

SWEDISH-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established to Record and Interpret the Swedish Presence in America

Newsletter / March 2021

2021 SPRING PROGRAM — SUNDAY APRIL 25 AT 2:00 PM CENTRAL
FREE AND ONLINE

“Busting Myths: A Conversation about Archiving the Swedish-American Experience”

Is it time for spring cleaning? Join us to hear leading archivists of Swedish-American collections share insights into preserving historical records and dispel some myths about what their work entails and how you can preserve your personal and family collections. You will not be surprised to hear that there has been a surge in inquiries from families and organizations who have been at home exploring boxes and computer drives full of documents, photos, recordings, scrapbooks, and other historical treasures. Find out what archivists really think about throwing things away, family bibles, photographs, audio-visual, digitizing everything, preservation, and more!

Our four panelists are members of the Board of Directors of the Swedish-American Historical Society and bring years of experience and expertise in the archival collections of Swedish America:

Andy Meyer is the Director of the F.M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University where he manages the Evangelical Covenant Church Archives and Historical Library, the North Park University Archives, and the Swedish-American Archives of Greater Chicago. He holds an MLIS from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a MA in Theological Studies from North Park Theological Seminary.



Lisa Huntsha is Archivist/Librarian and Assistant Professor for the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. She is responsible for managing the collecting, preservation, and access to library and archival materials at the Center, as well as teaching archival instruction sessions. She holds a BA in Scandinavian Studies from Augustana College, an MA in Museum Studies from Syracuse University, and additional training from the Society of American Archivists.



Anna-Kajsa Echague is the former Director of the F.M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University from 2012-2017. Her undergraduate degree is in Scandinavian Studies and English Literature from North Park, and she received her MLIS from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Kajsa lives in Mahtomedi, Minnesota.



Anne Jenner is curator of the Pacific Northwest Collection at the University of Washington Libraries Special Collections in Seattle where she is responsible for the flagship Pacific Northwest Collection, comprised of archival collections, print materials, maps, and ephemera. Anne is co-creator and chair of We Are History Keepers! a series of free workshops on preserving the historical and cultural record of ethnic communities. She holds an MA in Scandinavian Languages and Literature from the University of Washington and an MLIS from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She served as researcher and cataloger, then as Head of Library at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center in Rock Island, Illinois 2002-2007 and as Director of Archives and Special Collections at North Park University in Chicago 2007-2012. Anne is the president of Northwest Archivists and serves on the board of the Ethnic Heritage Council of the Pacific Northwest.



The Spring Program for members and friends of the Swedish-American Historical Society will take place on April 25 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern, 2:00 p.m. Central, 1:00 p.m. Mountain, and 12:00 noon Pacific times and will last 75-90 minutes. It is free and open to the public. You will find the registration form on the Society's website: www.swedishamericanhist.org and if you have questions, please contact our office manager, Maria Ward. The Zoom link will be sent to registrants. We look forward to your attendance. In addition to presentations and conversation, attendees will have opportunity to ask questions of our archival experts, either in advance or during the program. Welcome!

FALL 2020 PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTED MUSEUMS

More than a hundred people attended the Society's first-ever virtual meeting for members and friends via Zoom on Saturday afternoon, October 25, titled "Turbulent 2020 and the Swedish-American Museum Experience: A Conversation with the Directors." The directors of our four largest Swedish-American museums spoke with the audience and each other about the challenges brought by the pandemic, as well as broader realities faced by all museums in the communities where they reside and serve:



Tracey Beck at the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia; Karin Abercrombie at the Swedish American Museum in Chicago; Bruce Karstadt at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis; and Eric Nelson at the National Nordic Museum in Seattle. The program included a brief report on the Society, creative presentations by each of the directors about their museums, a moderated conversation with the four leaders by board members Anne Jenner and Marcus Cederström, and a time of questions from attendees that arose during the program. We extend our sincere thanks to all who participated!

QUARTERLY EDITOR

As publication of the Swedish-American Historical Quarterly moves into Volume 72 in 2021, the Society recognizes the passing of the editorial baton from Kevin Proescholdt to Mark Safstrom. We are grateful for Kevin's stellar leadership over past years, and welcome Mark to this important role, who will share in the next issue of the Newsletter his editor's vision for the journal in present and future years.

Reflections from Five Years as Editor **Kevin Proescholdt**

It has been an honor and a privilege to have served as the editor of the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* over the past five years. As our readers know, the Swedish-American Historical Society has published the *Quarterly* since 1950, and it continues to serve as the premier source of information about the history of Swedish immigration to America and the Swedish presence in North America.

My work in producing the *Quarterly* covered Volumes 67 through 71 during the years 2016-2020. I was honored to serve as only the seventh editor of the *Quarterly*, following the tremendous record-setting tenure of my predecessor, Dr. Byron Nordstrom, who served as editor from the beginning of 1997 through the end of 2015. Byron's incredible longevity as editor may never be broken, and he published a wealth of historical research and writing in the *Quarterly* during his many years.

During my time as editor, I have tried to build on and carry forward this rich legacy of the *Quarterly*. I particularly enjoyed helping put together eight special, themed issues of the journal. These included issues on the Swedish pietist leader Carl Olof Rosenius; the Swedish presence in Swede Point (Madrid), Iowa; the Symposium on Gustaf Unonius and Saint Ansgarius Church; the Rudman Hymnals from Colonial New Sweden; a retrospective on the life and contributions of former Society President Nils Hasselmo; Lindsborg, Kansas on the occasion of its sesquicentennial; Huldah Wiberg Hanson's remarkably detailed family history story, "Our Kin Folks"; and the early Swedish settlers in New Sweden, Iowa.

I am grateful to many for their support and contributions to the success of the *Quarterly* over the past five years, including Production Editor Sally Johnson, former Associate and Book Review Editor Daron Olson, the Society's Publications Committee and Board of Directors, all the contributors of articles and ideas for the *Quarterly*, and, of course, all of the members of the Society and readers of the *Quarterly*.

Dr. Mark Safstrom of Augustana College has taken over as the editor of the *Quarterly* beginning in 2021. He is a terrific scholar and editor, and will do a tremendous job in guiding and editing the *Quarterly* going forward. The Society is quite fortunate to have Mark as the new editor of the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*.



Kevin Proescholdt receiving the
Carl Sandburg Medal from Eric Lund

The Swedish-American Historical Society will celebrate its 75th anniversary in October 2023. It is important to remember that its origins are in the great nationwide Swedish Pioneer Centennial events of 1948, the culmination of detailed planning by key individuals and organizations over several years, especially seventy-five years ago at this time. The following essay was written by Eric R. Lund (1925-2016) as part of a larger unpublished recounting of the Society's history. Eric served as a board member from 1973-2005, president from 1976-1980, and editor of the Newsletter (along with his wife Grace) from 1997 until his passing.



“More Swedes than you ever saw”

Planning the 1948

Swedish Pioneer Centennial Celebration

Eric R. Lund

When Conrad Bergendoff (president of Augustana College) and Vilas Johnson (an executive at Arthur A. Andersen, becoming the Society's first president) met with President Harry Truman on January 27, 1948, in Washington, D.C., Johnson promised him “more Swedes than you ever saw” if he would speak at the Swedish Pioneer Centennial celebration in June. Sitting on stage at the old Chicago Stadium the night of June 4, the president looked out at an audience estimated at 18,000 to 20,000, one of the largest gatherings of Swedish Americans before or after. At one point, he turned to Johnson and said, “You have Swedes packed everywhere in this building except on the rafters,” adding stereotypically, “scrubbed and clean—typical of the Swedes.”

The rally, in a stadium designed by Swedish architect Eric Hall, was the kickoff event of the centennial celebration that encompassed twenty cities in nine states before it ended June 30 in New York. It came at a time of momentous events in world history with the State of Israel born May 14 and the Berlin blockade and airlift—start of the Cold War—beginning June 24 during the centennial festivities.

The celebration, which led to formation of the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society four months later, had its genesis at the 80th convention of the Augustana Lutheran Church in Rock Island, Illinois, in 1940, when its president, Dr. Petrus Olof Bersell, reminded his audience that “eight years from now, it will be one hundred years since church work began in New Sweden, Iowa.” The convention responded by authorizing the appointment of a centennial committee to plan an observance. The committee reported annually until 1945,

when the Augustana celebration was broadened to include all Swedish-Americans. Credit for the idea of an expanded observance belongs to a Swedish journalist working in New York, Naboth Hedin. The larger celebration was discussed in the Fall of 1945 at a lunch in New York City attended by Bergendoff, president of Augustana College and Theological Seminary; Hedin, and Yale professor Adolph Burnett Benson. Hedin, of the Swedish American News Service in New York, and Benson were co-authors of *Swedes in America, 1638-1938*, published for the 300th anniversary celebration of the New Sweden Colony in Delaware in 1938.

Swedish consul general Gösta Oldenburg recalled Hedin in a 1978 letter: “In the old days, there were two things that created interest in Sweden in the U.S.A., Marquis Childs’ book *Sweden, the Middle Way*, and the Nobel Prize. Hedin was the one who animated Childs to go to Sweden and introduced him there. Hedin went to Bergendoff in Rock Island and sold him the idea of staging a huge “Pioneer Celebration” in 1948, coordinated with Augustana’s centennial. On the way back Hedin came to my office in Chicago to tell me of the plans. Naboth was a wee bit disappointed that I was not immediately enthusiastic. But we knew each other too well to have an argument. He knew that I am slow and cautious, but will perform if I have a good thing. The thing looked very big to me; we would need good men for the Chicago committee, some money, etc. As we know, everything went so well. Vilas Johnson was the ideal [Chicago] chairman.”

In his letter, Oldenburg described Hedin as “a farmer’s son, born in Småland, who came to the U.S.A. in 1900, aged sixteen. He graduated from Harvard and developed a genuine New England mentality. Never went west of (the) Hudson, if he could avoid it. I believe his trek to Rock Island was his only visit to Indian territory. He refused to buy or rent a tuxedo. For this he was branded a hick by Hilmer Lundbeck, Jr. [of the Swedish American Line]. But Naboth’s pride was being a newspaper man, not willing to be taken for a social butterfly. He lived in Stamford, Conn., and ironed his week’s shirts on Sunday.”

The idea of a Swedish Pioneer Centennial celebration was floated by Hedin publicly for the first time at a meeting of the Augustana Institute of Swedish Culture in Rock Island. Not long after, in a letter dated November 19, 1945, Bergendoff invited representatives of other church and non-church groups to a meeting December 1 at the Swedish Club in Chicago to discuss the broader celebration. “No one group,” Bergendoff wrote, “has a monopoly on the noble qualities which have made the Swedish name respected in his country.” Co-signers were Bersell, two other Augustana Synod officials, and Herman G. Nelson of Rockford. Letters also were sent to Sweden and to the governors of seven Midwestern states: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin.

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Fourteen men attended the December meeting and formed a provisional organization headed by Bergendoff, as chairman; Algoth Ohlson, president of North Park College, as vice chairman; and C. George Ericson, representing the Swedish Baptists, as secretary. Others in attendance included Bersell, Nelson, Hedin, Oldenburg, E. Einar Andersson (publisher of the *Swedish Tribunen-Nyheter*), Nils Testor (Rockford industrialist), and C.G. Wallenius (president of Wesley College, Evanston), representing the Swedish Methodists.

The consensus was that “steps should be taken to celebrate the settlement of the early Swedes in the Middle West,” and Bergendoff wrote another letter inviting a larger group to a meeting at the Swedish Club January 26, 1946. C.G. Carlfelt of Augustana and Nils Testor were added to the list of provisional officers as corresponding secretary and treasurer, respectively. The name, “The Swedish Pioneer Centennial,” as suggested by Hedin and Benson, was adopted. The plans called not for a large central observation but for helping individual Swedish American communities across the country celebrate in their own way. The first local committee was organized in March in the Tri-City (Rock Island, Moline, Davenport) area.

By summer, publicity was making plans for the celebration known here and in Sweden. The execution stage can be said to have begun at a meeting April 28, 1947, when Nils William Olsson (then teaching at the University of Chicago) was named executive director, and Vilas Johnson (a partner in Arthur Andersen and Company), was announced as Chicago chairman. The role of treasurer Nils Testor in the centennial cannot be overemphasized. An enthusiastic supporter from the beginning, in 1947 he volunteered to pay Olsson’s salary of \$400 a month until funds could be forthcoming. He was one of three major financial backers, along with W.O. (William Otto) Swanson of Omaha and Johnson, who advanced funds out of his own pocket to the Chicago committee.

An organizational meeting of the Chicago committee, which had the largest role in the celebration, was held at the Swedish Engineers Society on a hot and humid night in August 1947. The meeting was attended by ninety-seven representatives of fifty-six groups who were told the centennial celebration was but a step toward the eventual organization of an historical society. Olsson wrote and got published in the following Sunday’s *Chicago Tribune* an article about the centennial. That afternoon and evening, and for weeks thereafter, Johnson had scores of calls from persons wanting to know how they could help. A finance committee headed by Arthur I. Appleton (Appleton Electric) raised \$103,000. Tax specialists with Arthur Andersen helped expedite government approval of the group’s tax-exempt status.

The Chicago committee decided on three major opening events, the Friday night Stadium rally, a Saturday night royal dinner at a hotel, and a commemorative religious service Sunday night at Wrigley Field. When an indoor location seemed more appropriate, the latter was changed, first to the Medinah Temple, then the Moody Church. Bergendoff and Johnson traveled to Washington, D.C., where they were introduced to President Harry Truman by Sen. Scott Lucas (D-Ill.) and invited him to speak at the Stadium event. A Swedish royal delegation headed by Prince Bertil was announced, and Archbishop Erling Eidem headed a separate church delegation. *(To be continued in the next issue of the Newsletter)*



NEWS FROM ARCHIVIST ANDY MEYER

This report from the Swedish-American Archives of Greater Chicago provides brief updates, as well as a reflection on archival work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Audiovisual Assessment and Inventory

The major project for the spring of 2021 has been completing an inventory and assessment of our audiovisual collections. The F.M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections won a Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Institutions from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2019. After a year of delays because of COVID-19, this work is now well underway. The outcomes of this project will be a general assessment of the audiovisual holdings in all three repositories—the North Park University Archives, the Evangelical Covenant Church Archives and Historical Library, and the Swedish-American Archives of Greater Chicago—as well as a technical inventory of the films in each repository. This grant will also fund the purchase of archivally appropriate containers to support long term preservation of the films.

New Archival Collection

We recently processed a new collection into the Swedish-American Archives of Greater Chicago – the H. Arnold Barton Papers. A distinguished historian, Barton served on the boards of the Swedish-American Historical Society and the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, as well as serving as editor of the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*. This collection contains correspondence, personal papers, and academic writings.

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Reference Questions

These “behind the scenes” projects of assessing our audiovisual holdings and processing new material are all aimed at the same goal: providing access to archival material. Access is the focus, and it is always gratifying to work with a new researcher and potentially engage a new audience with archival material. I was especially excited to get an email from Monica Eng, a reporter with Chicago’s NPR station WBEZ. Eng was working on a story about the history of some Chicago music venues, including The Metro in Chicago’s Wrigleyville neighborhood. This research led her to our archives and to the Independent Order of Svithiod Records. The story is available via WBEZ’s “Curious City” site.

Personal Reflection

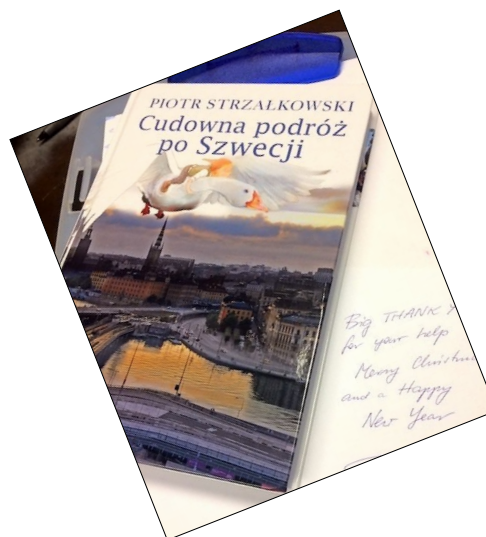
The spring of 2021 marks a full year of the COVID-19 pandemic and I too am longing for a return to normalcy and to human connection. In strange and yet profound ways, however, my work has fostered a different sense of human connection. Working with audiovisual materials, I think of the faces and voices captured on the film or tape. Working with personal papers, I can see notes scribbled in margins and pages dog-eared. And working with researchers, I am reminded that the questions of curious people (e.g., “What is the history of this building?”) can sometimes lead people into other worlds. So, while I still look forward to a return to some sense of normalcy, I am encouraged that my work—and the work of the Swedish-American Historical Society—nevertheless accomplishes a role in strengthening the connections between people.

From Maria Ward and the SAHS Office

This continuing pandemic year has been a wild ride in terms of following up with members who need to renew, offering condolences for lives lost, navigating the upheaval of the U.S. Postal Service as it has related to our book packages getting delayed or even rerouted and sometimes returned, and more. My work during the week gets fit in around remote learning for the older kids and preschool pick-ups and drop-offs for our 4-year-old. Thankfully, I am able to work from home during the week and my hours can be very flexible. I have been going into the office each weekend on either Saturday or Sunday afternoon to prepare packages and envelopes for mailing and to pick up new mail. This fall and winter were made much easier by the help of our treasurer Andy Johnson, who graciously offered to make mid-week office and mailroom trips so the kids and I could stay home. Throughout this pandemic we have continued to have strong book sales and several new members who have joined, although we have also seen many recent and long-

term members drop their memberships rather than renew for 2021. Some of these members and friends have suffered health-wise or financially, others have been too overwhelmed with life to be able to consider adding in extras like journal subscriptions at this point. Our hearts go out to everyone who has had extra struggles over this past year, and we hope for peace and restoration as 2021 moves on. If you would still like to renew for 2021 and you just have not remembered to do so yet, please contact me in the office (info@swedishamericanhist.org) and I will happily process your renewal and keep you on the mailing list for April 2021 and beyond.

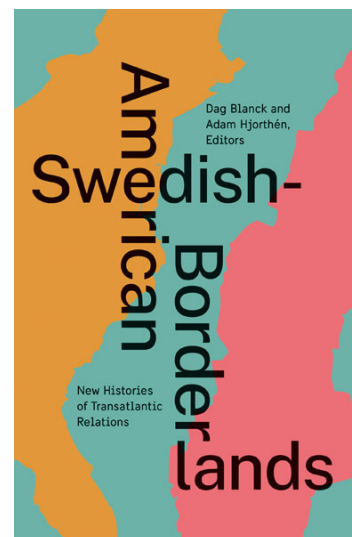
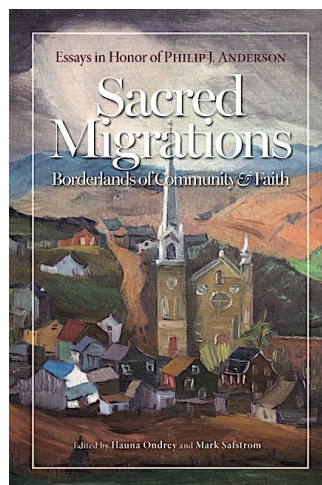
Life as the SAHS office manager often brings interesting connections and unanticipated opportunities. In April 2020, I was contacted by a historian named Piotr Strzalkowski who lives in Warsaw, Poland, and was preparing his book about Sweden for its initial printing run of 300 copies. He found some images on the SAHS website that he wanted to use in his book and wrote to us for permission. Archivist Andy Meyer responded in a quick and friendly manner, sharing the appropriate permissions-form and explaining our acknowledgement policy; our website technician/consultant Chris Brown located the larger, higher-resolution files of the digital images Mr. Strzalkowski wanted to use. He was very thankful for our assistance and permission, and he promised to send us a copy of his book once it was published. Indeed, this new Polish-language book about Sweden and its history safely made its way across the Atlantic Ocean to our Chicago office, along with the author’s warm thanks and best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year. What a unique experience to assist with Swedish-American-Polish historical research and publishing!



Newsletter editor: Phil Anderson
Production: Grace Lund

SOCIETY DIVIDEND BOOK BENEFITS

Qualifying members (Sustaining, Donor, Benefactor, and Patron) should now have received the most recent dividend book for 2020, *Sacred Migrations: Borderlands of Community and Faith, Essays in Honor of Philip J. Anderson*, published by the Swedish-American Historical Society and edited by board members Hauna Ondrey and Mark Safstrom. It is a festschrift that includes several essays by Society colleagues, and recognizes Anderson on his 70th birthday, as well as leadership for more than thirty years as president of the Society. The 2021-2022 dividend book is scheduled to be published in May by the University of Minnesota Press. Edited by Dag Blanck and Adam Hjorthén, *Swedish-American Borderlands: New Histories of Transatlantic Relations* is a volume of essays by scholars in the United States, Scandinavia, and Europe that breaks significant new ground in the long tradition of Swedish-American scholarship. If you are not currently eligible to receive the dividend books, *please consider raising your membership level to Sustaining or above to receive these books for free. Details are on the Society's website. Both books are also for sale by the Society through ordering online or contacting the office.*



MANY, MANY THANKS TO 2020 DONORS

*The following individuals and organizations contributed \$7,595 to the Society,
including a successful year-end appeal response*

Karin and Dan Abercrombie	Anne-Charlotte Harvey	Sandra Nelson and Christopher Brown
Karna and Philip Anderson	Robert V. Hillman	Charles and Janice Olson
Anonymous	James E. Holst	Curtis and Marian Olson
Jennifer Johnson Barkley	Kyle Jansson	Don and Kay Olson
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Dag Blanck	Duane Kullberg	Swedish Council of America Foundation
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Thomas W. Branigar	Diane A. Manthey	Kim-Eric Williams
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