

SWEDISH-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established to Record and Interpret the Swedish Presence in America

Newsletter / March 2020

SPRING MEETING

“SWEDEN ON A BUDGET: TIPS FOR TRAVEL AND RESEARCH”

Do you enjoy travel to Sweden to explore roots or visit family and friends? Are you doing genealogical or academic research, or perhaps studying at a university or folk school and wish to learn more about logistics and budgeting? Perhaps this might be a first visit or a major memorable excursion taking the entire family. Joining a tour group is always a possibility or just roaming around on one's own could be a preference.

Members and friends of the Swedish-American Historical Society are cordially invited to attend its Spring Meeting on the evening of Saturday, April 25, at the Swedish American Museum in Chicago. The dinner

will once again be catered by Tre Kronor Restaurant, followed by a program where selected members of the Society will speak to the above questions based on their own experiences over many years. Board member Mark Safstrom, Assistant Professor of Scandinavian Studies at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, will facilitate a panel presentation with audience discussion covering a wide range of travel opportunities with



Mark Safstrom

costs in mind. Mark has extensive experience traveling in Sweden as a scholar and as a leader of student study tours and exchange programs.

The Society has a long tradition of helping to arrange travel to Sweden and creating lasting friendships and memories. Consider the successful charter flight program of the 1960s and 70s, prior to deregulation of the airlines. In the summer of 1959, unable to sleep one night in hot and humid Washington, DC, one of the founders of the then-named Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, Nils William Olsson, wondered if sponsored chartered flights with SAS might be an answer to the financial and membership challenges of the young organization. Thus, began twenty years of amazing growth. The first return

flight from Chicago to Stockholm was in July 1960 on a ninety-seat DC-7C for a six-week stay at a cost of \$325. A second charter left New York for Stockholm in August that



year for a four-week duration. The Society then had 585 members and \$174 in the bank. A pattern of two charters a year from three to eight weeks in length (where to join the charter one must be a member) led a decade later to 1,685 members and assets of \$26,430. A brilliant idea while it lasted, fitting the moment and the growing desire of second- and third-generation descendants to reconnect with family and heritage.

On a different scale, the Holiday Lights Advent tours, sponsored by the Society and led superbly by Eloise and LeRoy Nelson, occurred twelve times between 1990 and 2017. Many members went more than once to be in Sweden during this beautiful time of year in early December. Might programs like this continue into a next generation of leadership?

Come and learn, share in the discussion, enjoy fine food and fellowship, and get caught up on the latest news of the Society. If interested in welcoming a student from North Park University to the dinner, please consider contributing to their registration. **Complete registration information is on the back page of the newsletter.** We look forward to being together in Chicago on April 25 and perhaps think about the next adventure!

Well wishes to Margit Fredrickson on her 102nd birthday!

Longtime friend, and likely the Society's most senior member, Margit Fredrickson, turned 102 on February 27 at her residence in Northfield, Minnesota, where she has lived for seventy-two years. Margit was born in Chicago to



Margit Fredrickson

Henry and Hildur Bengtson, growing up in the Swedish-American neighborhood of Brynford Park on the North Side. The family spoke only Swedish at home and thus being bilingual, Margit has traveled extensively and remained in close contact with relatives and friends in Sweden. Through the years, she has devoted much attention to documenting the life and work of her father, a significant figure in the history of Swedish America.

Henry emigrated in 1907 at the age of twenty to Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay), Ontario, Canada, employed as a lumberjack. He became involved in the emerging Scandinavian-American labor movement, with close ties to burgeoning developments in his Swedish homeland, and two years later moved to Chicago. He soon became the editor of *Svenska Socialisten* and active in regional and national politics. He left the movement formally the year Margit was born in 1918, later recording its then neglected history among Swedes and Scandinavians in his pathbreaking history,

Skandinaver på vänsterflygeln i USA, published in Stockholm in 1955. His printing business, System Press, served Swedish-American organizations and institutions in Chicago for decades.

The Society is gratefully indebted to Margit for donating her father's papers in the 1990s to its Swedish-American

Archives of Greater Chicago and being instrumental in its lengthy project of bringing her father's book into English-language translation, so beautifully done by Kermit Westerberg. The British-American scholar, Michael Brook, edited and annotated the volume, which was co-published in 1999 by the Society and Southern Illinois Press as *On the Left in America: Memoirs of the Scandinavian-American Labor Movement*.

To learn more about Margit in her own words through text, photos, and video, visit "Margit Fredrickson, A Swedish-American: The Story of the Daughter of Swedish Immigrants," at www.margitfredrickson.com

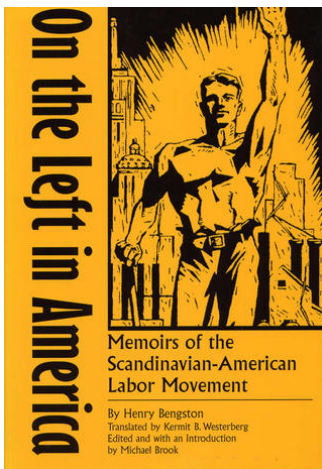
News from Office Manager Maria Ward

The Society would like to thank our members for making the effort to adapt to the new single-renewal date for memberships and subscriptions this past fall and winter. As we communicated last year, the goals were to (1) regularize the Office Manager's workload, (2) reduce opportunities for error, and (3) coordinate membership renewal communication with meeting notice and year-end appeal mailings. As of this writing, we are still waiting for some members to send in their renewal payments for 2020, but the vast majority are all set to enjoy a calendar-year subscription to the Swedish-American Historical Quarterly, with 2021 renewal payments due by December 31, 2020.

Having consolidated our membership renewal season into the six months between September and March, we anticipate that the spring and summer months will provide new time for other types of office work such as reordering out-of-stock books, organizing the contents of our office for easier access to past Quarterly issues and our in-stock books, maintaining our website and Facebook presence, working on outreach and publicity for the Society and its work, and more.

This reevaluation and changing of our renewal policies also prompted minor adjustments in our member benefits, with more streamlined and relevant perks for increased levels of financial support. Check out our website for a fresh look at the new benefits you might want to receive as a part of your SAHS membership.

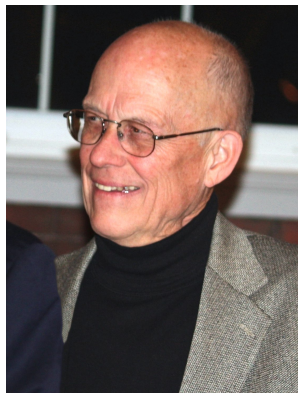
No summary of our efforts to enact a year-end renewal policy for our members would be complete without remembering two passionate, creative, and seemingly tireless members of the SAHS membership committee who brainstormed and worked hard to make this policy change come about in a responsible and workable way, but who are no longer with us. They were encouraging friends and invaluable mentors to me as well as integral members of our committee and the larger board. Mary Seeger and Bill Beyer, *vila i frid* and thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all you gave to the institutions and people who depended on you.



In Memoriam: William C. Beyer (1944-2020)

A longtime influential Society board member, Bill Beyer passed away unexpectedly at his home in St. Paul on February 4, 2020, two days prior to his 76th birthday. A memorial celebration of his life took place at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis on Sunday, February 23, with about 400 friends and family in attendance, a wonderful occasion remembering a fine colleague, whose knack for establishing an ever-widening network of friends never ceased. It was an afternoon of Swedish folk music, poetry, stories, and loving tributes, filled with good humor and pathos.

A graduate of Luther College, Bill earned his Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. His dissertation, "In Search of Common Ground," focused on the seminal quarterly publication of that name between 1940 and 1949, whose founders were inspired by the Settlement House Movement and the Common Council for American Unity. Its wide-ranging set of concerns



confronted anti-immigrant rhetoric and advocated for cultural pluralism that promoted equality in race, class, and ethnicity. Its editorial board included Pearl Buck, Mary Ellen Chase, Langston Hughes, and Thomas Mann. Bill's published essays reveal his own personal commitment to these ongoing issues, with a special interest in Langston Hughes. He collected many original primary sources, now in the collections of his alma mater.

Bill was an untiring champion of Swedish and Swedish-American culture. Following twenty-five years as an administrator and graduate faculty member at the University of Minnesota, he served as Director of Education, Collections, and Programs at the American Swedish Institute during a time of challenging institutional and capital expansion. He always grasped the large picture and had the patience to organize and attend to all the details in an effortless way, not only leading but inspiring his co-workers.

The Swedish-American Historical Society owes an enormous debt to Bill and will be his beneficiary for years to come, the result of his cheerful passion, gifted leadership, friendship, and administrative skill, especially his proactive imagination regarding membership recruitment and systems. His leadership of the membership committee, alongside other colleagues, has put the Society on a firm footing in meeting its mission of publications, preservation, and programs to present and future generations. Bill was an avid storyteller and was as eager to hear them (and learn something new) as he was in sharing them. He exerted unwavering presence and focus, exuding contagious optimism and delight.

In our correspondence, Bill concluded most missives with the sign-off words, "All good." In a commencement address delivered in 2002, he offered words to new graduates humbly modeled by his own life: "Hoping . . . to do good . . . authentically is as close as I can get us to the only practical vocation, the only calling that works life-long. We set out from here to do the good that each of us can do uniquely and that the world needs." He indeed showed us that doing good casts the light on others, creating common ground.

Ave atque vale! The Society extends its sincere gratitude and sympathy to Margareta, daughters Kerstin and Emma, and their husbands and children. Peace to the memory of Bill Beyer among us.

Jessica Smith Joins Archives Staff

The F.M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University is pleased to announce that Jessica Smith is the new Digital Processing Archivist. She is a current graduate student at Dominican University, where she is focusing on archives and cultural heritage collection processing and management. Jessica has completed internships at the Chicago History Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Skokie Public Library, and holds an undergraduate degree in Anthropology from DePaul University in Chicago. As Digital Processing Archivist, Jessica will manage all digital collections, including the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* collection and the Swedish Historical Book Collection within the Society's Swedish-American Archives of Greater Chicago. She will also be responsible for helping to manage born-digital content in all formats.

Bishop Hill Colony Church Needs Our Help

The Bishop Hill Colony Church in the Swedish-American settlement of Bishop Hill, Illinois, requires some major, necessary repairs. This historical structure is owned by the State of Illinois as part of the Bishop Hill State Historic Site. The wood frame two-story Colony Church was built in 1848 and is one of four buildings at Bishop Hill that is owned by the state. Particularly because Bishop Hill was founded in 1846 as a religious communal settlement by Eric Jansson and his followers, the Colony Church may be the most historically significant building in Bishop Hill today. To encourage the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to fund repairs for the Colony Church and the other state-owned buildings at Bishop Hill, readers are encouraged to write to:

Colleen Callahan, Director
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

Newsletter editor: Phil Anderson
Production: Grace Lund

MANY, MANY THANKS TO 2019 YEAR-END APPEAL DONORS!

The following donors generously contributed \$6,066 to the year-end appeal:

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Swedish-American Historical Society Dinner and Program

Saturday April 25, 2020

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

Reception 6:30 p.m.

Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Spring Meeting Registration

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 \$40 per person for the dinner, catered by Tre Kronor Restaurant on April 25.

Also please reserve _____ places for a North Park University student for the dinner and program.

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

Or charge my credit card: Visa Master Card _____ Exp. _____

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Please respond by April 17