

Swedish Immigrant Reminiscences

H. ARNOLD BARTON

I

It is possible to read a great deal about immigration and immigrants in North America and still remain remarkably little aware of what the immigrants wrote about themselves and their recollections. The Swedish immigrants provide a particularly good example of this.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, when Swedish emigration to America began on some scale, Sweden's population was already one of the most literate in the Western World, and this despite the fact that a law requiring that every parish maintain a school was not passed until 1842. The Italian historian Carlo M. Cipolla has estimated that by 1850 the basic literacy rate in Sweden had reached 90 percent, the highest for any of the major European countries and slightly higher than that of the white population in the United States.¹

This does not mean, however, that ordinary people who lived out their lives in their old home localities normally left behind them very much in writing. For those who departed across the sea the situation could be very different. They could feel a strong urge to put down their new and unfamiliar experiences on paper to share with others, both back home and in future generations, as well as to help themselves to understand their own situations. Some of the immigrants' children also wrote recollections of their families and Swedish-American backgrounds. So many Swedish Americans took pen in hand that G. N. Swan would claim in 1930 that his Swedish-American countrymen appeared to be more afflicted by the "writer's itch" than other Americans.²

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Their writings were of various kinds. Most numerous were the "America letters" they wrote to family and friends back in the Old Country. Over the roughly ninety years the great migration took place, between around 1840 and 1930, they must have numbered in the millions, of which probably only a few thousand are still preserved and a far smaller number have found their way into print.³ Immigrants meanwhile corresponded with each other in the new land. Many kept diaries, some of which have been published.⁴ In more recent decades, oral interviews with old immigrants have been recorded on tape.⁵

Our focus here is upon Swedish-American autobiographical writings, which are far more numerous than might be imagined. By this we mean personal reminiscences deliberately written for publication in some form, by persons who actually lived in North America; not included here are the travel accounts of a number of Swedish visitors.⁶ Such writings in turn fall into various categories. The most ambitious were autobiographies, published in book form, covering the author's life up to the time of publication. While for economic reasons these were usually slim and unpretentious, there were exceptions. Surely the most remarkable in this regard was the physician Johannes Hoving's five stout, well-bound, and illustrated volumes, published in Stockholm between 1944 and 1953. While most of these autobiographies appeared during their authors' lifetimes and just as they were written, several have been brought out at later times, edited to a greater or lesser degree and in some cases in translation, for example the English translations of Gustaf Unonius's or Eric Norelius's recollections, or the reminiscences of Charles J. Hoflund or Erick Youngquist.

Many immigrants left accounts of certain episodes in their lives in Swedish or Swedish-American periodicals or in local newspapers in both Swedish and English, on both sides of the Atlantic. Most of these amounted to no more than a few pages. In later times, some Swedish Americans have written recollections in response to inquiries by scholars, both amateur and professional, which have thereafter appeared in anthologies.⁷

In certain cases it is difficult to determine whether an impersonal account of a historical event or development, based largely on other

sources but in which the author was to some extent personally involved, ought to be considered autobiographical in nature. In the list of immigrant memoirs and reminiscences that follows, I have had to follow my best judgment in this matter.

What is striking, upon closer consideration, is not only how many and varied Swedish immigrant reminiscences have come out in print, but also how little this material has been utilized by historians of the Swedish migration and the Swedes in North America. To be sure, some use has been made of the autobiographies of certain prominent Swedish Americans, such as the early Wisconsin pioneer and Episcopalian missionary Gustaf Unonius; Pastor Eric Norelius, one of the founders of the Augustana Lutheran Synod; the journalist Ernst Skarstedt; and especially the Civil War colonel, politician, and immigration agent Hans Mattson. But the great mass of published immigrant recollections are notable by their absence in the scholarly literature. Only a few scholars, perhaps most notably the Swedish ethnologist (and novelist) Albin Widén, have given them much notice.⁸ One must naturally wonder why this should be.

There appear to be several reasons why this literature has not been used extensively. In the first place, the immigrant reminiscences are most often very difficult to find—or even to find out about. Most of those that came out in book form were privately published by their authors at their own expense, printed locally and in very small editions. Few copies still exist, most probably on the bookshelves or in the attics of descendants of their authors. Many are not to be found even in the leading library collections of Swedish-Americana, such as the Tell G. Dahllöf Collection at the University of Minnesota Library in Minneapolis, the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center in Rock Island, Illinois, the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö, or the Royal Library in Stockholm. Occasionally one might be lucky enough to find one or another in some dusty corner of a used book or second-hand store. There exists no single listing of such material that comes anywhere close to completeness, although there are some that are useful.⁹

There are the additional complications that the great majority of the immigrant reminiscences, at least in book form, were written in Swedish and were published in Sweden by returned immigrants. Even

if they can be located in North American libraries—which often enough proves impossible—American researchers who might be interested in them often cannot read Swedish or do not read it well enough to be able to make very effective use of them.

One may speculate over why so many were the work of returned emigrants. It may well be imagined that those who returned home had what both they themselves and those around them felt to be particularly exotic and adventurous tales to tell, of a kind that might not seem so novel to Swedish Americans. In their old home surroundings, they might surely have felt a particular urge to relive their experiences across the sea and to share them with others who encouraged them to do so.

Autobiographical writings raise complex questions which many historians would prefer not to face. What has the author seen fit to recall—or *not* to recall—in his or her published account? Characteristically, immigrant recollections give particular attention to certain episodes, above to all the departure from home, the Atlantic crossing and overland journey to American destinations, and the trials and tribulations of the first years in the new land. Some recount visits back to the old homeland, often after long years of absence. But often they say little or nothing about other things that historians would like to know more about.

A good example are the reminiscences of Colonel Hans Mattson, surely the best-known and most frequently cited Swedish-American autobiography, partly at least because it came out in English, as well as Swedish, in 1891. Mattson has much to tell about his reasons for leaving Sweden in 1851, the sea voyage, his experiences as a pioneer in Minnesota, in the Civil War, and—at considerable length—as American consul-general in Calcutta from 1881 to 1883. But he says disappointingly little about his activities as a journalist, Minnesota's secretary of state, and a highly successful immigrant recruiter for both American and Canadian railroads from the 1870s on—all matters of great interest to historians.¹⁰

In what ways, moreover, are personal reminiscences affected by such things as the passage of time, faulty memory, or later knowledge and experience? In one instance (I no longer remember where), an old immigrant recalled his feelings upon sailing into New York har-

bor and seeing the Statue of Liberty—several years before the statue was actually erected. The writers likewise tend to feel an understandable desire to present themselves in the best possible light, and sometimes to get back at personal opponents as well. Or there is quite simply the urge to “improve” upon the truth—to tell a tale that loses nothing in the telling.

Indeed, some of the most readable and entertaining immigrant reminiscences are written in a tongue-in-cheek, burlesque style that clearly reflects the work of America’s classical nineteenth-century humorists such as Mark Twain or Bret Hart. August Andrén, one of the many who wrote of his American years after returning home to Sweden, has much of interest to say about conditions among Scandinavian immigrants on the Great Plains during the 1860s and 1870s; but in places, such as where he purportedly gives an eyewitness account, complete with dialogue, of the negotiations between the Sioux chief Red Cloud and government agents that preceded the Sioux Rebellion of 1867, one naturally suspects a large dose of pure imagination.¹¹

In some cases, reminiscence clearly fades over into fiction. A prime example is *Jan Olsons äfventyr* (Jan Olson’s adventures) from 1892 by Gustaf Sjöström, which combines valuable insights into the Swedish immigrant life of the time, particularly in Chicago, with pure tall tales from the American wilderness. In much of this account “Jan Olson from Kil” becomes a kind of Swedish-American Baron Münchhausen. An even more obvious case is the largely fictionalized and melodramatic *Bland svenskar och yankees* (Among Swedes and Yankees) from 1894 by the Swedish journalist Hjalmar Cassel, written after he spent a year working for a Swedish-American newspaper in St. Paul.¹² At this point, the distance is not great to purely literary Swedish works broadly based upon the authors’ experiences in America, such as some of the novels and short stories of Hilma Angered-Strandberg, Henning Berger, Vilhelm Moberg, Walter Dixon, or Sven Delblanc.

It meanwhile cannot be denied that, as interesting as many of the published immigrant recollections may have been to family, friends, and neighbors at the time they came out, they make pretty humdrum reading today. Most were, after all, written by persons of humble

origins and little schooling. Many consist of little more than a string of everyday anecdotes from the writers' lives, with little attention paid to the world around them. As common folk—and, not least, as Swedes—their authors were not usually given to analyzing or openly expressing their feelings. Or, if they did so, it was most often in conventional, stereotyped terms that kept them safely at arm's length.

If immigrant autobiographies are in many ways problematical sources for historians to work with, the same is no less true of the other forms of direct testimony that the immigrants left behind them. Diaries often record only day-by-day events and reminders without comment. Emigrant letters recount events that seemed important at the time they were written. But they, too, could be affected by questions of what it seemed best to include or to leave out, which in turn could largely depend upon whom they were written to.¹³ Interviews, like published reminiscences, tend rather to reflect what seemed most significant from the perspective of a later time, filtered through subsequent experience and reflection, even if they may be more spontaneous and contain, thanks to the interviewer, information that it might not otherwise have occurred to the old immigrant to recount.

There is, however, another significant reason why both autobiographical writings and other forms of direct immigrant testimony have largely been overlooked. The study of history itself has been affected by changing trends. The early Swedish-American historians, who were essentially amateurs, freely made use of such materials in their attempts to record the history of their own people.¹⁴ Between the 1950s and 1970s, however, historical research became powerfully affected by the concerns and methodologies of the social sciences, with their emphasis upon statistical measurement and analysis. There seemed little room for the more personal and subjective aspects of the immigrant experience.

When serious academic research on emigration began in Sweden around 1960, it reflected from the start strong American social scientific influences, reinforced by an already well-established statistical tradition going back to the great Swedish government Emigration Inquest (*Emigrationsutredning*) between 1907 and 1913, and indeed long before.¹⁵ The findings of the Uppsala University project on the

Swedish emigration, published in 1976, show how effectively the statistical approach could be applied.¹⁶ Although for them language was no barrier, the Swedish historians of that period had little use for the emigrants' own writings.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the academic pendulum began to swing back toward a more humanistic approach to the study of the immigrant experience. The statistical analysts generally moved on to new fields of inquiry. New categories of scholars meanwhile became involved in studies of Swedish-American ethnic life and culture. Notable in this regard have been several members of the new Department of Sociology of Literature at Uppsala, who have made good use of the fictional works of Swedish immigrant writers. The Swedish-American periodical press, book publishing, art, and commemorations have drawn increasing attention from experts in those fields. Not least, the historians of immigration have themselves been moving in increasingly more humanistic directions.¹⁷

If the immigrants' own testimony is often difficult to find and interpret, it offers a wealth of information and insights that the historian can in the long run ill afford to overlook. No matter how dreary many of their recollections may appear at first glance, there are few that do not offer some concrete detail, some insight, some sense of what immigrants' lives were like in the circumstances of their times. It is necessary not only to read what they actually put down on paper but between the lines as well. A well-known example is the extensive use Vilhelm Moberg was able to make of the early Minnesota pioneer Andrew Peterson's laconic diary in his celebrated immigrant novels.¹⁸

To search through these scattered and little-known writings can turn up hidden gems. At times we are surprised and delighted at the breadth of interests and of self-acquired knowledge they reveal, their keen insights, subtle wit, and natural sense of style. They provide us with a more finely shaded picture of the past, give substance to our theories and suppositions—or at times give us cause to rethink. The historian can feel well rewarded for the long and patient search.

The time has thus surely come for the rediscovery and fuller utilization in immigration and ethnic research of the rich testimony left by the emigrants in their own words, notably including their

surprisingly numerous and varied published recollections. Problems of accessibility and interpretation are, after all, common to *all* types of historical documentation to a greater or lesser degree. As for autobiographies, we can hardly imagine, for instance, a study of an American presidential administration that did not draw heavily upon such sources. It seems ironic that in our day, when scholars are particularly concerned with the lives of the common people, they have so largely overlooked what ordinary men and women have had to tell about their own lives.

II

The following listing can make no claim to completeness, which in any case would be impossible. It could surely be supplemented by many shorter autobiographical writings in American and especially Swedish newspapers and other periodicals, and the publications of local history societies. But it is a fuller bibliography of this material than any that has thus far been attempted, and it should suffice to demonstrate the richness and variety of these largely unknown and overlooked historical sources. Particular attention should be drawn to the numerous immigrant reminiscences published by the Swedish Historical Society of America between 1907 and 1932 in its *Yearbook* and *Bulletin*, both in the original Swedish and English translation, as well as to those brought out in the *Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* (since 1982 *The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*) in English.

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parish, by a man who never saw America.

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Anderson, Elna Serafia. "A Description of My Journey from Sweden to America." Intro. by Evelyn V. Nelson. *SAHQ* 44 (1993): 148-58. A woman from Västergötland describes her family's emigration in 1901 to Hartford, Connecticut.

Anderson, John A. "Civil War Reminiscences." *Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society of America* 3 (1910): 17-22. By a Chicago veteran of the Swedish-American "Silversparre" artillery battery.

Anderson, John L. *Jag minns—Barn- och ungdomsminnen från åttiotalets Sverige*. Ed. Gösta Franzén. Göteborg and Chicago, 1947. Collection of reminiscences by emigrants in the Mission Covenant.

[Andersson, Ivar.] *Berättarkungen. Ivar Anderssons Amerikahistorier*. Compiled and introduced by Ulf Beijbom. Växjö, 1992. Andersson emigrated from Blekinge in 1920. He lived and worked in Minnesota on the Iron Range and in logging camps; in Galesburg and Chicago, Illinois; and ranged widely through the South and West, before returning to Sweden in 1938. He was "discovered" in the 1960s and became a national celebrity at Skansen and on radio and TV as a story-teller and concertina player. Here Ulf Beijbom has provided a selection of Andersson's lively "America Stories" from his tape recordings and manuscripts, and an introduction placing Andersson's reminiscences in their historic context.

Andrén, August. "Som emigrant i USA på 1860- och 1870-talen." [Ed. Albert Sandklef.] *Halland och hallänningar, Årsbok* 3 (Halmstad, 1956), 120 pp. High-spirited and entertaining account of two adventurous sojourns on the Great Plains, including Scandinavian-American social life in Omaha and contact with the Sioux Indians, by an returned emigrant in Halland. A story that loses noth-

ing in the telling.

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lege, Rock Island, Illinois.

Berggren, H. E. "Notes on My Journey to America in 1893 and Finding Work in the New Land." Trans. Ivar F. Anderson. SAHQ 42 (1991): 133-57. Account by an emigrant from Östergötland in 1895 who became a farmer in Dickey County, North Dakota, later in Otter Tail County, Minnesota.

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Johansson, Anders, [ed.]. *Mitt liv i Sverige och Amerika och i det stora kriget. Berättat för Anders Johansson*. Stockholm, 1981. Although the title gives no indication, the reminiscences given here are those of Einar Eklöf, an emigrant from Öland in 1912 who returned there in 1924; compiled and presented by Anders Johansson, evidently from tape-recorded interviews. Eklöf tells of growing up on Öland, of life and work in the American West, mainly in Oregon logging camps, front-line service in the American army during World War I, occupation duty in the Rhineland, return to the United States, and life as an Öland farmer and pensioner after 1924.

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Johnson, Walter, with Ruth Ingeborg Johnson, eds. and trans. "Beda Erickson's Journey to Chicago, 1902." *SPHQ* (1981): 7-19. A young girl's journey from Värmland to America with two young companions.

Kaplan, James M. "Coming from America: Birger Sandzén's Travel Narrative of 1905." *SAHQ* 50 (1999): 18-51. The celebrated Swedish-American painter and art professor at Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas, who had emigrated from Västergötland in 1894, gives his impressions of Sweden while on a visit there with his American-born wife, in letters first published in several Swedish-American newspapers.

Käpphästen. See Hendin, C. G.

Kronberg, Sven J. *Banbrytaren. Historisk skildring af nybyggarlifvet i Nordvästern under en tid af trettiofem år 1870-1905*. Rock Island, Ill., 1906. A high-spirited, generalized account of rural life among Swedes in the Midwest by a Lutheran pastor who emigrated from Halland in 1868, based on personal experience and with some personal reminiscences, for instance, of the old Augustana Seminary in Paxton, Illinois.

Larson, Ellen. "Aunt Ellen Remembers." Ed. H. Arnold Barton. *SAHQ* 38 (1987): 117-31. Vivid recollections written in 1971 for her grandchildren of growing up in a Swedish-American farm family in east-central Nebraska, including a remarkably true picture of life in Västerbotten based on what her parents remembered from before they emigrated in 1881.

Larson, John W. "Joel and Alma, Swedish Grandparents." *SAHQ* 44 (1993): 191-202. Recollections of the author's Swedish-born grandparents while growing up in St. Paul.

———. "Grandfather Joel Wilhelm Larson: An Immigrant Worker." *SAHQ* 50 (1999): 52-67. Further recollections of the author's grandfather and of growing up in St. Paul during the depths of the Depression in the 1930s.

———. "From Amerika to America: Alma Crosses the Border." *SAHQ* 51 (2000): 182-208. The story of the author's grandmother, a member of the second generation, and her determined efforts to become completely "American," including Larson's own memories of

her.

Larson, Nels T. A. "Life in Saskatchewan, 1918-1925: A Story of a Pioneer Missionary Family." Ed. Samuel Chell. SAHQ 36 (1985): 39-55. Recollections of her family's temporary sojourn in Canada by the daughter of a Lutheran pastor hounded out of his Minnesota congregation by accusations of pro-German sentiments during America's involvement in World War I.

Larson, Victor C. "A Swedish Immigrant in Iowa." SPHQ 4 (1953): 3-10. Brief account of conditions at home in Östergötland, emigration in 1892, and life in the Stratford area in Iowa.

Larsson, Evert A. "Lidköping to Lindsborg: Reminiscences, 1924-1929." SAHQ 33 (1982): 84-110, 183-206. The lively account by an emigrant from Västergötland of his journey to America in 1924, farm life around McPherson, Kansas, and student days at Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas.

———. "Lindsborg to Lawrence: Reminiscences, 1929-1931." SAHQ 43 (1992): 41-49. Evert Larsson describes his years in medical school at the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

———. "Lawrence to Kansas City: Reminiscences, 1931-1934." SAHQ 43 (1992): 221-32. Evert Larsson completes medical school before beginning his medical practice in New Jersey.

———. "Return to Lidköping: Reminiscences, 1934-1946." SAHQ 45 (1994): 27-37. Evert Larsson's medical practice in New Jersey, naval service in the Pacific during World War II, and sojourn back in Sweden in 1946-47.

Lidney, Nels S. *Reseminnen och skildringar från Sverige 1932-33*. N. p., n. d. [evidently Los Angeles, c. 1934]. Somewhat pedestrian description of Sweden and of his visit there, especially to his native Västergötland, in 1932-33.

[Liedberg, Johan Olof.] "Guldgrävaren Johan Olof Liedberg." *Småländska kulturbilder* (1972): 48-117. In English: "Johan Olof Liedberg, 'His Memoirs.'" Trans. Selma Jacobson. SPHQ 23 (1972): 221-45. The exiting recollections of a very early emigrant from Småland in 1843 who first settled in Wisconsin, then struck it rich in the California Gold Rush in 1848, and returned to Sweden the following year. After losing his fortune there, he returned to America in 1875.

Liljeholm, Johan Edvard. *Detta förlovade land. Resa i Amerika 1846-1850*. Ed. Olov Isaksson. Stockholm, 1981. The absorbing memoirs of a sailor from Kalmar who fell in with Eric Janssonists in New York, followed them out to their new colony of Bishop Hill, Illinois, then sailed on the Great Lakes and dug gold in California before returning to Sweden.

Lindquist, Helena Johanna Johannesdotter. "Grandmother Lindquist's Story." SAHQ 36 (1985): 83-92. An emigrant from Småland in 1871 describes her life at home, the voyage to America, and life in the small Swedish settlement in Lawrence County, southwest Missouri.

Lindstrand, Frans Albin ("Onkel Ola"). *I öster- och västerled*. Chicago, 1899. Travel account by a prominent Swedish-American journalist in Chicago (pseud. "Onkel Ola"), who had emigrated in 1890 from Östergötland, of his visit to the Old World, including Sweden, in 1897. Interesting reflections on the homeland from an educated emigrant's perspective.

Lund, Inge (pseud. for Ingeborg Lundström). *En piga i USA. Ett pennskafts äventyr*. A mixture of reportage and personal experiences. The author, a Stockholm journalist, concealed her identity to work during 1915-16 as a housemaid in New York. Provides interesting glimpses into the lives of her fellow Swedish female domestics in prosperous American homes.

McKnight, Roger. "Andrew Peterson's Emigrant Voyage of 1850." SPHQ 31 (1980): 3-11. A travel account by a farmer in Carver County, Minnesota, evidently from northern Småland or southern Östergötland, who between 1854 and 1898 kept a voluminous diary of his day-to-day doings that has been a useful source for historians.

Mattson, Hans. *Reminiscences: The Story of an Emigrant*. St. Paul, 1891; in Swedish, *Minnen af Öfverste Mattson*. Lund, 1891. A well-known classic American immigrant autobiography—doubtless the best known by a Swedish immigrant. Mattson emigrated from Skåne in 1851. He was one of the earliest Swedish pioneers in Minnesota when he founded the Vasa colony there in 1853. He later recruited and commanded his own Scandinavian volunteer regiment in the Civil War, became a journalist, secretary of state for Minnesota, and a highly successful recruiter of Swedish immigrants for Minnesota.

railroads, and served as American consul-general in Calcutta, 1881-83.

Miller, John P. *Vart togo de vägen?* Chicago, 1945. Reminiscences by a Swedish-born Methodist minister of immigrant life among his compatriots in Chicago, including the less fortunate.

Månsson, Evelina, *Amerika-minnen: upplevelser och iakttagelser från en 6-årig vistelse i U.S.A.* (H)vetlanda: Svenska Allmogeförlaget, 1930. 109 pp, illustrated. A young woman from Småland recalls her years in Minnesota, mainly Minneapolis, from 1901 to 1907. She supported herself as a maid, laundress, cleaning woman, and garment factory worker before marrying a fellow immigrant and returning to Sweden. See Byron J. Nordstrom, "Evelina Månsson and the Memoir of an Urban Labor Migrant," *SPHQ*, 21:3 (July 1980), 182-95.

Nelson, Carl G. *Memoarer och reseskildringar*. San Diego, [offset typescript, 1971]. The memoirs and travel accounts of an emigrant from Västergötland in 1913, first to Canada, then to the United States, including life at home before emigrating, odd jobs and farming, and eventual prosperity in California. Critical of the Social Democratic regime in Sweden while visiting there in the 1960s.

Nelson, Lars P. *En upptäcktsresa genom Sverige*. Stockholm, 1918. The "voyage of discovery" to the old homeland of a Swedish-American journalist who had emigrated from Skåne in 1869. Mainly descriptive.

Nelson, Nels. "Swedish-American Boys in Blue: Reminiscences from the Civil War." *Prärieblomman* 8 (1908): 170-87. Recollections of a former lieutenant in the Swedish-American Co. C, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, during the campaign in the West.

Nilsson, Victor. "Svensk-amerikanska elitkörens sverigefärd 1910." *Prärieblomman* 11 (1911): 117-46. Memories of the Swedish-American Elite Men's Chorus's triumphal tour of Sweden in 1910, by a participant from Minneapolis, who had emigrated from Skåne in 1885.

[Norelius, Eric.] *The Early Life of Eric Norelius (1833-1862): Journal of a Swedish Immigrant in the Middle West*. Trans. Emeroy Johnson. Rock Island, Ill., 1934. One of the best-known Swedish autobiographical works, by an emigrant in 1850 from Hälsingland who was the first Swedish Lutheran pastor to be ordained in America, one of

the founders of the Swedish Augustana Lutheran Synod in 1860 and long one of its leading figures. Covers life in Hälsingland during the 1840s, the journey to America, and pioneer life in the Vasa settlement in Goodhue County and elsewhere in Minnesota.

———. "Nybyggarlif. Teckningar från Minnesotas tidigare dagar." *Prärieblomman* 3 (1903): 158-67. Norelius's memories of pioneer days in Minnesota.

———. "Kolonien Vasa i Minnesota. Ett femtioårsminne." *Prärieblomman* 6 (1906): 13-32. Norelius's recollections of the first Swedes and the early days in the Vasa settlement in Minnesota.

Norman, Hans, and Harald Runblom. *Amerikaemigrationen*. Gävle, 1980. Intended for school use, this introduction to the Swedish emigration includes extensive quotations from original sources, including some personal recollections.

Oberg, Elmer B. "The Farm Life of a Swedish Immigrant in Illinois, circa 1900-1925." *SAHQ* 36 (1985): 168-85. Lively memories of the author's father, who emigrated (apparently from Skåne) in 1890, and of growing up under very frugal circumstances in rural Bureau County, Illinois.

Olin, Johan Otto. "We Went to the Klondike in 1898." *SPHQ* 10 (1959): 91-104. Recollections of a Swedish gold miner who emigrated in 1888 from Malmö.

Olson, Olof E. "A Letter from One Generation to Another." *SPHQ* 24 (1973): 242-58. Childhood memories of emigration from Dalarna in 1869, pioneer days Carver County, Minnesota, and contacts with the neighboring Chippewa Indians.

Olsson, Alex. *På turistfärd genom Amerika och Europa. Kortfattade skildringar från en resa sommaren 1908*. San Francisco, 1909. The insightful account of a visit to Europe, especially Sweden, in 1908 by a San Francisco Swedish-American newspaper editor, an emigrant in 1887 from Halland.

Olsson, Nils William. "How It All Began." *SAHQ* 50 (1999): 5-8. Recollections of organizing the Swedish Pioneer Centennial and the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society in 1948.

Orre, Nils. *15 års nybyggarlif i Norra Dakota*. Jönköping, 1906. The well-written reminiscences of an emigrant from Småland in 1883 of pioneer days in North Dakota. He returned to Sweden in 1898.

———. "Fifteen Years in North Dakota, 1883-1898." Trans. Elsa Danielson Johnson. *SAHQ* 41 (1990): 3-34. Translation of the above.

Osberg, Edward E. "Englewood Memories: Swedish Businessmen on Chicago's 59th Street." *SPHQ* 29 (1977): 57-61. Colorful recollections of life in a Swedish-American neighborhood in Chicago during the 1920s by a member of the second generation.

———. "Reminiscences of Chicago and Englewood." *SAHQ* 36 (1985): 200-207. More recollections of the same kind as in the preceding item.

Osborn, Joseph Esbjörn. "Personal Memories of Brig.-General C. J. Stolbrand." *Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society in America* 3 (1910): 5-17. Civil War reminiscences by the son of Lars Paul Esbjörn, who in 1849 was the first ordained Swedish Lutheran pastor to serve his countrymen in America. Osborn was a lieutenant in Stolbrand's Illinois artillery unit during the Civil War.

Paulin, Axel, and Wilhelm Odelberg, eds. *Edelhjertas öden. Ett forskningäventyr*. Stockholm, 1961. The story of one of the most mysterious and intriguing Swedes in the New World, including his reminiscences and letters. In 1820 Emanuel Sundels Edelhjerta, an educated young man from Värmland, went off to Boston under mysterious circumstances, claiming to be the illegitimate son of King Karl XIII. After a brief return to Sweden he went to Mexico, where he disappeared by 1837. In 1842 a Swede who called himself G. M. Waseurtz af Sandels turned up in California, whom Axel Paulin proved to be the same person and who claimed to have discovered gold at Sutter's Fort four or five years before John Marshall. Died in New Orleans in 1850. (See also Sandels, below.)

[Pearson, Trued Granville.] *En skånsk banbrytare i Amerika. Trued Granville Pearsons självbiografi*. Ed. Arvid Bjerking. Oscarshamn, 1937. The illuminating autobiography of an emigrant from Skåne in 1851, including life in the home parish, the journey to America under sail, pioneer days in Knox County, Illinois, with interesting contacts with the Bishop Hill colony, then in the Vasa settlement in Carver County, Minnesota. Pearson eventually served in the Minnesota state legislature.

Peterson, D. A. "From Östergötland to Iowa." *SPHQ* 22 (1971): 136-52, 221-35. Interesting account of a family's journey in the sail-

ing-ship era, in 1849; early days on the prairie frontier, first in Boone County, then Webster County, Iowa; and ramblings in the South. Includes the author's criticisms of conditions in Sweden in the 1840s that led to emigration.

Peterson, Frank. "Early Days on the Minnesota Prairies." *Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society of America* 8 (1923): 7-25. A Baptist minister, who came with his parents to America from Sweden in 1851 and served in the Civil War, recalls frontier life.

Quist, P. P. "Recollections of an Immigrant of 1865." *Bulletin of the Swedish Historical Society of America* 4, no. 3 (September 1931): 7-15. An immigrant from Skåne at the age of ten who later becomes a state official in Minnesota.

Sandels, G. M. Waseurtz af. *A Sojourn in California by the King's Orphan*. Ed. and intro. by Helen Putnam Van Siklen. San Francisco, 1945. Sandels's account of his years in California, 1842-43, then still under Mexican rule. (See also Paulin and Odelberg, above.)

Scott, Lars Emil. "Renaissance Gentleman Arrives in Texas: Swante Palm's Account of His Voyage from Sweden to the Lone Star Republic in 1844." *SAHQ* 34 (1983): 178-93. An educated gentleman from Småland journeys out to Texas, where his nephew, S. M. Swenson, had arrived already in 1836 and acquired large land holdings. Palm later became a leading figure among the Texas Swedes.

[Selander, Per.] *Per Selanders lefnadsteckning. Utgifven af honom själf*. Cambridge, Minn., 1913. Also: Per Selander, *Lefnadsteckning*. Intro. Erik Nilsson. Delsbo, 1991. Reminiscences, largely from the Old Country, of a blind musician, jack-of-all-trades, lay preacher, and temperance man from Bingsjö in Hälsingland, who emigrated to Minnesota in 1899 and in 1922 would return to his home parish. The 1991 edition includes some of his waltzes and polkas and his "Swedish-American March."

Sjöberg, Sofia Charlotta. "Journey to Florida, 1871." *SPHQ* 26 (1975): 24-45. Travel recollections by an elderly lady from Stockholm who joined a group of some sixty persons led by her relative Vilhelm Henschen to establish a settlement in central Florida.

Sjöstrand, S. *Den unge invandraren*. Chicago, [1977]. The author's lightly fictionalized memoirs, under the name "Anders Anderson," of emigration from Småland in the early 1920s and of his ventures and

misadventures in Chicago during the 1920s and 1930s, working in various trades and odd jobs.

[Sjöström, Gustaf.] *Jan Olsons äfventyr, eller en vermländsk emigrants resor och lefnadsöden i det Norra Amerika*. Chicago, 1892. A curious and entertaining work combining acute observation of actual Swedish immigrant life in Chicago with episodes of more or less pure fantasy in the West. Fortunately, it is easy to distinguish between them.

Skarstedt, Ernst. *Vagabond och redaktör. Lefnadsöden och tidsbilder*. Seattle, 1914. A most valuable and fascinating autobiography, well known to scholars, by one of Swedish America's most celebrated journalists, an educated man from Bohuslän who rebelled against the social constraints of his class; emigrated to America in 1878; wrote for or edited newspapers in Lindsborg, Kansas, San Francisco, and eventually New York; homesteaded in Washington Territory and farmed in California; and wrote the first general history of the Swedes in America as well as books on the Swedes in Washington, Oregon, and California, and on Swedish-American authors and journalists. Filled with fascinating detail on places and persons. Includes an interesting account of his visit back to Sweden in 1885-86.

———. "Mrs. Ott. En verklighetsbild från västra Washington." *Prärieblomman* 2 (1902): 78-86. Skarstedt's recollections of various Swedes living in the wilderness of western Washington in the 1880s.

———. "Skräckdagarna i San Francisco. Efter egen och andras erfarenheter tecknade." *Prärieblomman* 7 (1907): 69-90. Skarstedt's own experiences and those of other Swedes during and after the great San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906.

———. "Intryck och minnen från en sommarresa till östern." *Prärieblomman* 11 (1911): 51-77. Skarstedt, then farming on Orcas Island, Washington, revisits the Middle West and his old colleagues there among Swedish-American journalists and other cultural leaders.

Smålandssocken utvandrar, En. Compiled by Långasjö Emigrantcirkel, Växjö, 1967. A large, collaborative, pioneering study of emigration from Långasjö parish in Småland, with a section (pp. 821-90) giving letters and reminiscences of individual emigrants.

Södergren, Peter. *Levnadsöden och reseskildringar*. Los Angeles, 1932.

An immigrant from Jämtland in 1870 recalls the establishment of New Sweden, Maine, by the one-time American minister to Stockholm, William Widgery Thomas Jr., and life in the colony.

Söderström, Alfred. *Minneapolisminnen. Kulturhistorisk axplockning från kvarnstaden vid Mississippi*. Minneapolis, 1899. Partly a general history of Minneapolis, its landmarks and institutions, partly a voluminous source on the Swedish (and other Scandinavian) Americans and their contributions and organizations there, interwoven with personal recollections by a prominent Swedish-American newspaperman who had emigrated from Stockholm in 1869.

Sonquist, Linnea Swanson. "Nea Recalls." *SAHQ* 39 (1988): 21-38. Rural life in Boone and Webster Counties, Iowa, described in letters to her daughter and granddaughter, by the daughter, born in 1908, of Swedish immigrants from the 1860s.

Swenson, Johannes. "A Journey from Sweden to Texas—90 Years Ago." *SPHQ* 8 (1957): 128-35. A group of emigrants from Småland make their way out to central Texas in 1869 to work on the S. M. Swenson land holdings. (See Palm, above.)

Swensson, Carl A. *I Sverige. Minnen och bilder från mina fäders land*. Stockholm, 1891. A detailed, insightful, and at times critical account of his first visit, in 1890, to his parents' homeland by a highly influential Swedish-American Lutheran pastor, the founder and president of Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas. Also gives some background on the author's younger years in America. Doubtless the most widely read Swedish-American travel account of the Old Country.

———. *Åter i Sverige. Minnen och bilder från mina fäders land*. Chicago, 1898. In English: *Again in Sweden, Sketches and Reminiscences from the Land of Our Forefathers*. Chicago, 1898. Description of Swensson's second visit to Sweden in 1897, rather less original than the preceding item.

———. "När skolverksamheten i Svensk-Amerika var ung. Några hågkomster från det gamla Augustana College." *Prärieblomman* 2 (1901): 207-28. Reminiscences of student days at Augustana College in the early 1870s, when it was still located in Paxton, Illinois.

Thelander, Hulda E. "The Immigrants' Children." *SAHQ* 34 (1983): 211-23. Childhood memories of the author's parents, who emigrated in 1886—from where is not clear—and of growing up on

the family farm near St. Peter, Minnesota.

Unonius, Gustaf. *Minnen från en sjuttonårig vistelse i Nordvästra Amerika*. 2 vols. Uppsala, 1861-62. In English: *A Pioneer in Northwest America*. Trans. J. Oscar Backlund, ed. Nils William Olsson. 2 vols. Minneapolis, 1950, 1960. The classic autobiographical account of the author's years in America from 1841 to 1858, during which time he established the little Swedish settlement at Pine Lake, Wisconsin; became ordained as an Episcopalian minister; organized the first Swedish congregation, St. Ansgar's, in Chicago; and after 1849 engaged in bitter disputes with the early Swedish Lutheran pastors until he returned to Sweden.

Walleen, Carl A. "My Memoirs, or One Man's Fate." Trans. Carl L. Anderson. SAHQ 51 (2000): 5-29. Reminiscences of an emigrant from Västergötland in 1898, of his early years in Sweden, journey to America, successful career in construction in the Midwest, and return to Sweden in 1929.

Westerlund, Peter. "Reminiscences of a Trip to Pike's Peak and Down the Rio Grande in the Year 1859, at the Time of the Pike's Peak Gold Craze." *Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society of America* 2 (1908): 34-71. A group of seven Swedes from Andover, Illinois, in search of gold in Colorado.

Widén, Albin. *Amerikaemigrationen i dokument*. Stockholm, 1966. This documentary history of the Swedish emigration by a Swedish scholar intersperses numerous excerpts from immigrant reminiscences as well as "America letters."

_____. *Nybyggjarliv i Svensk-Amerika*. Stockholm, 1972. Consists mainly of written recollections solicited from old immigrants in North America.

Wilson, Elmer. "A Swede's First Logging Camp." SAHQ 34 (1983): 257-80. An emigrant from Dalsland in 1903 describes his early experiences cutting timber in Washington state.

Witting, Victor. *Minnen från mitt lif*. Worcester, Mass., 1904. Another of the better-known Swedish immigrant autobiographies by a one-time seaman from Skåne who helped transport the Eric Janssonists to America in 1846 and joined them in Bishop Hill for a year and a half. After digging gold in California he became one of the pioneers of Swedish Methodism in America. Interesting descriptions of life in

his home parish before departure and of Methodist missionary activity both among early Swedish immigrants in the Midwest and back in Sweden, where he spent lengthy periods during the 1860s and 1870s.

Youngquist, Erick. *America Fever: A Swede in the West, 1914-1923*. Nashville, Tenn., 1988. The reminiscences of a cowboy from Västergötland in western Nebraska and homesteader in Montana who arrived in America in 1914, including his service in France during World War I, compiled and edited by his son, Eric V. Youngquist.

ENDNOTES

1. Carlo M. Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West* (Harmondsworth, 1969); my *Letters from the Promised Land: Swedes in America, 1840-1914* (Minneapolis, 1975; 3rd. ed., 1990), 6.

2. G. N. Swan, *Swedish-American Literary Periodicals* (Rock Island, Ill., 1936), 14. From an article originally published in *Svenska Amerikanaren* (Chicago) in 1930-31.

3. See my *Letters from the Promised Land*, esp. 3-6. Swedish trans., *Brev från löftets land* (Stockholm, 1981). Also my article "As They Tell It Themselves: The Testimony of Immigrant Letters," in *Nordics in America: The Future of Their Past*, ed. Odd S. Lovoll (Northfield, Minn., 1993), 138-45.

4. *Adventures in the West, 1876-1880*, ed. and intro. by Richard E. Jensen (Lincoln, Neb., 2000). This article does not deal with diaries, but some interesting examples at least deserve mention, including, for example, Pastor Lars Paul Esbjörn's travel diary in "Letters from Pioneer Days," trans. and ed. by Conrad Peterson, *Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society of America* 9 (1923-24): 54-62; Ida Lindgren, *Beskrifning öfver vår resa till Amerika 1870. Dagboksanteckningar*, ed. Gustaf Lindgren (Stockholm, 1958); and Rolf Johnson, *Happy as a Big Sunflower*

5. A number of oral interview projects have been conducted. The most notable is the large collection made by the late Lennart Setterdahl of East Moline, Ill., begun already during the 1950s, now held by the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö. See also, for example, Edward F. and Gerda Sundberg, "Ribbons of Memories: An American-Scandinavian Oral History Project," *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* 33 (1982): 183-92.

6. For the views of Swedish travelers in America during the migration era, see my book *A Folk Divided: Homeland Swedes and Swedish Americans, 1840-1940* (Carbondale, Ill., 1994), esp. chs. 4, 8, 14, 18.

7. See, for instance, Albin Widén, *Nybyggjarliv i Svensk-Amerika* (Stockholm, 1972); Karl Gösta Gilström, "Amerikabrev," *Linköpings stiftsbok 1959-60* (Linköping, 1959), 152-65; Janet Rasmussen, ed., *New Land, New Lives: Scandi-*

navian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest (Seattle, 1993).

8. See Albin Widén, *Vår sista folkvandring* (Stockholm, 1962) and *Nybyggjarliv i Svensk-Amerika* (Stockholm, 1972). I have also sought to make use of such material wherever possible in my own work.

9. See especially the following: Carl E. Mattson, "Register över uppsatser om Svensk-Amerika och Svensk-Amerikaner i *Prärieblomman* (1900-1913) och *Valkyrian* (1897-1909)," *Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society of America* 6: 1916-1917 (Chicago, 1917), 89-120; O. Frithiof Ander, *The Cultural Heritage of the Swedish Immigrant: Selected References* (Rock Island, Ill., 1956); E. Gustav Johnson, "Articles on Swedish-American Subjects in 'Prärieblomman,'" *SPHQ* 6 (1955): 102-21, and "Articles Published by the Swedish Historical Society of America, 1905-1934," *SPHQ* 14 (1963): 127-35; "Bibliography of Articles Published, 1950-1985," comprising the January 1986 issue (vol. 37:1) of the *SAHQ*, the continuation since 1982 of *SPHQ*, also the annual Swedish-American bibliography in each October number of the *SPHQ/SAHQ* since 1977; Gunilla Larsson and Eva Tedenmyr, eds., *Svenskt tryck i Amerika. Katalog över Tell G. Dahlöfs samling* (Stockholm, 1988). A particularly useful recent resource is *SWAM*, the cumulative Swedish-American sub-catalogue of the Swedish national online catalogue, *LIBRIS*, compiled by Eva Tedenmyr, which can be accessed via internet (www.kb.se).

10. See Lars Ljungmark, *For Sale—Minnesota* (Göteborg and Chicago, 1971) and "Hans Mattson's Minnen: A Swedish-American Monument," *SPHQ* 29 (1978): 57-68; Don Heinrich Tolzmann, "Colonel Hans Mattson and Axel Lundeberg: Minnen/Reminiscences," *SPHQ* 26 (1975): 221-30; my "Hans Mattson, ett emigrantöde i vidare perspektiv," *Sverigekontakt* (Dec. 1995): 10-21.

11. Note the sections from Andrén's recollections in my *Letters from the Promised Land*, 127-33, 165-67.

12. *Ibid.*

13. See my "As They Tell It Themselves."

14. See my "Clio and Swedish America: Historians, Organizations, Publications," in *Perspectives on Swedish Immigration*, ed. Nils Hasselmo (Chicago, 1978), 3-24; and "Historians of the Scandinavians in North America," in J. R. Christianson, ed., *Scandinavians in America: Literary Life* (Decorah, Ill., 1985), 42-58; Ulf Beijbom, "The Historiography of Swedish America," *SPHQ* 31 (1980): 257-85.

15. Sweden was, for instance, the first country to establish a regular census in 1749, and the government's statistical tables were widely admired as models of their kind already during the eighteenth century.

16. Harald Runblom and Hans Norman, *From Sweden to America: A History of the Migration* (Uppsala and Minneapolis, 1976).

17. A good sampling is provided by Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck,

eds., *Swedish-American Life in Chicago: Cultural and Urban Aspects of an Immigrant People, 1850-1930* (Urbana, Ill., 1992), including the editors' introduction (1-16). See also, for example, Christianson, ed., *Scandinavians in America: Literary Life; my Folk Divided*; and Dag Blanck, *Becoming Swedish-American: The Construction of an Ethnic Identity in the Augustana Synod, 1860-1917* (Uppsala, 1997).

18. Vilhelm Moberg, *The Emigrants* (New York, 1951), esp. *Unto a Good Land* (New York, 1954), and *The Last Letter Home* (New York, 1961), all translated by Gustaf Lannestock. Cf. Roger McKnight, *Moberg's Emigrant Novels and the Journals of Andrew Peterson* (New York, 1979), and "Andrew Peterson's Journals: An Analysis," *SPHQ* 28 (1977): 153-72.