

SWEDISH-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established to Record and Interpret the Swedish Presence in America

Newsletter / September 2018

70th Anniversary Fall Meeting of the Society

The Swedish-American Historical Society will celebrate its 70th anniversary at the Swedish American Museum in Chicago on 20 October 2018. It has celebrated its history every ten years with some combination of symposium or workshop, festive dinner, engaging program, and a featured speaker. This anniversary is no exception and not to be missed by members and friends of the Society.



Richard Tellström

The afternoon event of lectures and discussion, co-sponsored with the Swedish American Museum, will be presented by Professor Richard Tellström and focus on food traditions in Sweden and their relation to Swedish Americans from the time of the mass migration (1840-1930) to the present, through successive generations of descendants and more recent emigration from Sweden. He has been an associate professor at Stockholm University, teaching and lecturing widely through his firm, *På Tal Om Mat AB*, and is also a consultant and freelance writer and speaker on food culture. Tellström is the on-air host and content advisor for the popular Swedish television series *Historieätarna*, or “History Eaters,” which explores Swedish history and food culture from medieval times to the present day.

The afternoon sessions from 2:00 to 5:30 will have two illustrated lectures, with equal time for discussion. The first will address the broader development of a Swedish food culture and what the emigrants brought with them from their own family and communal traditions, and how they have persisted and adapted to the present day. A central research focus for Tellström, he believes that the clearest way to understand nineteenth-century Swedish food practices is through their descendants in America—traditions often quite foreign to contemporary Swedes. The second topic focuses on the development of the *smörgåsbord* and the importance of the “open sandwich.” He will relate these topics to Swedes in Chicago, Swedish-American restaurants such as the Kungsholm (its puppets will be on exhibit at the Museum—see photo above and right), and the dinner to follow catered by Tre Kronor Restaurant.

The evening festive event will begin with a reception at 6:30, followed by dinner at 7:00—a special *smörgåsbord*



planned for the occasion. The program will include music, historical reflection, and recognition. The featured speaker will be Dr. Dag Blanck, Professor of North American Studies and director of the Swedish Institute for North American Studies (SINAS) at Uppsala University. He shares his time between Uppsala and Illinois, where for more than thirty years he has directed the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College. He has served as the president of the Nordic Association for American Studies, the American Studies Network, is the recipient of several awards—including the Society’s Carl Sandburg Medal—and has been a visiting scholar at the University of Minnesota and Stanford University. His sixty-plus publications center on the history of Swedish emigration to North America and on cultural and social relations between Sweden and the United States. Dag is a longtime Society board member and member of its Publications Committee. He is well-known in Sweden for his written and media commentary on current events in the United States and is a central figure in the study and understanding of relations between the two countries. His presentation will address the question: “Where Do We Stand Today? The Changing Nature of Swedish-American History.”



Dag Blanck

The Society has a noble history to celebrate and an exciting present and future to engage. Your presence will make the entire day special, and registration information is on the back page of the newsletter. We hope to see you in Chicago in October!

Society Origins

The Swedish-American Historical Society grew out of the national Swedish Pioneer Centennial celebration of 1948, and dates from two specific meetings held on October 15th at the old Swedish Club of Chicago. That day, fourteen leaders of the Swedish Pioneer Centennial Association gathered at 1258 N. LaSalle Street, for a 4 p.m. meeting and, following dinner, an 8 p.m. meeting of the Chicago committee attended by 115 members. At these meetings, the Chicago committee was dissolved as of 31 December and its assets turned over to the centennial association, which was to be reconstituted as an historical society with no immediate change in name. "We must not stop now," Conrad Bergendoff, chairman of the national association and president of Augustana College, declared at the evening meeting. The assets of the Chicago group, \$10,433.04, were sufficient to pay off the debts of the national body and provide a start-up fund for the new society.

An historical society had been a goal of celebration leaders almost from the beginning. In May, a month before the actual centennial events, Bergendoff and Vilas Johnson (chair of the Chicago committee) expressed this resolve in association Newsletter No. 5:

The first two of the three purposes of the Swedish Pioneer Centennial being in process of fulfillment (to honor the Swedish Pioneers and to make known the accomplishments of Swedes to American life during the past century), we direct our attention to the third purpose--writing the history of our first hundred years in the Midwest.... We are not deterred by the fact that this is a long-term project.... June of 1948 will long be remembered as the Centennial Month, but we propose to make October of 1948 equally memorable....

Thus, the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society was formed from those two meetings on 15 October 1948. The poet Carl Sandburg agreed to become the Society's honorary chairman, which he remained until his death in 1967.

The first issue of the *Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* came out in 1950, and since then the Society has continuously published this journal. Like the Society, the quarterly's name was changed in the 1980s to the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, more accurately to reflect the broader scope of historical research and inquiry beyond just the pioneer era. The *Quarterly* is now in its 69th year of publication. The first book publication of the new Society also came out in 1950, the translated first volume of Gustaf Unonius's two-volume work, *Minnen från en sjuttonårig vistelse i nordvestra Amerika*, whose translated title became *A Pioneer in Northwest America, 1841-1858: The Memoirs of Gustaf Unonius*, published in association with the University of Minnesota Press. More than thirty books have followed this first Society book publication.

From these origins seventy years ago, the Swedish-American Historical Society has grown and evolved AND

continues to focus on its mission of recording and interpreting the Swedish presence in North America.

(With acknowledgements to the late Eric Lund)

Vasa Order of America Award to Bruce Karstadt



The Vasa Order of America named Bruce Karstadt, Society member and former member of its board of directors, the Swedish-American of the Year for 2018. In August, it honored him over a two-week period at several events in Sweden. The order has bestowed this recognition every year since 1960, which commemorates the Swedish emigration to North America and recognizes "exceptional work by an individual in his or her profession" that promotes relationships between Sweden and the United States or Canada.

The President and CEO of the American Swedish Institute (ASI) in Minneapolis since 1990, Karstadt has also served as Honorary Consul General for Sweden since 1995, a role that expanded in 2003 to embrace Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Iowa, and Nebraska. It does not, however, include his native State of Kansas, where he was born, raised, and educated in Lindsborg. He served his alma mater, Bethany College, following graduation from law school prior to his distinguished leadership role at ASI, established in 1929, and in Swedish-American affairs. Under his direction, with the expansion of the new Nelson Cultural Center in 2012 and stewardship of the more than century-old Turnblad Mansion, it now welcomes yearly more than 150,000 visitors and is deeply invested educationally and culturally in its immediate immigrant neighbors, who come from Somalia, Mexico, Laos, and other countries.

In addition to his longtime service to the Society (e.g., instrumental in chairing the 1996 "Swedes in the Twin Cities" conference), Bruce is active in Friends of House of Sweden in Washington DC, American Friends of Uppsala University, the Minnesota chapter of the Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce, Swedish Council of America, the Association of Midwest Museums, and the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center. The recipient of many awards, including the first non-resident to accept the Medal of Honor from the City of Uppsala (sister city to Minneapolis), in 2012 he received the Society's highest honor, the Carl Sandburg Medal.

Congratulations Bruce!

A Coincidental Retrospect of Uppsala Honors

Uppsala University in Sweden celebrated its commencement exercises on 1 June 2018. Exactly eighty years ago to that day, two prominent Swedish Americans, Dr. George M. Stephenson of the University of Minnesota and Dr. Conrad Bergendoff of Augustana College, received honorary doctoral degrees from Uppsala University at the same commencement ceremony. Both historians were leading figures in Swedish America, and both had conducted significant academic research and writing of importance to Swedish immigration and life. The year 1938 also marked the tercentenary of the founding of the New Sweden Colony along the Delaware River, and that anniversary brought renewed attention in Sweden to its long ties to North America.

It was also fifty years ago, in 1968, that Dr. Nils William Olsson received his honorary doctorate from Uppsala University, recognizing his work as a diplomat, historian, and genealogist. A prominent presence in Swedish America, Nils William organized the 1948 Swedish Pioneer Centennial celebration, would later help form Swedish Council of America in 1972, and created the genealogical journal, *Swedish American Genealogist*, in 1981. All three men were instrumental in the Society's founding seventy years ago.

Swedish-American and Swedish-Canadian Church Records Now Online

In May, the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College in Rock Island announced that the Swedish-American and Swedish-Canadian church record microfilms have been scanned and indexed and are now available online at Ancestry.com. The Swenson Center provided microfilms for this project in cooperation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America archives, the Evangelical Covenant Church archives, the Evangelical Free Church of America archives, and the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö, Sweden. Digitized church records include Swedish-Lutheran, -Covenant, and -Free. The Swenson Center has long had these records on microfilm, along with Swedish-Methodist and -Baptist records. They were largely microfilmed in the 1960s and 1970s by the Swedish Emigrant Institute through Lennart Setterdahl. Ancestry.com is available by paid subscription. The Swenson Center has subscriptions for public use by appointment. Many public libraries also have Ancestry subscriptions for free use by their patrons. Latter-Day Saints FamilySearch Centers also have Ancestry subscriptions for public use.

2018-2019 Society Dividend Book

In December 2018, the University of Northern Illinois Press will publish a new book by Dr. Anita Olson Gustafson entitled *Swedish Chicago: The Shaping of an Immigrant Community, 1880-1920*. Between 1880 and 1920, emigration from Sweden to Chicago soared, and the city itself grew remarkably. During this time, the Swedish population in the city shifted from three centrally located

ethnic enclaves to neighborhoods scattered throughout the city. As Swedes moved to new neighborhoods, the early enclave-based culture adapted to a progressively more dispersed pattern of Swedish settlement in Chicago and its suburbs. Swedish community life in the new neighborhoods flourished as immigrants built a variety of ethnic churches and created meaningful social affiliations, in the process forging a complex Swedish-American identity that combined their Swedish heritage with their new urban realities.



Anita Olson Gustafson

Anita Olson Gustafson is the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and professor of history at Mercer University, a past board member of the Swedish-American Historical Society, and a current member of the Society's Publications Committee. This book will be the free dividend book for members of the Swedish-American Historical Society at the Sustainer and above membership levels.

Famous Puppets Come to Chicago's Andersonville

The Swedish American Museum has acquired a most interesting collection that represents a slice of Swedish Chicago's culinary and entertainment history—the Kungsholm Miniature Grand Opera Theatre and Restaurant. It became world famous. An idea emerged in the early 1930s that fine dining could be combined with performances of classical opera by Lilliputian puppets. They were manipulated from below the stage with recorded accompaniment. Now of a distant past, one might think today of the contemporary dinner theater with live on-stage musical performances.

The public was introduced to the concept at the 1939-40 world's fair in New York by the Victor Recording Studios, traveled nationwide, and soon caught the attention of restaurant entrepreneur, Fredrick Chramer, in Chicago. In 1941, the old McCormick mansion on Ontario Street opened as a Swedish restaurant named Kungsholm and the puppet theater was added later that year. Though the restaurant and theatre burned in 1947, it reopened to a 208-seat theater where guests enjoyed *smörgåsbord* and other Swedish delicacies. When Kungsholm closed in 1971, some opera artifacts were stored at the Museum of Science and Industry, and other restaurant items came in time through gifts by Rose Grossinger to the Swedish American Museum.

The opening reception for this unique exhibit is September 28. It will be on display during the Society's festive 70th anniversary dinner and will form a striking backdrop for the afternoon presentations on food practices by Richard Tellström. (See photo on page 1)

Newsletter editor: Phil Anderson
Production: Grace Lund



Kungsholm smörgåsbord c. 1940s-1970s

The Swedish-American Historical Society

invites you to a

FESTIVE 70TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM AND DINNER

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2018

The Swedish American Museum
5211 N. Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois

Afternoon sessions 2:00-5:30 p.m. Reception 6:30 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m.

FALL MEETING RESERVATION

Swedish-American Historical Society
3225 W. Foster Avenue, Box 48
Chicago, IL 60625-4816

Phone: (773) 244-5592
E-mail: info@swedishamericanhist.org

Please reserve ____ places at \$50.00 per person for the dinner and program on October 20.
Please reserve ____ places at the afternoon sessions. There is no cost to attend.

Enclosed is my check for \$_____
Or charge my credit card: Visa Master Card _____ Exp. _____
Name(s) _____ Phone _____
Address _____ E-mail _____
City, State, Zip _____

Please respond by October 12