

# Swenson Center News

PUBLICATION OF THE SWENSON SWEDISH IMMIGRATION RESEARCH CENTER

NUMBER 1, 1986

## From the Director:

### Announcing the Swenson Center News

This is the first issue of the *Swenson Center News*, published on the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College. Through this biannual newsletter, we'll keep you informed about Swenson Center activities and ways in which you can use our resources.

#### **"Ethnic Mosaic" conference.**

Our most exciting news is the most recent. We've just received funding from the Illinois Humanities Council for a conference called "The Ethnic Mosaic of the Quad Cities: Past and Present Perspectives."

At the April 25-26th, 1987, conference at the Swenson Center, Marcus Lee Hansen's classic theory of "third generation return to ethnicity" will be reappraised by leading scholars, including Dr. Nathan Glazer of Harvard, Dr. Rudolph Vecoli of the University of Minnesota, Dr. Arthur Mann of the University of Chicago, Dr. Stanford Lyman of Florida Atlantic University, and Dr. Arnold Barton of Southern Illinois University.

The conference will also involve representatives of the many ethnic communities in the Quad City area as well as the general public in lectures, discussions, film, photo exhibits, an ethnic neighborhood walk and, of course, ethnic food.

We will give you complete information on the conference in our winter issue.

**Genealogy classes.** This spring, the Center opened its doors in the evenings to some 20 persons armed with notebooks, pens, and Swedish ancestors.



*The Swenson Center is housed on the third floor of Denkmann Library on the Augustana College campus.*

Thanks to Vicky Oliver, the Center's researcher, the genealogy classes learned how to use the rich resources of the Swenson Center in the search for their Swedish roots.

Even with two sections, we had a waiting list, so we've decided to repeat the course in the next school year. Look for more specific announcements! And read the article in this issue on how to begin your own search.

**Visiting scholars.** Visiting researchers often share their findings with our staff and Augustana students. In February, Per Nordahl, a Ph.D. candidate in history from

Sweden's University of Umeå, spent a week here researching the Swedish-American labor movement. He spoke to students and faculty about his work at a "brown bag" lecture. If you have materials on the Swedish-American labor movement that you would like to share with him, write to him c/o the Swenson Center.

In May, Dr. Odd Lovoll, professor of history at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, spoke about his research on the early Norwegian settlements in Chicago. Dr. Lovoll is the editor of the Norwegian-American Historical Association. **Dag Blanck**

# Who's Who at the Swenson Center



Swenson Center staff (left to right) — Vicky Oliver, researcher/secretary; Dag Blanck, director; and Kermit Westerberg, archivist/librarian.

## Staff

Currently, there are three full-time staff members at the Swenson Center: the Director, the Archivist /Librarian and the Researcher /Secretary.

**Dag Blanck** is the Director of the Center. He has undergraduate degrees from Augustana College and the University of Stockholm and is presently a Ph.D. candidate in history at Uppsala University, Sweden. His research interest focuses on the varieties of the Swedish-American ethnic identity. He has published articles in the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* and *Invandrare & Minoriteter* and is the co-editor of a book from Uppsala University on overseas Scandinavian cultures.

**Kermit Westerberg** is the Archivist/Librarian. Kermit has an undergraduate degree from Oberlin College, a M.A.R. from Yale University and a Master of Library Science from the University of Minnesota. Originally coming to Sweden in 1970 as a graduate student at Uppsala University, he stayed on and lived in Uppsala for a total of eight years. Between 1977 and 1981, he was on the staff of Uppsala University Library. Kermit is also a translator. Among his translations are Lars Ljungmark's *Swedish Exodus* (*Den stora utvandringen*, published in 1979 by the Swedish-American Historical Society) and the final pub-

lication from the Uppsala emigration research project, *From Sweden to America* (published jointly in 1976 by the University of Minnesota and Uppsala Presses). He is presently working on a translation of Henry Bengston's *Skandinaver på vänsterflygeln i USA* (Scandinavians on the Left in the U.S.), which ties in well with his special interest in the history of working-class immigrants.

**Victoria A. Oliver** is the Researcher/Secretary. Vicky has her undergraduate degree from Augustana College. She has lived in Sweden for two years, first as a high school exchange student in Sala in central Sweden, and then studying for a year at the University College in Karlstad. Vicky is the genealogy expert at the Center, and she has achieved a sometimes almost uncanny ability to locate those long-lost and elusive relatives in the church records. In addition, she is very familiar with the source material available for family research in Sweden, having spent several months working as a researcher at the Emigrant Register in Karlstad.

## Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee of the Swenson Center functions as the Center's board of directors. It has recently been expanded to include representatives from most corners of Swedish-America, and also from Sweden.

### Committee members

- Glen E. Brolander, Vice-President for Financial Affairs, Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill., Chairman.
- H. Arnold Barton, Editor of *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, Carbondale, Ill.
- John Caldwell, Director of Library, Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.
- Arthur Dahl, Business Executive, Muscatine, Iowa.
- Nils Hasselmo, Provost of the University of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.
- Chester Johnson, Archivist, LCA Minnesota Synod Archives, Gustavus Adolphus College, St.

Peter, Minn.

- Peter Kivisto, Sociology Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.
- Joel W. Lundeen, Former LCA Archivist, Grand Forks, North Dakota.
- Byron Nordstrom, History Department, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn.
- Nils William Olsson, Editor of the *Swedish-American Genealogist*, Winter Park, Fla.
- Robert Ostergren, Geography Department, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisc.
- Ross Paulson, History Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.
- Harald Runblom, Director of the Centre for Multi-Ethnic Research, Uppsala University, Sweden.
- Lars Scott, Scandinavian Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.
- Harold Sundelius, Dean of Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.
- Mariann Tiblin, Scandinavian Bibliographer, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Thomas Tredway, President, Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.
- Bertil Winstrom, Former Grand-Master of the Vasa Order of America, Mequon, Wisc.

### Advisory Members

- Birger and Lyal Swenson, Founders of the Swenson Center, Rock Island, Ill.
- Conrad Bergendoff, President Emeritus, Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.
- Emory Lindquist, President Emeritus, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kans.

## SWENSON CENTER NEWS

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Telephone: (309) 794-7204  
Dag Blanck, Editor

# How the Collection Began

The Swenson Center was founded through a generous endowment by Birger Swenson and his wife Lyal. Birger Swenson came to this country at the age of 16, graduated from Augustana College and devoted his career to the field of publishing, retiring in 1963. He served as the last General Manager of the Augustana Book Concern, which for nearly a century was a leading publisher of Swedish language material in America.

On December 31, 1980, Birger and Lyal Swenson established an endowment at Augustana College in support of the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center. They wanted to preserve the heritage which had been so meaningful to them and to help Augustana College, their alma mater, which enabled Birger to obtain a much-wanted education.

The Swenson Center opened its doors on September 1, 1981, almost a century after the year in which the greatest number of emigrants left Sweden (1882 with 44,500 registered emigrants).

Although the Swenson Center is only five years old, it is a part of a more than century-long interest in preserving records and interpreting the history of Swedish immigration to the United States in Rock Island and at Augustana College. As early as the middle of the nineteenth century, Augustana's future president, the pastor and newspaper editor T. N. Hasselquist, started collecting Swedish-American newspapers, keeping one for the Augustana Library and sending one to the Royal Library in Stockholm. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, histories of the immigration and of leading Swedish-Americans were being published by the Augustana Book Concern.

The Augustana Synod named pastor Erik Norelius its official "historiographer" as early as 1869, and commissioned him to write a history of the Swedish immigration to the U.S., which resulted in his monumental two volumes: *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarnas och Svenskarnes Historia i Amerika* published in 1890 and 1916.

In 1905, the Swedish-American Historical Society was founded under the leadership of Johan A. Enander, journalist, author, sometime professor of Swedish at Augustana and, by one historian called "the most prominent layman in the Augustana Synod." The Society was formed in Chicago, but its collections were moved to Rock Island in 1917 and kept at Augustana until 1921, when it finally moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1930, finally, the Augustana Historical Society was formed in Rock Island.

Under the leadership of professional historians and academics, this Society has been devoted to an ambitious publications program: so far 33 volumes have been published. In 1938, the Society published immigration historian Marcus Lee Hansen's *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant*, which has proven to be one of the most influential pieces of writing in the field of immigration history.

In keeping with its commitment to the preservation of the Swedish-American press, the Augustana College Library has taken a very active part in various microfilming projects which have

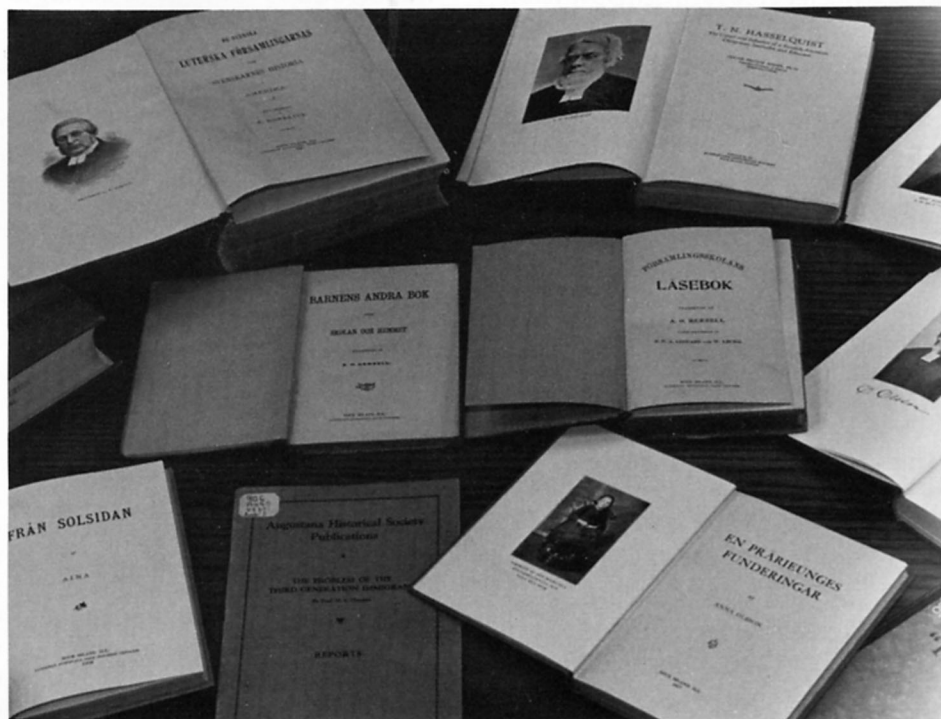
been carried out over the last decades.

In 1955, the Library initiated contacts with the Royal Library in Stockholm about microfilming the newspapers. The Royal Library was interested, but the problem was always, money.

Through the financial support of Augustana College, the first significant Swedish-American newspaper, *Hemlandet*, was filmed. Through cooperation of, among others, Augustana College Librarian Ernest Espelie, Augustana History Professor Fritiof Ander and Uno Willers of the Royal Library, the Wennergren Foundation in Stockholm allocated 100,000 crowns (roughly \$20,000) towards the project. This grant covered the filming of six additional newspapers, including *Svenska Amerikanaren* (Chicago), *Svenska Amerikanska Posten* (Minneapolis), and *Texas Posten* (Austin).

When the Swedish sources were drying up, the Augustana Library and its Director, John Caldwell, together with Augustana College Vice President Glen Brolander showed continued support for the preservation of the

*continued on page 6*



Part of the Swenson Center's Immigration Collection includes many books published by the Augustana Book Concern.

No.	RESIDENCE	Connections		NAME	BORN AND BAPTIZED		Confirme
		Male	Female		WHEN	WHERE	
T. List			X	Clara Lindelöf	19/37	Stockholm, Sweden	
"	Daughter	X		Augusta Christina	19/70	Lindköping	1/4/84
"	Son	X		Peter Emanuel	26/12/76	14/1/77 Woodbury	5/4/9.

## In Search of Roots at

Since its opening in 1981, the Center has acquired a great number of important collections, dealing with all aspects of Swedish immigration to the United States. In this and future issues of the News, we will describe some of the most important sources and collections and how they can be used.

One of the Swenson Center's main tasks has been to provide assistance to family historians. Most of the sources for Swedish-American family research at the Swenson Center are unique.

If you are of Swedish descent you are particularly fortunate since both Swedish and Swedish-American sources are of an unusually high quality. At the Swenson Center many of these are available, but we can, however, only provide you with information about the immigrants in this country. We will help you to get in touch with the appropriate archives in Sweden if you wish more information from the Swedish side.

This article will describe some of the more important sources at the Center, and provide practical information on how to prepare yourself before you start in on your work.

The most frequently used source of information at the Center are the microfilmed **Swedish-American church records**. They represent congregations from the

following denominations: Augustana Lutheran, Mission Covenant, Evangelical Free, Swedish Methodist and Swedish Baptist Churches.

These records were inventoried and filmed by the Emigrant Institute of Växjö, Sweden, during the 1960's and 1970's and by the Swenson Center between 1982 and 1984. More than 1,700 Swedish-American congregations in the U.S. and Canada have been filmed and are on deposit at the Center.

The church records are divided into four different categories: minutes from meetings, membership records, ministerial acts and other records. Of these four categories, membership records and records of ministerial acts are the most useful for family history research.

**Membership records** often include entire families, listing names, dates and places of birth, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, time of arrival in the U.S., time of reception into the congregation, dates of death and dismissal from the congregation. These records have generally been filmed up to 1930. If members moved away from the congregation, the records will sometimes list the congregation to which they moved.

**Ministerial acts** are an equally valuable source, including records of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, funerals, receptions and dismissals of members. Baptismal records, for example, nearly always

give the names of the person's parents and indicate if they were church members. If the church records are complete and accurately kept, they can provide a wealth of information to the family history researcher.

Through volunteer efforts at the Center, personal name indexes have been prepared for the pioneer congregation of Andover (Illinois) Lutheran Church and are in progress for First Lutheran Church of Moline (Illinois).

Equally valuable sources of information, especially if one already knows the year of emigration, are the **indexes to the embarkation records** kept by the harbor police in the Swedish ports of Göteborg (Gothenburg) and Malmö, and the **registration of the early emigrants** by the Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics.

These records list the name, age, last place of residence, destination in the U.S., date of departure from Sweden, and the index number of the emigrant contract.

The original emigrant contracts are kept by various Swedish archives and can be located via the contract number. The emigrant contract will list the name of the agent, the name and destination of the ship, the price of the ticket, whether it was paid for by the emigrant himself or by someone else, and whether the emigrant was travelling alone or in a group.

Another very important col-



Board of Trustees (1875-1884), all in English.

**Hope Academy, Moorhead, Minnesota:** Papers (1890's). Hope Academy was started in 1888 by Swedish settlers in the Red River Valley, Minnesota, because they thought that Gustavus Adolphus College and Academy were too far away for their children to attend.

Donations and subscriptions for the school were raised by the Lutheran Benevolent Society of the Red River Valley, which operated the institution up to 1892, when ownership was released to the Alexandria and Red River Districts of the Minnesota Conference of the Augustana Lutheran Church. The economic depression of the 1890's had severe consequences for the Red River Valley and ultimately led to the demise of Hope Academy in 1896.

This collection consists primarily of individual and group portraits of Academy faculty and students, most of whom are identified.

**Luther College and Academy, Wahoo, Nebraska:** Papers, 1903-1962. Incorporated on March 29, 1883, as a Lutheran educational institution (Augustana Synod) in the state of Nebraska, Luther College and Academy was operated by the Nebraska Conference of the Augustana Synod until 1962, when it merged with Midland College (Fremont, Nebraska).

This collection includes an 11-page manuscript of the College, various printed matter (choral programs and promotional brochures) and several photographs of campus buildings, college administrators, organizations and activities.

In addition, the extensive records of **Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois**, the oldest Swedish-American education institution, are found in the Augustana College Archives, located adjacent to the Swenson Center.

In future issues of the *News*, we will present other major institutional as well as personal collections at the Center. Examples of these collections include the extensive G. N. Swan collection, the Ernst Teofil Skarstedt collection and the recently acquired very extensive Axel Lundeberg collection.

## Collection

*continued from page 3*

Swedish-American press by managing to interest various State Historical Societies in microfilming. More importantly, they raised and allocated more than \$30,000 for the continued filming and positive print purchases. The holdings at the Augustana College Library increased from 637 rolls in 1977 to more than double (1,537 rolls) two years later.

A total of 237 newspapers are now available at the Swenson Center. Mrs. Lilly Setterdahl served as the coordinator for this project. When the Swenson Center was founded in 1981, the Augustana Library transferred a great number of collections to the Center, of which these microfilm rolls were one of the most significant parts.

The Swenson Center should thus be seen against this background of a strong interest in and a commitment to the preservation of the history of Swedish immigration to the United States in Rock Island. It is the only institution in this country devoted to the preservation and interpretation of the total impact of Swedish immigration to the U.S., regardless of religious or political affiliations or geographic location.

In the next issue, we will have more about the collection activities of the Center itself since 1981.

## How to begin your search for roots

Before you start the quest for your roots at the Swenson Center, you should collect as much information as possible, thus making the search easier and more efficient. The following are some tips on how to prepare yourself:

1. Talk to older relatives and ask them where the immigrants' children were baptized and confirmed (denomination and location of church).

2. Search for old letters and other documents from Sweden, including photographs (name and location of studio) and family Bibles.

3. If possible, obtain copies of naturalization records, marriage licenses, deeds, death certificates (from county courthouses), census records and listings in city directories (from local libraries). These types of documents will provide you with addresses for ancestors and can help you determine which congregation they may have belonged to. A pastor's signature on an official church document is also helpful.

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# Who uses the Swenson Center?

The unique resources at the Swenson Center are used by a great number of many different people. Since the Center opened its doors in 1981, well over 2,000 persons have visited and made use of the materials at the Center.

The great majority of these visitors have been interested in finding their roots, making use of the outstanding genealogical sources. In addition, some 1,000 people from almost all states of the Union and from Sweden have been assisted in finding their relatives by writing to our genealogist.

Moreover, many academic researchers have utilized the collections at the Center. The following is a partial list of scholars who have been here and the projects on which they have been working. It shows not only that the Center attracts scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, but also indicates the variety of subjects dealing with Swedish immigration to the United States that can be studied at the Center.

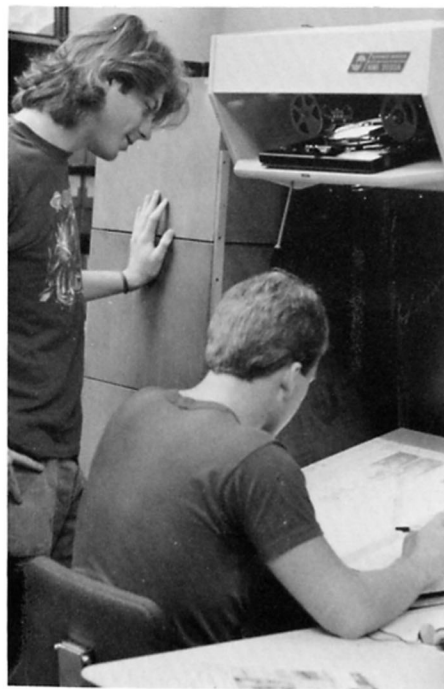
## American scholars

Dr. Lars Scott of the Scandinavian Department at Augustana College has made extensive and almost daily use of the Center's various collections for his forthcoming study of the very early and virtually unexplored Swedish immigration to Texas. Here, instead of harvesting corn and wheat on the Midwestern fields or working in factories in Chicago or Rockford, Swedish immigrants ginned cotton, herded cattle and even started one of the largest ranches in the state.

Work on the Swedish utopian settlement of Bishop Hill, Ill., has been done by Dr. Alan Swanson from Brigham Young University in Utah and Peter E. Carlson from the University of Illinois. Dr. Mary Swanson from College of St. Thomas in Minneapolis has researched some long forgotten but very talented Swedish-American artists, and Dr. Janet Rasmusen of Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Wash., did work on Scandinavians in the Pacific Northwest. Dr. Nils William Olsson of Winter Park, Florida, has been a frequent researcher at the Center.

Among other things, he has located a previously unknown address calendar for the Swedes in Cleveland among the Center's holdings. Elsie Schebler of the Putnam Museum in Davenport, Ia., did work on the Swedish-American heritage of the Quad-Cities.

The Center's collections have also been used extensively by Augustana College students for various class assignments. Courses that have made use of our resources include "Immigration History and Literature," "Historiography," "American Ethnic Minorities" and "Scandinavian History" offered in the College's Scandinavian, History and Sociology Departments.



*Two Augustana students review microfilm of immigration records at the Swenson Center.*

## Swedish scholars

The rich and exciting literature written by and for Swedish immigrants in the United States is a sadly neglected field of study. Especially the Old Country has ignored this important part of Swedish literary history, perhaps only because this Swedish literature was printed and published on the other side of the Atlantic.

Recently, however, Swedish literary scholars have discovered this body of writing, and some of the

more prominent researchers have come to the Center to use our extensive collection in this field. They include Professor Lars Furu-land of the Department of Literature at Uppsala University and Anna Williams, doctoral candidate from the same department, who is preparing a study of the newspaper editor and author Jacob Bonggren. Birgitta Svensson from the University of Gothenburg has researched the Swedish-American literary annual *Prärieblomman*, and Dr. Mona Pers from the University College at Västerås did work on Willa Cather and the Swedish immigrant.

Other recent researchers from Sweden include Dr. Harald Runblom from the Centre for Multi-Ethnic Research at Uppsala University studying the relationship between the immigrants and the Old Country. Doctoral candidate Per Nordahl from the History Department at the University of Umeå used the Center's resources for his dissertation on the Swedish-American labor movement.

## Visitors

The Center has been visited by a number of Swedes and Americans in various capacities and on various occasions. Some of these visitors attended conferences at the Center, others (especially the Swedes) were passing through the area and just wanted to visit the Center. A partial list of Swedish visitors includes Archbishop Bertil Werkström of Uppsala; Dr. Peter Wallenberg of Drottningholm; the present and former Swedish Consuls General in Chicago, Lars Arnö and Arne Thorén; Author Göran Palm of Stockholm; Professor Sten Carlsson of Uppsala University; Dr. Ulf Beijbom of the Emigrant Institute in Växjö; and the Director of the Emigrant Register in Karlstad, Erik Gustavson.

American visitors include: Dr. Franklin Scott of Claremont College in Claremont, Calif.; Dr. Marion Marzolf of the University of Michigan; Dr. Rochelle Wright of the University of Illinois; and Mariann Tiblin, Scandinavian bibliographer of the University of Minnesota.

# Support for the Swenson Center

We would like to express a heartfelt thanks to those donors who have made significant contributions to the preservation of the history of Swedish immigrants in America.

While the Swenson Endowment provides a large part of the financial support for the Swenson Center, it does not cover all of the costs.

Gifts from friends are immensely important to the Center as it works to preserve and interpret the records of Swedish immigration to North America. We welcome gifts of any size. All donors are considered "Friends of the Swenson Center" and receive mailings from the center. We greatly appreciate the financial support of all who value the Swedish heritage in America and the work being done by the Center.

If you have materials that you think could be of interest to the Center, we encourage you to contact our archivist, Kermit Westberg, to discuss appropriate ways in which you can share these materials with us. We are especially interested in the following items:

- Personal papers of Swedish immigrants and their families: letters, diaries, certificates, photographs, family histories, and genealogies.
- Organizational papers from Swedish-American fraternal and labor associations, societies and clubs.
- Minutes, correspondence and other records from business

firms started by Swedish immigrants.

- All types of printed and unpublished material related to Swedish immigration and Swedes in America.

## GIFTS

*The following major gifts are gratefully acknowledged:*

### \$10,000 and over

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Dahl  
Dr. and Mrs. Birger Swenson  
Lutheran Brotherhood  
National Historical Records  
Publication, Records Commission  
Swedish Council of America  
Wallenberg Foundation

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Dr. Paul Youngberg Memorial Gifts

## Swenson Center Office Hours, Phone Numbers and Address

The Center is located on the third floor of the Denkmann Memorial Library on the Augustana College Campus, 3520 - 7th Avenue, in Rock Island, Ill.

The mailing address is Swenson Center, Box 175, Augustana College, Rock Island, IL 61201.

The Director can be reached by telephone at (309) 794-7443, the Archivist/Librarian at (309) 794-7221 and the Researcher/Secretary at (309) 794-7204.

**Office hours** are from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. every day except Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

Hours may be restricted during school vacation periods.

If you plan on visiting the Center, we encourage you to make an appointment by calling or writing in advance.

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