Jan 14, 1939 First Baptist Church
"Our Swedish Heritage"

THE
SWEDISH CONTRIBUTION
TO
AMERICA

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1939
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Late in October 1936 Senator Hale Sipe appeared before the State Senate in Pennsylvania to introduce a resolution which was to authorize the State of Pennsylvania to participate in a great international celebration. Senator Sipe in his remarks said, "Every schoolchild in Pennsylvania 10 years of age can tell you the name of the ship that brought the first settlers to the shores of Massachusetts hundreds of miles from Pennsylvania, but not one school teacher in ten can give you the names of the ships that brought the first settlers to this, our own Keystone State."

It is unfortunate as well as almost incredible that such a lack of information exists about the history of any state, and most particularly those states which figured in the earliest history of our nation. A prominent speaker appeared before a large audience during the past year, and in the course of his remarks asked for a showing of hands by those who knew where "New England" was located. When almost the entire audience raised their hands and several youngsters volunteered the correct information. A second question asked the location of "New Netherlands." There was an intermittent show of hands through the crowd and one young girl gave the correct answer that the Dutch settlement in the Hudson River valley and New York City was called "New Netherlands." But it was a stunning blow to the speaker when he asked where New Sweden was located to find only a single hand near the back of the room, and when the young lad was asked to give its location, he answered assuredly, "Minnesota."

More than a million Swedes have immigrated to America during the past 300 years. As a matter of history the early pioneers received little recognition. It is only recently that attention has been drawn to their activities which have influenced American life to a far greater extent than any of us ever realized or believed.

In March 1638, two ships, the "Kalmar Nyckel" and the "Fogel Grip" sailed up the Delaware River after a long voyage from Gothenberg, Sweden. Peter Minuit, the promoter of the expedition, had chosen the secluded spot on the Delaware because he was acquainted with the settlements of the Dutch and English to the north and south of that point.
An undisturbed opportunity to establish a foothold was a welcome characteristic to this small group of colonists. Within a period of five months Peter Minuit met with several Indian chiefs of the Delaware tribe on board one of the Swedish ships and purchased from the tribesmen a strip of land along the Delaware River. The next day to the accompaniment of the booming of the ship's cannon, a pole adorned with the Coat of Arms of Sweden was raised and the first European settlement on the Delaware River was officially named "New Sweden."

The colonial life of these Swedish pioneers was quite unusual. In contrast to the regular raids of Indians upon all the other colonies dotting the Atlantic coast in that period, the Swedes and the Indians lived in close contact for over twenty years. The white men had things of as great value to the Indians as diamonds and pearls are to civilized people. They had guns, swords, knives, tools of all kinds and woolen cloth, in fact every sort of thing exceedingly desirable, but impossible of procurement elsewhere by the Indians. The Swedes were few in number, scattered thinly in tiny settlements along the river bank. The Indians were many, individually strong and daring, skilled in the highest degree in the kind of warfare most effective against these little unguarded communities. One swift, well concerted onslaught would have wiped out New Sweden and yielded to the Indians such a store of plunder as would have enriched them beyond their fondest imaginings of Wealth. While the colonists to the north and south of New Sweden could expect an arrow from ambush, or a skull-cracking tomahawk, and the torch of the incendiary at almost any hour of the day or night, the colony on the Delaware lived, worked and slept in peace and safety year after year.

The Swedes were a peacable people, just and fair minded. They treated the Indians well. They never attacked them. They were never guilty of such massacres as the Dutch and English had inflicted on their red-skinned neighbors at Pavonia and in the Pequot War, and as a result New Sweden grew stronger in man power and in the personal satisfaction that must come to those who have successfully overcome the obstacles presented in ventures of this kind.

In one of the later expeditions from Sweden there appeared several over-enthusiastic army officers who unfortunately made the bad mistake of taking a force of men from New Sweden and capturing Fort Cassimir which had been erected by Peter Stuyvesant nearby. On its capture, Stuyvesant swore revenge, and in 1655 with an attacking party, captured the colony of New Sweden, and thus destroyed Swedish power in the new world.
Briefly, that is the history of New Sweden. In fact, that seems to be the movement and result of Swedish colonization throughout the world. By her geographic position she was not able to promote her colonial expansion program. And besides, Sweden was preoccupied with defending or extending her possessions on the eastern and southern shores of the Baltic and could scarcely give trans-oceanic undertakings more than intermittent attention and ineffective protection.

But with the physical fall of the colony of New Sweden, there continued a force still greater than the shadows of the forts and buildings which had been erected along the Delaware. What remained after Stuyvesant took the Swedish commander's sword was the spirit of the people. Physically vigorous, they withstood hardship. Used to rough living, they faced rude conditions easily. Accustomed to agriculture, they developed prosperous farms. Intent on permanent occupation, they struck their roots deep in the soil. Self reliant, they thrived individually in spite of neglect and lack of cooperation from the motherland. These sturdy people of the Norseland were ideal pioneers. And with that spirit of a people whose national flag could no longer fly over their homes, they continued to make and maintain for themselves and their posterity a scheme of living that survived longer than their flag placed on foreign soil.

And so, three hundred years from the date when the first Swedes landed along the Delaware River, the American government and the government of the states most vitally interested and concerned made the first extensive efforts to permanently unearth and preserve the efforts of colonial expansion carried on by Sweden in America.

Perhaps most prominent among the states was Pennsylvania, which participated as host to the Swedish Tercentenary Celebration of 1938. The official notice carrying the state seal was, in part, as follows:

By His Excellency, George M. Earle, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, A PROCLAMATION of Thanksgiving for three hundred years of Godly Civilization.

Whereas, Thanksgiving Day of 1937 is the approximate anniversary of the date the ships Kalmar Nyckel and Fogel Grip sailed from Gothenberg, Sweden, upon that momentous voyage which brought them to the shores of the Delaware on April 8, 1638 thereby establishing the colony of New Sweden, which invests this Tercentenary of the first permanent civilized settlement within the bounds of Pennsylvania with a deep
significance and an especial interest to this commonwealth, the nation and the world.

Whereas, this long and affectionate intercourse between Sweden and the commonwealth government is a bond between Sweden past and present, and Pennsylvania past and present; These groups, old and new, have made important cultural contributions, not only to the welfare of this commonwealth, but as well to the entire body politic, in religion, statesmanship, science, economics, literature, music and the arts.

Now Therefore, I, George H. Earle, Governor of Pennsylvania, titular successor so called, to his Excellency Johan Printz, Governor of New Sweden, do solemnly adjure the citizenry of the Commonwealth loyally to consider at this Thanksgiving-tide during 1938 and thereafter, the historical and spiritual significance of events marking this goodly vista of three hundred years, and by practice and precept, to evolve a concept of simpler, sterner living in which character is fundamental; and that ancient ties be more closely welded and mankind everywhere enriched by this international celebration.

And so, to have a part in considering the important cultural contributions, as suggested by his excellency the governor (or should I say "ex" governor) of Pennsylvania, we can take stock this evening of Sweden's contributions to American life, past, present and possibly future.

Sweden, like America, faces definitely toward a civilization based on the arts of peace rather than the conquests of war. In fact, with all our national publicity about "hating war," Sweden, during the past 100 years has been even more skillful than we in keeping out of war. But with the same ideal in mind, Sweden and America make up a peace axis around the troubled world, and along such an axis it is only natural that the immeasurable forces of peace, science and progress can and do flow.

A Swede can hardly be called unique, in that he is different from all the rest of the people, but there is something which most of us must admit after seeing their accomplishments in America. That is the SPIRIT, which seems to run through the blood stream of all who profess ancestry in the Norsemen. That indefinable something comes, of course, from long nationalistic experience in the mother-country. The peasants in Sweden had never been subjected to the serfdom that those in other European lands had been forced to endure. A free peasantry in Sweden has always been the rule, even in the trying times following the death of King Gustavus Adolphus, when special privileges for the upper classes threatened to undermine for a short time - the free economic position of the peasantry. Here in America the pioneers certainly found a condition that closely met their freedom and happiness in Sweden.
That same elusive characteristic is shown in the ease with which the Swedes are assimilated into any country in which they live. They are proud and patriotic of their homeland, but it seems to me they are first of all, citizens of the planet Earth, which, if we all stop to realize it, has no boundaries to make us any different from any of the citizens of that same world. And if we look at it in that light, perhaps we can direct our attention to better, more gracious living instead of setting up political boundaries that confine our thoughts and actions to the point where we may be forgetful of just what good living consists.

By the time of William Penn's leadership in the territory now known as Pennsylvania, the Swedes were lost as a national group, but they maintained their identity through their already firmly established churches, schools and national unity. The high literacy in Sweden was the important thing which carried on this underlying spirit within the group. As early as 1649 a school Ordinance was created requiring education of the children. This particular law occupies a conspicuous place in world educational history and forms a worthy contemporary of Sweden's leading place in international political history.

It would be impossible in a short time to even enter upon the many fields of activity in which the Swedish heritage has brought influence and effect upon America. And it is also true that any other great nation can also scan the lists of outstanding men and their deeds here in America and select their own patriots. Whether those individuals be professional or business men, scientists or statesmen, artists or aviators, the list of Swedes and Swedish descendants will be as familiar to you as any other similar group of names.

Robert "Believe it or not" Ripley, recently made the statement in one of his newspaper features that the first president of the United States was not George Washington. To correct this statement which every schoolchild has been taught, Ripley points out that, "believe it or not" John Hanson, a Swede from Maryland, was the first president of the United States. In fact it was Hanson who welcomed George Washington who spoke to Congress as a plain and simple citizen of these United States during the early days of the first session of Congress. And as preface to that rather startling bit of American history, it was John Morton, a Swedish signer of the Declaration of Independence who in the tie vote for determining whether or not we should secede from British rule, cast the deciding ballot in favor of American independence from Great Britain. And in the war that followed John Morton's significant act, there were hundreds of Swedes who served the United States as officers in the Revolution and many thousands more who enlisted and fought for the American cause of Independence.
Once established as an independent nation it was important to the United States that their position as such was recognized and acknowledged. Foreign commerce was necessary even at this early date, for although they purchased great amounts of merchandise from across the Atlantic, their crops of tobacco and cotton also sought a market. And here again Sweden came to aid us. Five months before the final arrangements for peace between the United States and Great Britain were negotiated, Benjamin Franklin met the Swedish Ambassador in Paris and signed a treaty of Commerce and Amity between the Swedish government and the government of a country which at that time appeared to be the certain victor in a war of independence.

In this now profitable and active foreign market, one trading company stood out above all others. It was called the New Sweden Company and had been organized in the early days of the New Sweden Colony. The company had been set up for the purpose of carrying on trade with the colony, and during that time had obtained from the Swedish government a monopoly of the beaver fur and tobacco trade. The beaver was soon left behind as the tobacco business gained by leaps and bounds. Even after the colony of New Sweden was lost to the mother country the New Sweden Company continued and finally developed a tobacco trade that included plantations, warehouses and manufacturing plants as well as distributing facilities. Today that same company is effectively represented on our radios by the man who with his familiar chant of the tobacco auctioneer concludes his monotone by saying, "Sold, to the American Tobacco Company." That great organization is the one time Swedish operated and controlled "New Sweden Company."

The original settlement of the Swedes was in the Delaware Valley. But it broke away from the east and moved to the middle Atlantic states and later into the mid and far west during the 18th century. Today one out of every ten persons in the state of Minnesota are Swedish by birth or ancestry. Naturally conservative and foresighted the Swedes in America are politically Republican although a labor government has controlled the policies of Sweden through several administrations. Oddly enough, a Delaware Indian Chief, from whom the Swedes purchased the land comprising the colony of New Sweden, was named Tamemend. That Chief is the man whose name the Tammany Society of New York City chose as their namesake and party symbol for the country's strongest Democratic organization.

The Father of American Painting was Gustav Hesselius, who came from Sweden in 1711. He was the first artist commissioned to paint a picture for a public building in the United States. His works appear in many of America's great galleries and in the mural designs of several of our best known government structures. He also constructed the first pipe organ made in the colonies. Ulric Wertmuller, one of the great artists of the colonial period came here from Sweden in 1795.
While considering the fine arts we must pay tribute to that
greatest woman writer the world has known, Selma Lagerlof, who
at 80, is today Sweden's most distinguished private personage.
When she traveled to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature at
Stockholm in 1909, a holiday was proclaimed along the route of
the train and every station was decorated with blue and yellow.
Her works are read in America along with those of other Nobel
winners—Maeterlinck; Anatole France; Sinclair Lewis; Galsworthy
and O'Neill, and have contributed to the American students of
literature in no small way.

And again in the field of art America turns to Sweden for
her many industrial art products. The great American stores
such as R. H. Macy, Marshall Field, Franklin Simon and
Lord & Taylor report continually increasing sales and displays
of all the various products of fabrics, chinaware, glass, pottery,
and metals. The Swedish products are all accorded the flattery
of having American styles openly patterned after them. Our own
Furniture Exposition Building displayed just last week many articles
advertised as being in the Swedish Style.

Again to turn to individuals in the artist group, we must
recognize the success of Miss Vin Lindhe director of the now
world famous 30 voice Radio City Male Chorus. Many of you may
have heard the results of her work in the outstanding stage
shows given daily in Radio City Music Hall. Of Swedish descent,
Miss Lindhe is the only director of a professionally recognized
male chorus in America.

Sweden's contribution to the religious life of early America
is extremely significant. The oldest church in America still
in use was built by Swedes and is located at Wilmington, Delaware.
In the state of Pennsylvania we found its counterpart in the
city of Philadelphia in Gloria Dei Church; built by the colonists
of the New Sweden settlement. One of the great church groups in
America today is the Lutheran denomination, brought from Sweden by
her colonists and carried on successfully up to the present day
through the complete eradication of her political and governmental
activities in the New World.

Science and industry from Swedish sources have made rich
contributions to modern American life. It would be almost
impossible to find a single home in the country where the Swedish
safety match has not become a familiar article. Although we
now manufacture such matches ourselves, the invention of them is
a Swedish importation. The story of Ivar Kreuger and his
monopoly control of the world match business is an entire story in
itself and as fantastic as any tale from modern story books.

The safety razor upon its invention in America proved to be
extremely popular, and in every case the blades used were made of
Swedish steel. The first cargoes of merchandise unloaded from
Sweden in America included axes, hatchets, and knives made of
Swedish steel. This particular product has had a longer con-
tinuous import in America than any other commodity from any other
source. Swedish iron as far back as 1820 averaged over a
million dollars yearly. Since that date it has increased annually, for in spite of American production, the Swedish irons and steels have not been duplicated in this country in certain specific types and uses.

In 1647, shortly after the founding of the colony in New Sweden, the Swedish government enacted a special forestry law which was intended to conserve a natural resource so important to the future well being of any nation. Since that time, Sweden, by her consistently careful use of forests has supplied the United States with more than half of our wood product imports. In 1936, after 300 years of yearly cutting of Swedish forests, the value of wood pulp and other wood products imported from Sweden was over $35,000,000. America can certainly observe and consider carefully the results of foresight and prudence in the use of what we seem to consider inexhaustable natural resources.

The world's largest copper producing mine during the 16th and 17th century was in the province of Falun in Sweden. The company owning and operating that mine is the oldest stock company in existence anywhere in the world. Today, with our own copper mines operating at reduced production, we are at the same time importing from Sweden copper of a quality which cannot be equaled by any similar process in our country.

70% of all cigarettes manufactured in America are made by machines either manufactured or patented by Swedish engineers and machinists.

Stromberg-Carlson radio products are used in whole or in part in many of the nation's great broadcasting stations, and the highly specialized radio receiver and power amplifier units are used in a majority of large public installations such as the large unit in our new Senior High School Building.

John Ericson, the Swedish-American inventor, has been named as one of the five men whose genius as inventor and engineer has made modern civilization possible. Among his important contributions were the fire engine and the first steel ship the "Monitor" whose historic battle with the "Merrimac" is new world history, and perhaps his most important invention, the screw propeller, which without change in principle has made England the mistress of the seas, has brought American trade to every corner of the globe, and has turned ocean travel into pleasure. John Ericson's contribution is acknowledged as the leading mechanical contribution by Swedish inventors up to the 20th Century.

And then in 1900 there follows a Swede whose name may be neither familiar nor Swedish-sounding to you, Vincent Bendix. No airplane that flies the skies anywhere in the world does not carry some mechanical equipment either made or invented by Vincent Bendix. Of all the inventions that protect modern aviation from the hazards of the air and land, this Swedish mechanical genius has produced more than any other group of men. More
More familiar than airplane equipment to most of you, the self starter used on every car made in America is the invention of Vincent Bendix. To him is also credited the air-brake used on railroad trains and the more modern vacuum brake used on several recent automobile models. The contributions of Vincent Bendix will stand beside those of Edison, Steinmetz and Westinghouse as the major mechanical contributions to industry during this century.

And now to a different type of business. Charles R. Jalgreen, the drug store owner and operator is a Swedish descendant of a family that settled in central Iowa. At present he manages nearly five hundred stores in 32 of the 48 states and has placed the low price modern drug store on a level with the outstanding business enterprises in America bringing to the public drug consumer that particular type of merchandise.

A great share of all surgical instruments, several leading brands of cream separators both domestic and commercial, and the Electrolux refrigerator, to mention only a few specific products, all come from Sweden or are manufactured in the United States under Swedish licenses and patents.

And of course we can't skip over Swedes in general without at least a reference to remind those of you who enjoy the Chase and Sanborn radio program that Edgar Bergen and Charley McCarthy are both Swedish, at least I am sure of Bergen's ancestry. If I'm wrong about Charley McCarthy's then you tell me where he came from.

And to be particular again, America's most widely recognized hero admits his Swedish ancestry by his name ... Charles A. Lindberg.

To move from individual achievement and contribution we can briefly look over the mass movements which have already influenced American life and are destined to affect it with still greater influence in the future. The Consumer co-operative movement in Sweden today embraces some 600,000 households or more than 1/3 of the entire population of the country. With this new movement a new family economy is being created. All of the technical resources of manufacturing, distributing and selling are owned and operated directly by these households. Our local Civic Forum last year scheduled a speaker on this subject and another is announced this year. The Swedish cooperatives have been studied and investigated by commissions from many different nations, our own included, and it seems certain that with their success in Sweden in bringing the people something they desire, the movement may have a definite effect on family economics everywhere.
With international unrest and suspicion being carried to us with every shifting of the breeze, it is certainly encouraging and hopeful that two democracies so far distant and so unequal in size and population, in industries and in so many other comparative characteristics can cooperate so helpfully to utilize the benefits which each can bestow on the other.

The intense interest which has been shown in Swedish influences and general culture this past year in connection with the Swedish Tercentenary Celebration has been criticized by some of the public press as being anti-American. Fortunately, there are many more like myself, who may be a little prejudiced because of our nationality, who feel that interests of this kind are a strengthening attribute to good citizenship within our own country rather than harmful to it. Certainly the explanation of beneficial matters of everyday living will not lower the standards we already have here in America. In fact there is every reason to believe that it will raise them by exposing some of our own inefficient governmental, social and economic methods to those Swedish counterparts which have proven so highly effective.

And with our consideration of the methods of Swedish living and governing, we must realize that their success in this line of endeavor has not been upon an experimental standard. It is interesting to see that this nation which is so closely observed and copied in many ways throughout the world today, had a written constitution written by King Gustevus Adolphius in the year 1634. In spite of the monarchical form of government, the Swedes adopted and enforced a constitution preserving their rights, and have continued to use that constitution up to the present day. In the matters of government there is still much to be learned or at least observed from Sweden. The plans of many of Sweden's socialized and economic activities such as liquor control, old age relief, socialized medicine, preservation of natural resources, control of monopolies, administration of law and relations between labor and capital, all of which are problems now before the American public, have not been applied directly to the present form of government in the United States. But it is sincerely hoped by many, that we may all profit from these proven examples of sound and secure administration in Sweden. From the activities now prominent in our Federal offices it would seem as though they had gone back to 17th century Sweden rather than the modern plan, for on an ancient oak bedstead shown in the Swedish Museum this summer at Philadelphia was this prayer, decorated with painted carvings, "The Lord's Goodness Will Make Me Rich Without Trouble or Work."

We Americans have been grateful to the Swedes for their contribution in opening the great farmlands of the west and the forests of the northwest; for the stimulus they have given our inventions; for their service to the liberties in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars; for their statesmanship as governors, mayors, congressmen and Senators, and for their contributions to literature and the other fine arts. And in addition, their personal enthusiasm and integrity have been woven into the social fabric of this great nation.
However, in spotlighting the achievements of individuals of any particular racial stock one easily loses sight of the plain truth that all immigrants to this country and their descendants are immeasurably indebted to America for the privilege of striking root in this new soil; for environmental benefits; for education and culture in general; and for those social and occupational opportunities which enable them to exercise their powers and thus contribute to the growth of our civilization. Whatever a man gets from birth requires a fair appraisal, but so do his powers acquired from every other source. He uses what he has and can get, in order to give what he can. And in that way, over a period of time, the scales balance in the end.

And so Sweden is grateful to America. The imposing black granite monument designed by that famous Sculptor Carl Milles was presented to America at the Tercentenary Celebration as a gift of thanks from the people of Sweden for what they have received from this side of the Atlantic during the past 300 years. Every day the Swedes eat potatoes and the first one came to them as an importation from America. Tobacco and coffee at first thought, seem to have certainly existed in general use longer than the American nation, but it is a fact that we sent to Sweden the first of those two popular products. The socializing influence of breaking down class distinctions and in dignifying the individual and making his place important in the state are all pointed out as coming from America. For these and many other progressive movements and products Sweden is thankful, and for the friendship of a great power like the United States, Sweden is deeply and sincerely appreciative.

Dr. Charles de Lannoy, one of the world's greatest historians, has published a series of books one of which is titled, "A History of Swedish Colonial Expansion." May I quote briefly from this authoritative work. "None of Sweden's efforts to acquire overseas possessions brought about the establishment of flourishing or lasting settlements. The attempts at colonization brought disappointment but no real injury to the nation. Everything considered, colonization brought Sweden appreciable more of wealth than it took from her."

And so an impartial observer might stand off and look at Sweden and America and see progress in both countries moving steadily toward a higher standard of living both culturally and economically. And as he observes more closely he will surely see in America great advances due to the contributions of our Swedish friends across the water. Selfishly we can be proud that we too have made contributions for which the Swedish people are grateful.

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In concluding this brief review of our heritage from Sweden it is only natural that we should draw some conclusions. Such a summary will not be difficult. I am certain that I speak for all of us here when I say that we Americans are sincerely grateful for the contributions in all the fields of living which have come to us during the 300 years which have past, since the Kalmar Nyckel and the Fogel Grip sailed up the Delaware River to establish the colony of New Sweden.

This is an exact copy of
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and was typewritten by Clayburne B. Sampson at
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