other books of Swedish-American interest.

–Added a “Search by Author” box on the book collection home page.

–Begun work on a redesign of the Archives website for completion this winter.

The St. Ansgarius records have been closed to researchers since 2009 because of their fragility. Available now only on microfilm at the Swenson Center in Rock Island, they have

been examined by a Chicago conservation laboratory for potential treatment and digitization.

The five newly digitized books are *Scandinavian Immigrants and Education in North America* (1995), *Peter Cassel and New Sweden, Iowa* (1995), *Ingrid: My Swedish-American Life and Adventures*, by Ingrid Bergstrom (2003), *Scandinavians in Old and New Lands* (2004), and *Why I Wrote the Novel About Swedish Immigrants*, by Vilhelm Moberg (2008).

To access the digitized books, go to the North Park web site, [northpark.edu/archives](http://northpark.edu/archives), click on Digital Collections, then Swedish-American Historical Book Collection, then Browse Collection at left.

The new links in the Swedish-American Historical Book Collection are to HathiTrust, a large-scale collaborative effort by research libraries to digitize and make available books and serials online. Hathi is the Hindi word for elephant, known for its memory. More than 12 million volumes have been digitized so far.

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## *Bishop Hill captivates SAHS group*

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the village, during which we visited the Colony Church and had the unique opportunity to inspect the on-going restoration of the Dairy Building, the structure in which the dairy maids represented by our Friday evening entertainers lived, churned butter and made cheese in the communal days.

While the entire little town of Bishop Hill is a registered historic landmark, with its many buildings from the Colony era, it is also a living village with a mayor, fire department, post office, and several interesting businesses largely devoted to arts and crafts. As a group, we enjoyed lunch at the Colony Bakery and Eatery and, on our own, patronized the Colony Store, which supports the BHHA. Bishop Hill is also the site of the Henry County Historical Society Museum and the VASA Order of America National Archives. And, with the unique epitaph of “Murdered,” the colony’s prophet, Eric Janson, lies in the Bishop Hill Cemetery.

Many thanks go to the Society’s Program Committee, with our always superb tour organizers and leaders, Eloise Nelson and LeRoy Nelson, and especially to SAHS and BHHA board-member Kerstin Lane for their work in devising, arranging and coordinating the activities of the weekend.

Galesburg and Bishop Hill Fall Tour participants assembled on the steps of the Colony Church in the page 1

photo are (first row) Gaynal Cross, Eloise Nelson, John Norton, Janet Norton, Lori Johnson, Carol Noren, Kay Olson, Janice Olson, (second row) LeRoy Nelson, Janet Johnson, Ron Johnson, Donald Ahlm, Dee Kleinow, Mary Lee Benson, Don Olson, Charles Olson, (back rows) David Cross, Mary Ann Skoog, Anita Skoog, Carl Boberg, Kerstin Lane, Ray Kleinow, Ted Roberg, Don Benson, Bob Gramen, Mardee Kasik. Not pictured: Carl Appelquist and Ann Hutchins.

### THANK YOU!

Thanksgiving is an appropriate time to say thank you to everyone who makes the Society the successful organization it is:

The board of directors who initiate and oversee our activities in the areas of finance, membership, preservation, program and publication.

Our unpaid president Philip J. Anderson, treasurer Donald Olson and *Quarterly* editor Byron Nordstrom.

Our staff members, archivist Anna-Kajsa Anderson, office manager Karin Andersson and *Quarterly* production manager Sally Johnson.

Most of all, our members, who are the bedrock of the Society.

Thank you one and all.



## Obituaries

### *Long-time SAHS member Helen Fredrickson dies*

A memorial service was held Oct. 5 at North Park Covenant Church for Helen Fredrickson, a Society member since the 1950s. Helen died Sept. 3 at Covenant Village of Northbrook. She was 94.



Born Helen Goode in Yakima, Washington, she taught English at North Park Academy from 1943 to 1950. There she met J. William Fredrickson, also a faculty member, and they were married in 1946. The wedding took place in Finland, where they were participating in postwar relief efforts through the American Friends Service Committee.

From the late 1960s to the early 1980s, she managed the North Park College book store on Foster Ave. Her husband died in 1990.

**Jan Gray**, production manager for Covenant Communications, died Oct. 7 after a two-year battle with cancer. She was 65. Jan worked for the Covenant Offices print shop for nearly 35 years and as such was responsible for printing this newsletter until last year.

**Robert T. Sandin**, former dean of North Park College, died Apr. 5 in St. Charles at age 84. He also served as dean of Northwestern College (Minn.), provost of Mercer University and president of Wood College.

**Art Edstrom**, former North Park College and Deerfield High School swimming coach, died March 23 in Chicago. He was 82. He and his wife, Sandy, were long-time members of the Society.

### **Two new directors elected**

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Bill Beyer is retired director of museum education, collections, and programs at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis. Mark Granquist is associate professor of church history at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Granquist was first elected to the board in 2000, Beyer in 2007. Board bylaws provide directors may serve two consecutive three-year terms, then be eligible for re-nomination after a year.

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Newsletter editor: Eric Lund  
Production: Grace Lund

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### **Society Officers**

Board chair, Kevin Proescholdt  
Board vice chair, Eloise V. Nelson  
Secretary, Carol Noren  
President, Philip J. Anderson  
Treasurer, Donald E. Olson  
At-large, Eric R. Lund

### **Board of Directors**

#### **Terms expiring 2015**

Anne Jenner, Seattle, AWA  
Kerstin B. Lane, Chicago  
Eloise V. Nelson, Northbrook, IL  
Mark Safstrom, Champaign, IL  
Mary Anderson Seeger, Caledonia, MI  
Peter Strom, Chicago  
Thomas Tredway, Hampton, IL

#### **Terms expiring 2016**

Donald Ahlm, South Holland, IL  
Dag Blanck, Stockholm, Sweden  
Anne-Charlotte Harvey, San Diego, CA  
Carol Noren, Chicago  
Charles Olson, Chicago  
Kurt W. Peterson, Chicago  
Kevin Proescholdt, Minneapolis, MN

#### **Terms expiring 2017**

William Beyer, St. Paul, MN  
Maria Erling, Gettysburg, PA  
Mark Granquist, Northfield, MN  
David M. Gustafson, Mundelein, IL  
James E. Holst, Moraga, CA  
Joy K. Lintelman, Moorhead, MN  
Lynn Gullikson Spencer, Skokie, IL

Office manager, Karin Andersson  
Archivist, Anna-Kajsa Anderson  
Quarterly editor, Byron J. Nordstrom  
Editor emeritus, H. Arnold Barton

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