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## THE KANSAS HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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### The Swedish Immigrant and Life in Kansas

EMORY LINDQUIST

THE coming of the Swedish immigrants to Kansas was a part of the general movement that developed with increasing tempo during the second half of the 19th century. The extent of that development in Kansas is indicated numerically by the census of 1865, which showed 204 Swedes in Kansas, and 25 years later in the census of 1890, the highest point, when 17,096 Swedish-born men, women, and children claimed Kansas as their home. In 1890 the Swedes ranked in third place behind the Germans and the English in the category of foreign born in the state. Although the total numbers dropped in 1900, the Swedes ranked second behind the Germans numerically in that census year.<sup>1</sup>

The motives which brought the Swedes to Kansas were generally not unlike those of the Swedish immigration to other states, but the situation created by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and the events prior to and during the Civil War were factors in determining the time, and also quite likely, the extent of the Swedish immigration to Kansas. There were ardent champions and bitter opponents of Kansas among the Swedes as a place of settlement during the Civil War era. An early supporter of immigration to Kansas, who later changed his attitude, was the Rev. T. N. Hasselquist, an influential Lutheran clergyman and founder in 1855 of the principal, and at the time, the only Swedish newspaper published in America, *Hemlandet, Det Gamla Och Det Nya*, Galesburg, Ill. In *Hemlandet*, March 31, 1855, Hasselquist referred to Kansas

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This article is an expansion, plus footnotes, of his presidential address before the annual meeting of the State Historical Society in Topeka on October 16, 1962.

1. The "Compendium of the Kansas Census of 1865" was published for the first time in J. Neale Carman, *Foreign-Language Units of Kansas: v. 1, Historical Atlas and Statistics* (Lawrence, 1962), pp. 5-8. The statistics for 1890 and 1900 are from the federal census.—*Sixteenth Census of the U. S.: 1940, Population, v. 2, Characteristics of the Population*, pt. 3, p. 31. The federal census for 1860 showed 122 Swedes in Kansas and 4,954 in 1870. The decade of greatest gain was from 1870 to 1880 when the number increased from 4,954 to 11,207.—*Ibid.*



as "an excellent country." On July 14, 1857, in a special feature, "Some Words to Recently Arrived Immigrants and Others Who Are Seeking Their Luck in America," he pointed out that the Eastern states offered few opportunities, that land in Illinois and Iowa was already too costly for immigrants of modest means, and that the wise decision would be to go to some new territory like Kansas or Nebraska.

A pre-Civil War enthusiast for Scandinavian immigration to Kansas was Dr. C. H. Gran, a physician of Andover, Ill., who was heartily supported in the columns of *Hemlandet* by Hasselquist. Gran planned a Scandinavian colony in Kansas, which never became a reality, but he wrote enthusiastically about the prospects in Kansas. In *Hemlandet*, December 3, 1857, Gran described at length the advantages of Kansas, based on an extensive trip to the area. The countryside was beautiful and productive, and, "when one gets up on a bluff and looks about these fruitful plains and woods, and sees these wonders of God's creation, the soul is filled with a stirring that words cannot describe." The description of Kansas included the Kansas, Big Blue, Smoky Hill, and Republican river valleys, which the physician had visited. Gran found the climate to be moderate, the soil fertile, and the rainfall adequate. Here indeed was the promise of a great future for the immigrant.<sup>2</sup>

Other enthusiasts for Kansas wrote frequently to *Hemlandet*, which was read extensively by Swedes in this country and in the homeland. Henry L. Kiisel, who had been in the United States for eight years, addressed his countrymen through the pages of *Hemlandet*, December 15, 1857, as follows: "Countrymen in New York and in other eastern states! You who work hard every day for your small daily wage, now is the chance for you to get your own home, where you can live independent of Americans, and you will escape working so hard and cease to be dependent upon your daily wages." Kiisel ended his plea by urging the Scandinavian immigrants "to hurry to Kansas." Letters continued to urge settlement in Kansas. On March 15, 1859, *Hemlandet* carried another enthusiastic account from Riley county, where John Johnson had settled in the area known as Mariadahl in 1855, from a correspondent who described the fertile soil, plentiful water, good supplies of wood and building stone, invigorating and healthful climate, plenty of good level land, and trading posts within 30 miles.

2. For a discussion of the proposed Gran colony in Kansas, see Emory Lindquist, "The Swedes in Kansas Before the Civil War," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 19 (August, 1951), pp. 258-265, and "A Proposed Scandinavian Colony in Kansas Prior to the Civil War," *The Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly*, Chicago, v. 9 (April, 1958), pp. 48-60.



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However, the pages of *Hemlandet* also contained letters opposing Kansas as a field for settlement. On March 15, 1859, *Hemlandet* carried a long article by Louis Lybecker, a Swede who had spent a year with a surveying party in Kansas. He was outspoken in his criticism of Kansas as he wrote:

My knowledge about Kansas is such that from the bottom of my heart I never want to think of it. What is home for us people from the North without a glorious Summer, without snow, without woods and water? Are we accustomed to an endless prairie with its eternal monotony? No, we feel at home when we find ourselves surrounded by beautiful nature, by evergreen forests along a lake or river. Then we can call it New Sweden.

Lybecker contended that he was in weekly correspondence with countrymen in Kansas who were disgruntled with the prospects there. He concluded his attack upon Kansas by urging the Swedes to settle in Minnesota. A. Thorson, writing in *Hemlandet* July 6, 1858, had warned his Swedish readers that

Kansas is the battle ground and the scene of conflict between two great political parties, and the end of the struggle is far off. For this reason at present Kansas can only with difficulty be settled and occupied by peaceable people, who must earn their bread by the sweat of their brows.

A combination of factors turned Swedish immigration away from Kansas until after the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> The failure of the Gran plan for a large colony, and frequent discouraging reports from Swedes in Kansas, created an adverse situation. In *Hemlandet*, March 8, 1859, the editor reported that a letter "earnestly urging Swedes not to come to Kansas," had been read at a large meeting at Galesburg, Ill., on February 28. Newspaper reports and "Amerika brev," letters from the new country to friends and relatives in Sweden, created a negative attitude toward Kansas. *Hemlandet*, October 19, 1860, reprinted a long letter from the *Chicago Tribune* describing in most graphic language the terrible economic conditions as a result of the prolonged drought of that year. The newspaper also discussed the impact of the Civil War on Kansas, and on September 30, 1863, *Hemlandet* described the casualties among the Swedes in Lawrence as a result of Quantrill's raid. When the Civil War was concluded, a new situation prevailed in Kansas, and united with economic and religious factors in the homeland, the stage was set for a new era of Swedish immigration to this state.

3. Accounts of the early Swedish settlements in Kansas are found in A. Schön, "De förste svenskarne i Kansas," *Främlingarna*, 1912 (Rock Island, Ill., 1911), pp. 171-173; T. W. Anderson, "Swedish Pioneers in Kansas," *Year-Book of the Swedish Historical Society of America*, St. Paul, Minn., v. 10 (1924-1925), pp. 7-18. A compilation of letters from *Hemlandet* is edited and translated by George M. Stephenson in *Year-Book of the Swedish Historical Society of America*, v. 8 (1922-1923), pp. 56-152. This source has been used in this study.





The relationship of the future growth of Kansas to European immigration was recognized in February, 1864, with the passage of an act by the Kansas legislature to establish the bureau of immigration. This legislation provided for two commissioners, appointed by the governor with the consent of the senate, with the governor as an ex-officio member. Section 1 stated that the commissioners had ". . . power to appoint one or more agents to visit Europe for the purpose of encouraging and directing immigration to this State. . . ." <sup>4</sup> The first report pursuant to the act creating the bureau of immigration was presented by L. D. Bailey and George A. Crawford, commissioners, and Gov. S. J. Crawford for 1867. The report indicated that no appropriations for the work of the bureau had been made by the legislature, although the bureau had prepared a one-page "immigration letter paper" which had been distributed widely. This first report included an urgent appeal for developing financial resources to promote immigration to Kansas. Emphasis was placed upon "the starving condition of 500,000 people in Sweden. Every western and northwestern State but Kansas appropriates money to secure a share of this human harvest." <sup>5</sup> On December 30, 1868, J. B. McAfee, adjutant general of Kansas, reported that "the great famine in Sweden has been causing tens of thousands to immigrate to this country; a great portion of them might, with proper effort, be secured to this State." <sup>6</sup> In February, 1865, John P. Swensson, a Swede residing in Junction City, wrote to Governor Crawford that he had received a letter from a countryman in Sweden, "a man who says that thousands of them [Swedes], also in Norway and Denmark, make preparation to go to this country. . . ." <sup>7</sup> Four years later, in January, 1869, Swensson urged Gov. James M. Harvey to promote Swedish immigration, offering his services as an immigration agent if the legislature would appropriate funds for that purpose. <sup>8</sup> Although the activity of Kansas immigration agents was quite extensive in Germany and France, this phase of promotion of Swedish settlement in Kansas was limited. The official roster of Kansas shows only one such appointment on March 13, 1874. <sup>9</sup>

4. *Laws of the State of Kansas, 1864*, ch. 75, sec. 1, pp. 143, 144.

5. *Report of the Office State Bureau of Immigration*, Topeka, March 7, 1868 (Leavenworth, 1868), pp. 5-8. The condition in Sweden has been described as follows: "An economic crisis gripped Sweden in 1864 and 1865 and was followed by three distressing years of crop failures."—Florence Edith Janson, *The Background of Swedish Immigration* (Chicago, 1931), p. 222.

6. D. W. Wilder, *The Annals of Kansas* (Topeka, 1886), pp. 495-496.

7. John P. Swensson to Gov. S. J. Crawford, February 6, 1865.

8. John P. Swensson to Gov. James M. Harvey, January 29, 1869.

9. *Kansas Historical Collections*, v. 16 (1923-1925), p. 682.



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Kansas profited directly from the various activities of immigration companies with headquarters in New York and Chicago. The American Emigrant Company, which carried on extensive operations in Europe, was represented by an agent in Gothenberg, the principal port city in Sweden, as early as 1865, and the company began advertising to enlist the attention of Swedes planning on immigrating to America in 1866. The Columbian Emigration Company also began its activities in Sweden about the same time. Other active groups were the Chicago Emigrant Agency and the American Emigrant Aid and Homestead Company. Several newspapers in the Swedish language were circulated in Sweden beginning in the 1870's for the avowed purpose of stimulating an interest in immigration. *Amerika-Bladet* was one of the best known of these publications.<sup>10</sup>

The railroad companies took the lead in promoting immigration of various nationalities to Kansas, and appropriate recognition was given to Sweden. In 1874 the Santa Fe railroad printed a modest-sized pamphlet in Swedish in promoting a Swedish settlement at Pawnee Rock, in the upper Arkansas valley. Swedish immigrants were urged to settle in an area which included 115,000 acres of railroad land which sold from \$4.00 to \$7.00 per acre with credit terms for 11 years.<sup>11</sup> A comprehensive attempt to enlist the interest of Swedish immigrants to Kansas was presented by the Kansas Pacific railroad in a 24-page pamphlet published in the Swedish language at Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1877. The pamphlet identifies C. W. Helstrom as immigration agent in Gothenburg. Helstrom later became a well-known citizen in McPherson county. The names of 19 Swedes in Kansas, who would endorse the superior advantages of the state, are listed. The pamphlet affirmed that "it is undeniable beyond any doubt that Kansas is a paradise."<sup>12</sup>

Several other factors, in which Swedes already in America took the initiative, brought their countrymen to Kansas. It has been pointed out that many Swedes came to the United States between 1867 and 1879 through the influence of friends and relatives already in this country.<sup>13</sup> A vital element in developing interest in America was the "*Amerika brev*," letters from immigrants to friends and relatives at home. One Swedish immigrant has described the ac-

10. Janson, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-240.

11. Available only in an English translation.

12. *Kansas och Colorado. En kort beskrifning öfver landet dess Boskapsskötsel och Akerbruk, längs Kansas-Pacific Jernbanan* (Köpenhamn, 1877), 24 pages.

13. Janson, *op. cit.*, p. 271.





counts as "full of hope and great expectations for the future, and people came from far and near to read these letters. Copies were made and read to crowds of people upon public occasions in the surrounding country."<sup>14</sup>

A special factor in promoting Swedish immigration to Kansas was the organization of land companies by Swedes. The year 1868 witnessed the organization by Swedes already in this country of two companies whose activities were decisive in creating the large Swedish element in southern Saline and northern McPherson counties with Lindsborg as the center. The First Swedish Agricultural Company of McPherson county was organized at Chicago on April 17, 1868. On the basis of information available on 42 members, 30 of them had arrived in the United States in 1867 and 1868. The company purchased 13,168 acres of land from the Kansas Pacific railway in McPherson and Saline counties. The Galesburg Land Company was formed at Galesburg, Ill., in the autumn of 1868. This group acquired 14,080 acres in Saline and McPherson counties, with the centers of activity at Freemount and Salemsborg.<sup>15</sup> The year 1868 also witnessed the founding of the Scandinavian Agricultural Society of Chicago, which purchased 12 sections of land along the Republican river. The colony, called New Scandinavia, now known as Scandia, in Republic county, brought many Swedes to the area.<sup>16</sup>

The increasing tempo of Swedish immigration in the 1880's stimulated Swedes in Kansas to organize for the promotion of settlement in their state. The leaders in the movement were the Rev. Olof Olsson, who had come to Lindsborg in 1869 in the area provided by the First Swedish Agricultural Company, and Dr. Carl Swensson, founder and president of Bethany College. The two men toured western Kansas in 1887 and gave glowing accounts of the prospects there. The special area urged for settlement was in Wallace and Logan counties. Olsson and Swensson used extensively the pages of the Swedish newspaper, *Framåt*, published in Lindsborg, for promoting this venture. Olsson predicted that the prophecy of Isaiah 35 would be forthcoming, "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert will rejoice

14. C. J. A. Ericson, "Memories of a Swedish Immigrant," *Annals of Iowa*, v. 8 (April, 1907), p. 2.

15. Alfred Bergin, "The Swedish Settlements in Central Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections*, v. 11 (1909-1910), pp. 22-30; Emory Lindquist, "A Land Company and a Community: The Background Factors in the Founding of Lindsborg, Kansas," *The Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly*, v. 9 (October, 1958), pp. 111-123.

16. I. O. Savage, *History of Republic County* (1883), p. 68; *New Scandinavia's Ninety-Three Years, 1868-1961* (Scandia, 1961), pp. 3-5.



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and blossom."<sup>17</sup> The *Lindsborg News* reported enthusiastically on February 3, 1888, that the Southwest Swedish Colonization Company had sold nearly 50,000 acres of land in western Kansas since the previous July. The editor predicted that Wallace, Logan, Greeley, Sherman, and Thomas counties would soon have prosperous Swedish settlements. Another colonization company was promoting settlement in Trego county. It was predicted that Vasa, Birka, Vega, and Altona would be as well known as Lindsborg. Although the exuberant expectations of the promoters were never realized, a sizeable Swedish element settled in the area south of Ogallah in Trego county, and near Sharon Springs in Wallace county, and in the area of Page City in Logan county.<sup>18</sup>

The transition from life in the old country to Kansas was marked by a variety of responses dependent upon the outlook and circumstances of the immigrant. There was, nevertheless, a common element expressed in the Swedish word, *hemlängtan*, which is difficult to translate meaningfully into English. *Hemlängtan* includes the vital and fundamental meaning of "longing for home," expressed only partially in the English word "homesickness." Nature must have contributed mightily to this feeling as the immigrant contrasted the wide expanse of uninhabited prairie with the pine and spruce woods, the colorful small meadows, the birch-lined streams, and the winding roads of the homeland. One Smoky valley immigrant, decades after leaving the homeland as a youth, unobtrusively carried out a personal ritual each Sunday morning, when, after the church service which had been conducted in the liturgical form of Sweden, he plucked a few pine needles from a tree on church property, rubbed them gently in his hands, and inhaled the fragrance of the residue, sharing thus silently in a sacrament of remembrance from former days.

The feeling of *hemlängtan* was magnified by a full realization that the immigrants were separated from familiar faces and places by the vast expanse of the Atlantic ocean and half of the space of the great American continent. The likelihood of a return to Sweden was remote because of economic factors, but the possibility was kept alive in the temple of memory. There was at first a feeling of lostness, too, in the newness and strangeness of the language, customs, people, and life in the new world.

17. *Framåt* was used extensively in 1887 and 1888 for promoting this project. A long description of opportunities for Swedes in western Kansas by the Rev. Olof Olsson, "En Titt Till Kansas," is found in *Framåt*, October 29, 1887.

18. For the pattern of Swedish settlements, see Carman, *op. cit.*, in the county sections.





Although there are many expressions of this *hemlängtan* in "Amerika brev" written from Kansas to the old country, the depth and meaning of it is beautifully and poignantly expressed in a series of letters written from a farm home near Manhattan by Mrs. Ida Nibelius Lindgren to her mother in Sweden during the period 1870-1881.<sup>19</sup> In the best tradition of Sweden, the farm was given a name, *Lindesfrid*, and from there and at other places in the area, this cultured and sensitive wife and mother of five children shared her feelings about life in Kansas. When mail came one day from Sweden containing flower seeds, she wrote: "When they [the flowers] bloom, as I hope they will do, and when some evening they send their fragrance through the window to me, I will think that it is a dear greeting from my loved ones." Only one picture had been brought from Sweden. It hung over her bed and reminded her of "by gone and happier times." But there were the ever-present resources of God's great universe which she shared with her dear ones far away. She described what this meant to her shortly after arriving in Kansas:

I see the stars twinkling and the milky way shines here so clearly. It sits so low here, right in front of my window. I know that it sits right in front of mamma's front hall door. Oh, you small, clear stars, may you shine there on happy, joyous people, blink at them, and greet them from me and tell them that I love them and long for them always.

This pioneer Swedish woman recalled the festivities of Midsummer day, June 24, in the old country, when they wandered out in the fields and meadows, seeking a great variety of beautiful flowers, the serenading of the young men with the sound of the last chorus singing in her ears, "Summer is such a happy time for the young," and the great joy of the day. But Midsummer day was only another day on the calendar of Kansans. There were other times of remembrance, a wedding anniversary, with a rose in the hair to identify it, and tears mingled with the carpet rags as the pioneer woman thought of former days. One August day in 1875 a visitor came to *Lindesfrid*, a man selling a highly prized item, a sewing machine. This would be a splendid possession in a household of seven persons but the family funds would not produce the \$70 required for purchase. But Mrs. Lindgren was resourceful. She recalled that packed away in the sea chest was her beautiful white silk shawl, a treasured possession from Sweden. The shawl was displayed, and to the great pleasure of the owner, the man liked it.

19. Ida Nibelius Lindgren, *Brev Från Nybyggarhuset i Kansas, 1870-1881* (Göteborg, 1960), April 12, 1871, p. 38; February 9, 1871, p. 35; October 9, 1871, p. 44; June 24, 1877, p. 69; August 28, 1875, pp. 66, 67. These letters constitute an excellent source of information about the daily life and aspirations of a cultured Swedish immigrant.



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Soon a bargain was concluded. The Swedish immigrant parted with her treasured white silk shawl and \$25, and in return she now owned the sewing machine.

There were times of great sorrow also for the immigrants trying to build a new life in a distant land. One pioneer mother asked herself why "God's hand rests so heavily upon us. He beats us in so many ways, not that we do not deserve it and much more—no, it is that *we should require so much discipline*,—that strikes me so heavily. I read last evening the first two chapters of Job. I thought that we needed to be reminded, how a Christian should bear his adversities."<sup>20</sup> On New Year's Eve, in 1868, in the Smoky valley, Mrs. John Nelson, the mother of seven small children, died as the New Year was dawning. Six dollars were subscribed among her neighbors for the purchase of lumber for a coffin. Burial took place as C. R. Carlson, a schoolteacher, read the simple service of the homeland.<sup>21</sup> On May 20, 1870, a Swedish woman made this entry in her diary at Lake Sibley, Cloud county, six weeks after leaving Sweden:

Anna is better today and God be praised that she didn't die here. They have buried Claus' son, but no preacher, no bells, no cemetery. They bury their dead under a large, lone tree out on the prairie, sometimes without a coffin. Claus nailed together a little coffin and we decorated it both inside and outside with flowers. They themselves read the burial service.<sup>22</sup>

The pattern of life includes sorrow for the family of man everywhere, but the burden of tragedy must have been especially great for the immigrants in a strange and far-away land. The Rev. Olof Olsson, who came to Kansas from Värmland, Sweden, in 1869, pondered these facts later and gave his response:

From whence should strength and comfort come to us as we were called upon to bury our dear ones in the wilderness? You must have a spiritual, yes, a divine strength that upholds you when you must withstand anguish, misreckonings, sorrow, and loss year after year. Pioneer life in the wilderness is no joke; it is a war, a battle. We should have been most foolish to have lost our hope in the heavenly home.<sup>23</sup>

The Swedish immigrant was confronted with the difficulty of learning the English language and the rate of that achievement varied considerably among individuals and in different communities. Some of the Kansas immigrants never learned the language of the land, while many others made substantial progress. It was generally

20. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

21. Alfred Bergin, *Lindsborg. Bidrag Till Svenskarnas och Den Lutherska Kyrkans Historia i Smoky Hill Dalen* (Rock Island, Ill., 1909), pp. 31, 32.

22. Ida Nibelius Lindgren, *Vår Resa Till Amerika, 1870. Dagboks—anteckningar* (Stockholm, 1958), p. 40.

23. Olof Olsson, *Samlade Skrifter* (Rock Island, Ill.), v. 3, p. 186.





true that Swedes in towns and cities adapted themselves more readily to the English language than people in distinctly rural areas. The men, who were involved in wider contacts than the women, generally learned English earlier. The process of Americanization increased in tempo as the children of immigrants attended American schools. These children became bi-lingual and they soon felt more at ease in the use of English than in Swedish. One factor which perpetuated the use of the Swedish language was the "Swedish schools" held usually for two months in the summer, and conducted under the auspices of individual congregations. An observer in Lindsborg, writing in 1919 and reviewing developments in the previous decade or so, pointed out that children often answered the questions of their parents in English, although the mother or father had used Swedish in making the inquiry. Sunday School materials were written in Swedish but the discussion had been in English for several years prior to the writer's comments.<sup>24</sup>

Prof. J. Neale Carman, of the University of Kansas, has rendered a great service to the knowledge of Kansas life and history in his excellent and comprehensive study of foreign-language units and linguistic developments in Kansas, published this year.<sup>25</sup> In an analysis of 44 Swedish settlements among the 59 identified by Professor Carman, the most critical years for the abandonment of the Swedish language in Kansas were the years 1914-1918, the period of World War I. Professor Carman appropriately defines the term "critical year" as "the year in which a community ceased to use the foreign language habitually in the majority of the homes where there were growing children."<sup>26</sup> In 14 settlements the critical year occurred before 1914, and in five of them as early as 1905. The World War I period was critical for 18 settlements, including the large Swedish area in McPherson and Saline counties. Twelve Swedish communities reached the critical year after 1918, with three related to 1925 and one as late as 1930.

The pattern of development is interesting and sometimes quite puzzling. For instance, Garfield township in Clay county, a distinctly rural area, had its critical year in 1905. One possible explanation is found in the fact that there had been only modest

24. G. A. Peterson, "Svenskheten i Lindsborg," in Bergin, *Lindsborg after Femtio År*, pp. 146-149. The influence of children in the Americanization of Swedish immigrants is discussed in Oscar Algot Benson, "Problems in the Accommodation of the Swede to American Culture" (an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1933), pp. 118, 119.

25. Carman, *op. cit.*

26. *Ibid.*, p. 2. Professor Carman states: "Because of its character of estimate, the date fixed in the *Atlas* for the critical year of any community may be in error by as much as two, three, or even five years; five may be regarded as the maximum error."



immigration there since early times, because in 1895 only 221 persons out of the total Swedish stock of 533, were born in Sweden. However, in Laing township in Rawlins county, also like Garfield township a definitely rural area, the critical year was 1930. In 1895 112 of the Swedish stock of 191 were born in Sweden, indicating a more direct relationship with the old country than in Garfield township. In Morris county, the Marion Hill Swedes and Burdick Swedes have similar patterns except that the former was founded in 1869 and the latter in 1881. The critical year for the Marion Hill Swedes was 1912 and for the Burdick Swedes it was 1925.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence suggests that the presence of a church with a Swedish background was not always a decisive factor in perpetuating the Swedish language. Isolation in a rural area and the number and date of arrival of Swedish-born residents tended to be decisive factors. The critical year 1918 for the Lindsborg Swedes, although dominant in that region, may be explained at least in part to the presence of Bethany College as an Americanization factor and the desire of this Swedish community, so well known in Kansas, to be recognized as an integral part of the American scene during the abnormal years of World War I.

The Swedish language was often used in church services beyond the time that it was generally spoken in the homes. Dr. Alfred Bergin has written that the first preaching in the English language in the Bethany Lutheran church, Lindsborg, occurred in 1885. The church report for 1895 indicates that there had been an effort made to preach in English the previous year, but, as it encroached upon the regular program of the church, the services were moved to [Bethany] College. There was no rite of confirmation in the English language prior to 1904.<sup>28</sup> Swedish was the language of the services of the large Bethany Lutheran church at Lindsborg until 1928, when the practice was initiated of having one morning service in Swedish and one in English. However, Messiah Lutheran church, in which the English service was used exclusively, was organized in Lindsborg in 1908 to serve the non-Swedish population and Swedes who favored the language of the land for church services. The principal service at the Bethany Lutheran church after 1928 was conducted in English. Beginning in 1941 English was used exclusively except for one Bible class. The minutes of congregational business were written in Swedish until 1934.<sup>29</sup>

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 102, 211, 241-243.

28. Alfred Bergin, *The Story of Lindsborg* (Lindsborg, 1929), p. 15.

29. Emory Lindquist, *Smoky Valley People* (Rock Island, Ill., 1953), p. 182.





The pattern at Lindsborg was quite typical of other Swedish communities in the use of language in church services.

Available written materials indicate that the Swedes readily adopted English words for expressing meaning whenever this was convenient. The official records of the First Swedish Agricultural Company of McPherson county, 1868-1877, produce interesting evidence. Included among the English words and modifications of them in the midst of Swedish sentences were such words as farming, flooring (flooring), motion, gaten (gate), lawyer, deedens (deed), platformen (platform), trainen (train), and depoten (depot).<sup>30</sup> One scholar has pointed out interesting usage based upon a diary kept by a Kansas Swede, 1870-1885. This diary included such usage as "tubb" for tub, "peel" for pail, "skingel" for shingle, "lomber" for lumber, "torkis" for turkey, and "fäns" for fence.<sup>31</sup> Quaint and interesting results often occurred in the spoken word as English was mixed with Swedish. G. N. Malm, a Kansan, and a well-known name in literary and artistic circles among Swedish Americans, has caught the tone and spirit of this language in his classic volume on Swedish American life in the 1890's entitled, *Charli Johnson*.<sup>32</sup> This volume is a splendid source for this phase of linguistic study. In the hundreds of examples in the volume the following are cited: kroppen (crop), kutta (cut), hajrat (hired), kipat upp (continue), kaontrit (country), karload (carload), tjita (cheat), tometes plantes (tomato plants), enjyotat (enjoyed), palajt (polite), evriting (everything), exhastada (exhausted).

The Swedes in Kansas realized the need for newspapers and periodicals in their own language until a new generation could master the English language. The first Kansas publication in Swedish was *Nytt och Gammalt*, a religious journal written by the Rev. Olof Olsson at Lindsborg and printed in German type in Salina. Six issues totaling 190 pages were published between April and November, 1873. The journal was then merged with other Swedish language publications. Ten other Swedish language newspapers and periodicals were published in Kansas. The oldest newspaper, *Svenska Herolden*, a weekly, was published in Salina, 1878-1881. Lindsborg *Posten*, a weekly, had the longest continuous history. The first issue appeared in 1897; it ceased publication in

30. "Records and Minutes of the First Swedish Agricultural Company of McPherson County, Kansas."

31. C. Terence Pihlblad, "The Kansas Swedes," *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, Austin, Tex., v. 13 (June, 1932), p. 42.

32. G. N. Malm, *Charli Johnson*. *Svensk-Amerikan* (Chicago, 1910).



1930. Other Swedish language publications have been *Kansas Staats Tidning*, 1879-1880; *Kansas Posten*, 1882-1883; *Pedagogen*, 1885-1886; *Praktiken*, 1886; *Framåt*, 1887-1888; *Kansas Missions Tidning*, 1904-1912; and *Budbäraran*, a Bethany College publication appearing occasionally for a few years beginning in 1892. *Kansas Monitoren*, a short-lived journal, was published in Salina. The editor apologized "for his deficiency in Swedish spelling and grammar." However, he stated, "that really makes no difference, since the purpose of *Monitoren* is merely to promote true culture among the people of the Saline valley."<sup>33</sup> All the above publications, except as noted, had their origin in Lindsborg.<sup>34</sup>

The political affiliation of the Swedes in the United States generally as well as in Kansas has been definitely with the Republican party. An important factor was the commitment of the Rev. T. N. Hasselquist, founder and editor of *Heimlandet, Det Gamla Och Det Nya*, to the Republican cause. Hasselquist greatly admired Horace Greeley of the New York *Tribune* and the columns of the *Tribune* furnished much material for this Swedish newspaper. The identification of the Democratic party with slavery caused the Swedish immigrants generally to shun that party. An authority on Swedish-American life has described the situation as follows:

Although one denomination fought another for converts, all agreed upon the merits of the Republican party. It was the staunch adherence to the tenets of the Republican party by the Swedish American press from 1855 to 1876 which is largely accountable for the faithfulness of the Swedes to the Republican party both during and following that period.<sup>35</sup>

The situation in Kansas is described at least symbolically in the terse philosophy of life declared by one Swedish immigrant as follows: "Jag är Luteran, jag är Republikan och jag kör en McCormick själv binder." ("I am a Lutheran, I am a Republican, and I drive a McCormick self-binder.") Dr. Carl Swensson, founder of Bethany College, writing to D. W. Wilder from Lindsborg in January, 1881, declared:

We Swedes come from a free and noble people, and our history as a free people dates back at least as far as the beginning of the Christian era. . . . The Swedes of Kansas and Iowa, as a class, have worked hard for Prohibition, and that as good Republicans, because every Swede is born a Republican and will remain such if no unforeseen accidents overtake him.<sup>36</sup>

33. J. Oscar Backlund, *A Century of the Swedish American Press* (Chicago, 1952), pp. 69, 70.

34. A fairly complete list of Swedish papers published in Kansas is found in William E. Connelley, *History of Kansas Newspapers* (Topeka, 1916), pp. 232, 233.

35. O. Fritiof Ander, "Swedish-American Newspapers and the Republican Party," *Augustana Historical Society Publications*, Rock Island, Ill., v. 2 (1932), p. 77.

36. C. A. Swensson to D. W. Wilder, January 16, 1881.





The voting record of the Kansas Swedes, in so far as it can be determined, indicates that generally "no unforeseen accidents" overtook them politically. Prof. Walter Nugent in his comprehensive study of voting patterns in Kansas has pointed out that McPherson county, with a large concentration of Swedes and Protestant Germans, was "farther above the average in Republicanism throughout the period 1880-1908 than either the native or other immigrant counties among the 26 counties that were studied." He goes on to point out that 15 Swedish precincts in the period 1894-1908 were "generally and heavily Republican. In 1908 the heavier the Swedish percentage in the precinct, the heavier the Republican vote with two exceptions." An analysis of voting in 1894, in Smoky Hill township, where Lindsborg is located, shows the following: Populist, 21.3%; Democratic, 3%; Republican, 75.9%. For the entire state of Kansas: Populist, 38.8%, Democratic, 9.5%, and Republican 51.7%.<sup>37</sup>

Although the commitment to the Republican party was decisive, some interesting and spotty voting can be observed in Swedish communities during the Populist era. In McPherson county, in the contest for governor in 1896, the incumbent Republican candidate, Edmund N. Morrill, won decisively in the Swedish townships, Smoky Hill and Union, but John W. Leedy, the Populist candidate, the winner in the election, gained the largest number of votes in the Swedish settlement, New Gottland. In Saline county, in Falun and Smolan townships, where the Swedes had dominating superiority in numbers, Leedy had a two to one majority over his Republican opponent. The results were particularly interesting in Union and New Gottland townships in McPherson county where the Swedish voters dominated and were almost identical in number. Union chose the Republican by a large majority, and New Gottland preferred the Populist, but by a lesser majority.<sup>38</sup>

The above facts are interesting but difficult to interpret because of the parallel similarity in Swedish background. One important factor accounting for the great Republican strength in Lindsborg and Smoky Hill township was the personal influence of Dr. Carl Swensson, president of Bethany College and a dedicated Republican. As early as 1882 the Lindsborg *Localist*, October 26, 1882,

37. Walter Nugent, "Populism and Nativism in Kansas, 1888-1904" (an unpublished dissertation for the Ph. D. degree, University of Chicago, 1961), pp. 206-209.

38. The census for 1895, preceding the election of 1896, shows the following: Union township, total population, 608; Swedish stock, 560; Morrill (R), 121, Leedy, (P), 28. New Gottland township, total population, 607; Swedish stock 540, Morrill (R), 67, Leedy (P), 81. The statistics on population and Swedish stock are found in Carman, *op. cit.*, p. 190. The statistics on the election are found in the records of the secretary of state of Kansas.

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announced a Republican rally on Sunday evening at the Swedish Lutheran church where Swensson was the pastor. He was, moreover, an avowed and vitriolic opponent of the Populists. In a letter to the Populist Gov. L. D. Lewelling, in April, 1894, he wrote:

The plague of grasshoppers and droughts cannot be compared to the disasters that have been heaped upon our young, noble state by the doctrines and proclamations and public and private utterances by yourself and other leaders of your party. You have made Kansas the laughing-stock of the entire intelligent world.<sup>39</sup>

The Republicans organized strong Swedish-American Republican clubs in various parts of the state. The state-wide League met in Lindsborg on March 6, 1896, with delegates from 50 local Swedish-American Republican clubs in attendance. The objective of the League was "to educate the Swedish-Americans along the lines of republicanism and Americanism."<sup>40</sup> In October of the same year, John A. Enander, editor of the Republican newspaper, *Hemlandet*, published in Chicago, addressed a great rally at Lindsborg attended by 2,500 people.<sup>41</sup>

The normal Republican commitment of the Swedes of Kansas was modestly challenged by the growth of the Farmers' Alliance and Populist movement. Smoky Valley Alliance No. 2535 had been organized in the Lindsborg community and carried on an active program. The group planned picnics and rallies. This unit of the Alliance was entitled to 10 delegates to the county convention at McPherson on June 26, 1891.<sup>42</sup>

The activities of the Alliance were bitterly opposed in some Swedish communities. The climax of conflict came in the Smoky valley when on August 12, 1891, seven members of the Bethany Lutheran church, Lindsborg, were excommunicated for their membership in the Alliance.<sup>43</sup> The organization nevertheless sponsored an Alliance picnic at Lindsborg on August 15 which attracted between 500 and 600 people according to the Populist press. A correspondent of the *Topeka Capital*, however, reported that the "attendance was very slim and a great disappointment to the leaders."<sup>44</sup>

As the controversy developed in Lindsborg, the editor of the *Peoples' Advocate*, McPherson, wrote on October 2, 1891, that the attitude of the "Luthren [*sic*] church is unamerican, anti-demo-

39. *Topeka Capital*, April 29, 1894.

40. *Lindsborg News*, March 13, 1896.

41. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1896.

42. *Peoples' Advocate*, McPherson, June 12, July 31, 1891.

43. "Record of Ministerial Acts, 1891," Bethany Lutheran church, Lindsborg, p. 240.

44. *Peoples' Advocate*, August 21, 1891; *Topeka Capital*, August 16, 1891.





cratic, and less liberal than the Pope of Rome." Dr. Carl Swensson, a staunch Republican and pastor of the Bethany Lutheran church which had excommunicated the Alliance members, replied at length to his McPherson critic in a long article in the *Lindsborg News*, October 30, 1891. He pointed out that he had replied to his Alliance opponents in a letter to Judge Coldwell of McPherson on September 15, 1891, stating that

politically the decision has no significance whatever, as our church as such has not taken any part in politics, nor does it intend to. . . . But as to all secret organizations the founders . . . had taken the stand that such organizations are unchristian, unrepubli- can in their tendency, and therefore antagonistic to the best interests of the state, church, and family, however innocent and benevolent their exterior appearance may be.

The Lindsborg pastor further informed his readers that the position should not be changed although some of the "sons . . . make fools of themselves by supporting without previous examination a secret political organization called the Alliance."

The debate about the excommunication of the Alliance members of the church was not confined to the 1890's. There are some who felt that the action was taken not because of the "anti-republicanism" cited in Swensson's letter, but because of the anti-Republican party position of the Alliance. However, the farmers' movement was not crushed at Lindsborg, because on June 17, 1892, the *Lindsborg News* reported that a stock company had been organized there with a capital stock of \$5,000 for the purpose of publishing a Populist newspaper in the Swedish language in the city. These plans never materialized. The pattern of loyalty to the Republican party was fully re-established at the turn of the century, and received support from many quarters. In October, 1906, for instance, a pastor of the Swedish Lutheran church in Marshall county published a three-column article in the semi-official Kansas Conference organ, *Lindsborg Posten*, entitled "Some Words to Swedes in Kansas." In this article the pastor pleaded, "Countrymen, let us be Republicans and here in Kansas vote for Governor Hoch."<sup>45</sup>

Sen. Frank Carlson of Concordia, the son of Swedish immigrants, has achieved the most distinguished record among the Swedes of Kansas in politics and elective office. Carlson's father, who arrived in America in 1880, was born in the province of Värmland. His mother's birthplace was in Småland. Mrs. Carlson's parents are also Swedish born. Frank Carlson represented the former sixth district in the United States congress from 1934 to 1946. He

45. The Rev. A. S. Segerhammar in *Lindsborg Posten*, October 17, 1906.



then served as governor of Kansas from 1946 to 1950. Carlson was first elected to the United States senate in 1950 and was re-elected in 1956 and 1962 by substantial majorities. He holds important committee assignments in the senate, including membership on the senate foreign relations committee.<sup>46</sup>

Religion and the desire for freedom in religious expression were important factors in Swedish immigration to Kansas, especially in the early era. The Lutheran state church was challenged effectively about the middle of the 19th century by dissent within its own ranks. One phase was related to a free, evangelical movement, Lutheran in doctrine, whose members were known as *läsare*. This group maintained a distinctively pietistic and subjective emphasis and attracted increasingly large numbers of adherents as the years advanced. Individuals like Carl Rosenius, editor of *Pietisten*, and Peter Fjellstedt, the Biblical scholar, and the organization Fosterlands-stiftelsen (The Evangelical Fatherland), were important influences in this development. This evangelical movement produced great hymns by Lina Sandell-Berg (L. S.). *Tryggare Kan Ingen Vara and Blott En Dag Ett Ögonblick I Sender*, from the hymn book, *Hemlandsånger*, were sung with deep feeling by many Kansas Swedes.<sup>47</sup>

Closely identified with this evangelical movement was the Rev. Olof Olsson of Sunnemo, Karlstad diocese, who came with a large party of immigrants to the Smoky valley in 1869 to share in the founding of Lindsborg. In that year, 1869, a newspaper correspondent in Sweden, writing in *Hemlandet*, August 10, 1869, observed: "The largest number of immigrants consists of vigorous people, of which a large number belonged to that group called *läsare*—in other words, those who have with earnestness found the greatest end in life: to live by faith in Christ and to die happy." The Rev. Olof Olsson, a distinguished preacher, writer, leader, and the first member of the Kansas house of representatives from McPherson county, was a great spiritual force among the Kansas Swedes during the formative period of the late 1860's and 1870's.<sup>48</sup>

Important Swedish colonizing companies in Kansas were definitely committed to religious principles and to the development of spiritual life. The First Swedish Agricultural Company of McPherson

46. *Official Congressional Directory*, 87th Cong., 2d Sess. (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 53.

47. Oscar N. Olson, *The Augustana Lutheran Church* (Rock Island, Ill., 1950), pp. 16-26. An interesting description of the career of Lina Sandell-Berg by J. E. Lijedahl is found in the *Lindsborg News-Record*, July 12, 1962.

48. The Kansas phase of Olof Olsson's career is described in E. W. Olson, *Olof Olsson. The Man, His Work, and His Thought* (Rock Island, Ill., 1941), pp. 46-140.





county provided in the second article of its constitution the following statement: "Everyone received as a member of this corporation shall be a believing Christian, adhere to the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran church, be industrious and thrifty, and exert himself for the upbuilding and development of the company." Several leaders and members of the company were members of the *läsare* movement. The minutes of the meetings of the company reflect a serious religious spirit. The Galesburg company, which like the First Swedish Agricultural Company, acquired thousands of acres of land in McPherson and Saline counties, was also based upon the desire to found a Swedish settlement upon Christian principles. This company was organized in the Galesburg, Ill., Swedish Lutheran Church, where the Rev. A. W. Dahlsten was the pastor. Dahlsten, the leader of the group, became the first president of the Kansas conference of Swedish Lutheran churches.<sup>49</sup>

Since religious motives played an important role in immigration, it was only natural that the Swedes would found and support churches in Kansas reflecting this doctrinal, liturgical, and linguistic commitment. Swedish Lutheran, Mission Covenant, Baptist, and Methodist churches were established in communities where any sizeable number of Swedes lived. The largest group numerically were the Swedish Lutherans who founded at least 50 churches in Kansas. The first church of this denomination was organized in the Blue valley near Cleburne in Riley county on October 13, 1863. It was named Mariadahl in honor of the mother of the Johnson children, whose first representative, John, came to this area in 1855. The great center for Swedish Lutherans has been the Smoky valley area where in McPherson and Saline counties, 12 congregations were established.<sup>50</sup>

The Lutheran churches among the Swedes in Kansas experienced in intense form the conflict which divided Swedish Lutheran churches throughout America and in Sweden as a result primarily of the teaching of P. P. Waldenström on the doctrine of the atonement. Scarcely any Swedish community was spared the agony and strife produced by the issues of doctrine as earnest men and women strove to know the truth. The dissenters withdrew from the Lutheran churches and organized independently, including many Lutheran elements in their new church. These congregations organized into what became known as the Mission Covenant church. In some

49. Alfred Bergin, "The Swedish Settlements in Central Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections* v. 1 (1909-1910), pp. 19, 24-30.

50. *Kansas-Konferensens Referat*, 1897, "Statistics, 1896," pp. 2, 3. Other volumes of the *Referat* furnish full information about the Swedish Lutherans in Kansas.

rural areas in Kansas, a Swedish Lutheran church and a Mission Covenant church were located within the same section, or on opposite corners of intersecting miles, and in towns, the two groups occasionally had churches within a block or two of each other. The Mission church at Rose Hill, five miles north of Lindsborg, founded in 1873-1874, was the first one of this denomination in Kansas. The Mission Friends, as they were known, organized 28 churches, 11 mission congregations, and conducted religious services in 19 other communities in Kansas.<sup>51</sup> Swedish Baptists founded 19 churches in Kansas. The first congregation of this denomination was organized at Swede Center, Neosho county, near Chanute, in May, 1869.<sup>52</sup> Clay Center was the site for the founding of the first Swedish Methodist church in Kansas in April, 1870. Seven congregations of this denomination were organized among the Swedes of Kansas.<sup>53</sup>

The Swedish Baptist and Swedish Methodist churches in Kansas merged with their American counterparts in the 1920's. The Lutheran churches with Swedish antecedents have merged this year (1962) with three other Lutheran groups. The Mission Covenant church alone maintains its historic identity with the period of Swedish immigration.

Religious motives were the principal factors which created the tradition of education and culture at Bethany College, which constitutes the greatest single contribution of the Swedes to Kansas. Dr. Carl Swensson, pastor of the Bethany Lutheran church, Lindsborg, was the founder of the college in 1881, and served later for many years as its president until his death in 1904. The Rev. Olof Olsson, Swensson's predecessor as pastor of the Lutheran church, had earlier discussed with friends the possibility of founding a school in the Smoky valley. However, the personal initiative and faith of Swensson was the decisive factor. He described the background factors in 1884 in these words:

"I saw how God had blessed our settlements in this beautiful, flourishing, and liberty-loving state. But how our children and youth should obtain the necessary Christian education was a question not easily answered. Without the elevating influence exerted by a good school to mould the character of students and others, we would evidently be in danger of sinking into the worship of the almighty dollar and materialism. In addition, among our youth, how many gifts that would otherwise be hidden and deteriorate, would not such a school disclose, gifts to benefit and gladden the community and the church of God. Finally, after consulting the members in the vicinity and laymen

51. *Strödda Drag Ur Missions-Vännernas Verksamhet i Kansas* (Topeka, 1917) describes the activities of the Evangelical Mission Covenant church of Kansas in detail.

52. P. Lovene, *History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas and Missouri, 1869-1927*.

53. *Scenska-Metodismen i Amerika* (Chicago, 1895), pp. 455-463.





who were interested in the work, all of whom with one accord seconded the project, we ventured upon the undertaking!<sup>54</sup>

The support of the college was broadened significantly for the future when the Kansas conference of the Swedish Lutheran churches assumed responsibility for the institution in 1884.

Bethany College furnished the setting for the origin and growth of the great oratorio tradition at Lindsborg. The Swedish immigrants and their children, under the inspiring leadership of Dr. and Mrs. Carl Swensson, established the distinctive "Messiah" tradition which has an outstanding record of achievement since 1882.<sup>55</sup> Dr. Birger Sandzén joined the faculty of Bethany College in 1894, coming directly from Sweden. He became Kansas' most outstanding artist. His paintings, watercolors, and prints have attracted national and international acclaim.<sup>56</sup> The faculty of Bethany College was greatly enriched in the early decades by Swedish immigrants of distinguished learning and culture, who shared in building a fine educational tradition.

The Kansas Swedes, like all immigrants, were confronted with the conflict produced by old allegiances and the challenge of accommodation to the reality that America was their new home. Inevitably there were transitional phases in this adjustment. It was only natural that the immigrants cherished the observance of festive days, like Midsummer day and Christmas, in the manner of the old country. One pioneer Swedish mother wrote to Sweden about the Christmas observance near Manhattan in 1870, the year of arrival in Kansas. A few Swedish friends in the vicinity came on Christmas Eve for the traditional Christmas coffee and Swedish delicacies. The beautiful cedar Christmas tree, with the Swedish flag at the top, and aglow with 24 candles, was decorated with apples, nuts, raisins, and candy. Familiar Christmas carols were sung in the mother tongue to the accompaniment of an harmonica.<sup>57</sup> The non-Swedish editor of the Lindsborg *Localist* described the traditional *Jul Otta* service in Bethany Lutheran church in 1881. He awakened

54. *Kansas-Konferensens Protokoll, 1884*, pp. 35, 36. A detailed description of the founding and early years of Bethany College is found in Carl Swensson, "Huru Bethany College Blef Till" *Präriebloman*, 1903 (Rock Island, Ill., 1902), pp. 76-86. Material on the life of Carl Swensson is found in Ernest Skarstedt, "Läroverkspresidenten Carl Swensson," *Präriebloman*, 1905 (Rock Island, Ill., 1904), pp. 77-93; J. E. Floreen, "Dr. Carl Aaron Swensson," *Korsbaneret*, 1905 (Rock Island, Ill., 1904), pp. 175-193; Lindquist, *Smoky Valley People*, pp. 126-146.

55. The literature describing the Lindsborg "Messiah" is extensive. For a bibliography, see, Lindquist, *Smoky Valley People*, pp. 260-262.

56. Extensive printed material is available on Birger Sandzén: see William Allen White's introduction to the volume, *In the Mountains* (McPherson, 1925); Charles Matthews, "Artist, Gentleman, and Scholar," *Kansas Magazine*, Manhattan, 1935, pp. 3-7; Charles Pelham Greenough, III, *The Graphic Work of Birger Sandzén* (Manhattan, 1952); Margaret Sandzén Greenough, "From Sweden to Kansas," *American Artist*, Stamford, Conn., v. 25 (January, 1961), pp. 26-31, 72, 73.

57. Lindgren, *Från Nybyggargårhemmet i Kansas*, pp. 58, 59.



at 4 a. m. in response to the ringing of the church bell, calling the residents to the festive worship service. Christmas morning that year was "clear, starlight, and pleasant. The city was illuminated, nearly every house had tapers in the windows, and the farm houses out on the prairie, as far as the eye could reach, glimmered and twinkled with lights."<sup>58</sup> The church had candles in every window. The choir sang the famous Swedish Christmas anthem, "Hosianna," and the congregation sang enthusiastically, "Var Helsad Sköna Morgon-Stund" ("All Hail to Thee, Oh Blessed Morn"). The liturgy was the familiar one of the distant church in Värmland or Smålan.

Swedish communities observed regularly Gustavus Adolphus day in commemoration of the great King of Sweden and hero of Protestantism, who died on the field of battle at Lutzen on November 16, 1632.<sup>59</sup> On those occasions the immigrants and their children sang enthusiastically the Swedish national anthem, "Du Gamla, Du Fria" ("You Old, Free Nation") and "Hell Dig, Du Höga Nord" ("Hail Thee, Thou Great Northland").

The nature of this dualism involving American and Swedish elements can be readily illustrated from the printed sources in the *Lindsborg Localist*. On July 5, 1879, the *Localist* described the great Fourth of July celebration in the Lindsborg community. This splendid event had been initiated with a parade a half-mile long and the multiple events of the day were concluded when "the Captain of the players called 'partners for cotillion', and all went merry as a marriage bell, till the wee small hours chased the full moon away." The same article, however, contained the following statement: "Meanwhile the Sweeds [*sic*] celebrated the American Holiday, in a grand pic-nic on the banks of the boisterous Smokey, thus showing that they are not sweeds [*sic*], but Americans, loyal patriotic Americans. . . ." Apparently there was a rift in the community that year between Swedes and non-Swedes. On the basis of the pietism of the Swedish immigrants in the Smoky valley and their attitude towards dancing, the key was undoubtedly the phrase quoted above, "the Captain of the players called 'partners for cotillion', and all went merry as a marriage bell, till the wee hours chased the full moon away."

Several interesting aspects of the distinction between the American and Swedish elements are recorded in the early life of the Lindsborg community.<sup>60</sup> In 1880, following the developments dur-

58. *Lindsborg Localist*, December 29, 1881.

59. Lindquist, *Smoky Valley People*, p. 184.

60. *Lindsborg Localist*, July 5, 1879; May 20, 1880; July 7, July 14, September 9, 1881; August 10, 1882.





ing the Fourth of July celebration the previous year as described above, it was decided that the various elements in the community should join in one great celebration. Arrangements should be announced in the Lindsborg *Localist* and in the Swedish weekly, *Svenska Herolden*, published in Salina. Allen Wilbur was listed as the "English Secretary" and John A. Rodell, the "Swedish Secretary." When the Augustana Swedish Lutheran synod met in Lindsborg in July, 1881, the *Localist* carried this announcement: "There will be English preaching in the Lutheran Bethany Church next Sabbath p. m. by some visiting clergymen. Americans are cordially invited to attend." Later, the editor observed that the services were "greatly appreciated by the Americans present." In September, 1881, memorial services were held at the Bethany Lutheran church for President Garfield. "Mrs. Rev. Swensson" is listed as leading "the Swedish choir" and Mrs. A. Wilbur, "the American choir." The editor of the *Localist* urged Pastor Carl Swensson in August, 1882, to preach in English on Sunday afternoons. He was certain that this arrangement "would secure the attendance of many of the Americans."

The records indicate that the intermarriage of Kansas Swedes with non-Swedes was rather rare in the early days of settlement. For instance, the Rev. Olof Olsson, pastor of the Bethany Lutheran church, Lindsborg, performed no mixed marriages during his pastorate from 1869 to 1877. The records of McPherson county show that from November, 1870, to January, 1880, 76 marriage licenses were issued to couples who were both Swedish and eight when only one was of that nationality for a ratio slightly higher than nine-to-one. From March, 1880, to March, 1887, in McPherson county, 181 licenses were purchased by Swedish couples to 38 when only one party was Swedish for a ratio slightly less than five to one.<sup>61</sup> Records for couples at the Bethany Lutheran church in 1896 show no mixed marriages out of a total of 87 marriages in the United States.<sup>62</sup>

Professor Carman's summary of the census for 1895 shows that there were 15,352 children in Kansas whose parents were both Swedish or only one was Swedish. It shows further that 11,664 or 75.9% were children of parents who were both born in Sweden and 3,688, or 24.1% had only one parent born in Sweden or a ratio of about three to one. The range was from 92.7% to 7.3% in Rawlins county, but it was reversed, 48.1% to 51.9% in Jewell county.<sup>63</sup> This

61. Lindquist, *Smoky Valley People*, p. 182.

62. *Helsing Från Pastors-Embetet i Lindsborg, 1896*, Bethany Lutheran church, Lindsborg. This material consists of a questionnaire filled in by members.

63. Carman, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-25.



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study shows that the greater the concentration of Swedes the lesser the number of mixed marriages for the obvious reason that the range of opportunities for marriage outside the Swedish settlement were restricted. In 1900 there were 2,930 native Americans in Kansas whose fathers were born in Sweden and 1,422 whose mothers were born in that country. The other spouse was generally an American. Since there were 15,755 native-born Americans in Kansas with full or partial Swedish parentage, it can be concluded that 11,403 or 72.4% of the children came from homes where both parents were born in Sweden.<sup>64</sup> The evidence is clear that in the early period, parents urged their children to marry men or women of Swedish nationality. Expressions such as the following: "She married an American," to distinguish marriage to a non-Swede, have been common until recent times and may still be heard.

When Bethany College was founded in 1881, the colors of the Swedish flag, yellow and blue, were chosen as the college colors. When the first edition of Bethany College songs appeared, the 30 selections were all in the Swedish language. Included was the "Bethany Song," which was to be sung to the well-known Swedish patriotic tune, "*Hell Dig, Du Höga Nord.*" The board of directors of the college published an extensive hymn book *Hemåt* in the Swedish language in 1888.<sup>65</sup>

When a college yell became a part of collegiate life at athletic contests, the "Terrible Swedes" of Bethany College were urged on to victory by words in the Swedish language based in Nordic mythology:

Rockar Stockar  
Thor och Hans Bockar  
Kör Igenom, Kör Igenom  
Tju Tju Tju.  
Bethania!

The words are difficult to translate. They refer to the Nordic god, Thor, driving his chariot with great speed on an urgent mission. The aid of the Nordic god and his example was sought in order to drive through the line, *Kör igenom, Kör igenom*, (Drive through, Drive through) for a touchdown. "Rockar, Stockar" is still the official college yell. Recent generations have pronounced these Swedish words with strange accents.<sup>66</sup>

Although the Swedish heritage has been cherished at Bethany College and great resources have been derived from it, the orienta-

64. *Twelfth Census of the U. S.: 1900*, v. 1, pt. 1, pp. 815, 823, 831.

65. Lindquist, *Smoky Valley People*, p. 184.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 221.





tion and purpose of the college has been toward making a distinctive contribution to American life and culture. The aim of the founder, Dr. Carl Swensson, who was American born, was described by him in the *Lutersk Kvartal-Schrift*, Rock Island, Ill., July, 1887, as follows: "The education that our people in America need is Swedish-American. We do not wish, even if it were possible, which it is not, to build a little, new Sweden in this country. That would be as childish as it would be wrong, but on the other hand, we do not wish to become Americanized at the turn of the hand." This statement expresses clearly the spirit of the Swedes in Kansas.<sup>67</sup>

The Swedish immigrant identified himself quite readily with American life. He soon found in America what he described by the Swedish word, *framtidlandet*, "the land of the future." The Rev. Olof Olsson, a leader among the early Swedish immigrants in Kansas, viewed the developments after approximately two decades in this country in the following words:

When I think of all the settlements I have visited, which my countrymen have built under toil and difficulties but with the divine reward of having their own homes, my heart leaps with joy, especially when I see it all in the light of history and know that only a few centuries ago all the working men in the world's most civilized continent, Europe, were slaves. In America, every workingman can, if he will, become a nobleman, baron, and count.<sup>68</sup>

Dr. Carl Swensson, also writing on the same subject in 1887, described the coming of the Swedes and their settlement in Kansas. He found that the following pattern developed after the passing of 10 years:

The sod-house yields to a comfortable wood house, the shade trees are large, the fruit trees have already started to bear fruit, the fields are extensive and well-cultivated, the farmer is the happy proprietor in the largest and best country in the world. So it goes from year to year. Children are born, the family grows up, there are churches and schools, and with respect for and love of God's word, they will become a large and happy people.<sup>69</sup>

For the vast majority of Swedish immigrants to Kansas, America proved to be "*framtidlandet*," the land of the future.<sup>70</sup>

67. The relationship of Bethany College to Swedish life and culture is carefully documented and discussed from Dr. Swensson's point of view in Emmet Eklund, "A Study of Bethany College and Its Educational Objectives as Interpreted by Its Founder, Dr. Carl Aaron Swensson, From 1881 to 1904" (an unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1958), pp. 38-48.

68. Skolvännen, October 31, 1887, quoted in George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspects of the Swedish Immigration* (Minneapolis, 1932), p. 401. A summary view of the Americanization of the Swedish immigrant is found in Oscar Algot Benson, "Problems in the Accommodation of the Swede to American Culture" (an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Pittsburgh University, 1933), pp. 111-135.

69. *Framåt*, September 3, 1887.

70. Statistics are not complete relative to Swedish immigrants to Kansas who returned to the homeland. Such entries as the one in the church records at Råda, Värmland, in 1869, contain a more meaningful story than the following words suggest: "Jan Eriksson, veterinarian, immigrated to Kansas in the Spring with his wife and one child but returned here in the Autumn."

## The "Exodusters" on the Missouri

GLEN SCHWENDEMANN

SATURDAY afternoon, April 19, 1879, had become a little too warm for the Negroes clustered around the depot in Wyandotte, and they were forced to find protection from the sun's rays. Some were seen under the railroad station itself, which was built on trestle-work, while others had sought refuge among the lumber piles near the Missouri river, a short distance from the tracks. All were awaiting the arrival of the train which was to carry them to Lawrence, where they expected to find homes and a welcome conclusion to a journey begun weeks before on the river banks of Louisiana and Mississippi.

These were some of the "Exodusters," or Negro migrants who had gained national attention by their unprecedented mass movement up the Mississippi river to Kansas. They and hundreds more throughout the river parishes and counties of Louisiana and Mississippi had been pouring northward since early March in quest of a new life on the plains of Kansas.<sup>1</sup> Walking or riding to the river, carrying what few possessions they had not sacrificed in the rush to leave, the migrants deserted the plantations in great numbers. Negroes who previously had been ignorant of the very existence of the Sunflower state, soon began filling the towns and cities along the river. Even at places where the steamers made no regular stops, freedmen had gathered in large groups endeavoring to attract the attention of the passing vessels.<sup>2</sup>

The first boatload of migrants had arrived in St. Louis aboard the steamer *Colorado* on the evening of March 5. The newcomers, apparently expecting some kind of assistance on the last leg of their journey to Kansas, were greatly disappointed when no such help was forthcoming.<sup>3</sup> A reporter of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*,

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1. For a discussion of the causes of the migration as well as the Negroes' departure from the South, see Glen Schwendemann, "Negro Exodus to Kansas: First Phase, March-July, 1879" (unpublished master's thesis, Department of History, University of Oklahoma, 1957), pp. 1-39.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-39, 152, 153. See, also, the St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, April 27, 1879; the Atchison *Daily Champion*, May 6, 1879, and an unidentified and undated newspaper clipping in "Horatio N. Rust Scrapbook; Relating to the Negro Exodus From the South to Kansas, 1880," Kansas State Historical Society library, p. 48.

3. A St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* reporter, who interviewed the migrants arriving on the steamer *Colorado*, wrote of their "firm and abiding faith that they would be furnished free transportation to Kansas, where the Government would not only provide each individual darky with a good farm free of charge, but also with the necessary mules and farming implements at the same price. Their mistaken belief, it was said, had been imparted to them through the medium of printed circulars."—St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, March 13, 1879. See, also, *ibid.*, March 12, 1879, for a further discussion of this subject.





who visited the levee the following morning, found 280 men, women, and children in "utter want." The women and children were sitting dejectedly around several fires, while the men were either loafing on the levee, or had gone into the city and elsewhere, probably in search of food and shelter. Nothing more than a few chunks of bread was discovered among the whole group.<sup>4</sup>

The plight of the newcomers had apparently aroused little more than curiosity among the white residents of St. Louis. The colored people of the city, however, had quickly begun to provide relief for their Southern brethren. Charleton H. Tandy, a Negro resident of St. Louis, was the first of his race to become concerned about the condition of the new arrivals. He found shelter for a part of the group, and many of the remainder sought a welcome among the Negro residents of St. Louis, where they were provided with food and shelter.<sup>5</sup>

Scarcely had the first boatload been settled in the city than the steamer *Grand Tower* docked on March 16 with a record of 500 to 600 on its decks.<sup>6</sup> This development, plus news from the South of thousands more awaiting transportation northward,<sup>7</sup> compelled the colored people of St. Louis to put relief on a more permanent basis. Two Negro churches, St. Paul's chapel (A. M. E.) and the Eighth Street Baptist church were thrown open to the migrants. In addition, a mass meeting of colored people was held at St. Paul's chapel on March 17, at which meeting it was agreed to undertake the relief of the refugees from the South who were temporarily "stalled" in the city. A committee of 15 (later expanded to 25) was appointed to provide ways and means to relieve the migrants.<sup>8</sup>

The problems confronting the committee were more than merely providing food and shelter, however. Unless the migrants were shipped from the city periodically, relief work would soon become impossible through sheer weight of numbers. This question was discussed at the first meeting of the committee of 15, and it was felt necessary to inaugurate the transporting of the Negroes on to their destination as soon as possible. Accordingly, a transportation committee was created with one Charles W. Prentice at its head,

4. *Ibid.*, March 13, 1879.

5. *Ibid.*, March 16, 1879. See, also, the St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, March 19, 1879, and Charleton H. Tandy's testimony in "Report and Testimony of the Select Committee of the United States Senate to Investigate the Causes of the Removal of the Negroes from the Southern States to the Northern States," *Senate Report, No. 693* (Serial 1899), 46th Cong., 2d Sess., 1880, pt. 3, p. 37.

6. St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* and *Missouri Republican*, March 17, 1879.

7. St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, March 16, 17, 1879, and St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, March 19, 1879.

8. St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, March 18, 1879.

and arrangements were made with the Missouri River Packet Company to transport the first boatload westward on March 22.<sup>9</sup>

The movement of migrants from St. Louis to Kansas had already begun, however. On March 16 the steamer *Fanny Lewis* had departed for the "Promised Land" carrying 150-200 of the *Grand Tower* group capable of paying their own passage.<sup>10</sup> Such financial independence among the migrants proved an exception, however, and the remaining shipments to Kansas, beginning with the *Joe Kinney* on March 22,<sup>11</sup> were financed and supervised by the St. Louis relief group. These were destined for Wyandotte, which soon became the recipient of all migrants arriving in that state.

It was not chance that had given Wyandotte such a prominent role in the migration, for with the exception of Kansas City, Kan., no other town was as geographically well located to receive the Negroes. Kansas City, with a population of about 3,200, had been considered as the objective point for the migration until the authorities there had announced that they would "positively" refuse to allow the Negroes into the city.<sup>12</sup> Kansas City, Mo., with well over 55,000 inhabitants<sup>13</sup> and a prosperous business community, would have been a logical depository for the migrants had it been a Kansas town. In this respect it failed to meet a most important requirement.

The elimination of these two cities narrowed the choice to the settlements on the west side of the junction of the Kansas and Missouri rivers. Although this area would one day become a part of a great industrial city, in 1879 there was little to indicate its future growth. Except for Wyandotte, located immediately west of the river junction, the region was in its infancy. North of Wyandotte a few miles, on the long trip up the Missouri river to Leavenworth and Atchison, was the former Free-State town of Quindaro, which had declined rapidly since the Civil War. Near Wyandotte on the south was the village of Armstrong with its nearly 718 inhabitants. Still farther southward, beyond the bend in the Kansas river, was Rosedale, whose population of around 962

9. St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, March 19, 20, 1879.

10. The St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, March 17, 1879, estimated that 150 took the *Fanny Lewis* and 250 departed by rail. The latter group were probably those who arrived in Topeka on March 19, the first of the "Exodusters" to enter the state. The Topeka *Commonwealth* and the North Topeka *Times*, March 21, 1879, both estimated the group at 200 persons. See, also, the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, March 23, 1879 (Supplement), for a report of this group of migrants.

11. For descriptions of the departure of the steamer *Joe Kinney*, see the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, March 23, 1879 (Supplement), and the St. Louis *Missouri Republican* of the same date.

12. St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, March 16, 1879.

13. *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880, v. 1, p. 242.





afforded little rivalry to its bustling sister city at the confluence of the two rivers.

Wyandotte was, therefore, the bright spot in the whole area around the junction of the two rivers, and by 1879 it could boast a population of nearly 5,000.<sup>14</sup> The "click of the trowel and the sound of the hammer," heard throughout the town, testified to its prosperous condition. The town could point to frequent visits by Jay Gould, the well-known financier, who "pranced around over the macadam" as though wishing to invest in the "Metropolis of Kansas." It was even rumored he had threatened to make a "whistling station" of Kansas City, Mo., because of its opposition to him, and to locate a "big town" on the Kansas side of the state line.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, the prospects for Wyandotte never looked brighter than on the eve of the influx of the migrants from the South.

Yet in spite of the favorable condition of the city, it was not prepared to weather the deluge of destitute Negroes that began arriving. Following the landing of the *Fanny Lewis*, previously mentioned, came the *Joe Kinney* on March 31 with over 400 migrants,<sup>16</sup> and the *E. H. Durfee* on April 6 with 450 on its decks.<sup>17</sup> This mass of humanity, numbering close to 1,000, was sheltered in the Negro churches of Wyandotte and supported from whatever the citizens of the city could supply.<sup>18</sup>

The Wyandotte *Herald* of May 1, 1879, in describing the first arrivals in the city, recalled that they had been composed "almost entirely of helpless children and aged and infirm people, many of whom were sick and some of whom had been paralytics for a series of years." V. J. Lane, editor of the *Herald*, in his testimony before the senate committee investigating the exodus, further described the newcomers as "the most God-forsaken set of people" he had ever seen. "They were entirely destitute," continued Lane, "and it looked like the almshouses of the Mississippi valley had

14. See an unofficial census published in the Wyandotte *Herald*, April 17, 1879, which set the population at 4,612. The decennial census of 1880 gave the population as 6,149, an increase over the unofficial census of 1879 of 1,537, an increase explained in part by the migrants who remained in the city, living in shacks along the river.—*Tenth Census*, 1880, v. 1, p. 449.

15. Wyandotte *Herald*, March 27, May 22, 1879. See, also, the Topeka *Daily Capital*, April 22, 1879, quoting from the Wyandotte *Gazette* of an unknown date.

16. The St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, March 23, 1879, set the number at 450; the Wyandotte *Herald*, April 3, 1879, estimated the group to be 400, while the *Kansas Pilot*, Kansas City, April 5, 1879, reported 350. The St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, however, arrived at its figure from the number of tickets bought in St. Louis.

17. Wyandotte *Herald*, April 10, 1879.

18. For a general account of the migration in Wyandotte, see Glen Schwendemann, "Wyandotte and the First 'Exodusters' of 1879," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* (Autumn, 1960), v. 26, pp. 233-249.



been searched to get them together, and it became an act of humanity to do something for their relief."<sup>19</sup>

Initially, the migrants had been received by most of the residents of Wyandotte with a mixture of surprise and sympathy. As the numbers in the city increased, however, this attitude turned to one of fear and indignation—fear because it was generally believed the Negroes baggage carried yellow fever germs; indignation because the burden of caring for so many indigent persons had soon become an intolerable imposition. This feeling led to a demand by a large segment of the population that the migrants in the city be transported away, and new arrivals be excluded.<sup>20</sup>

In the face of this mounting discontent, Mayor J. S. Stockton, who had been appointed chairman of the Wyandotte relief committee formed on April 8 to care for the migrants,<sup>21</sup> selected an executive committee of three to expedite the transporting of the newcomers from the city.<sup>22</sup> Such a course of action had become increasingly necessary. On April 13 the steamer *Joe Kinney* made its second appearance in the city with around 200 more Negroes. News had also arrived that over 300 migrants were leaving St. Louis on April 14 aboard the *E. H. Durfee*.<sup>23</sup> These developments hastened the committee to appeal to the "Generous of The United States" for their help in providing for the destitute freedmen.<sup>24</sup>

The response to the committee's appeal for help was heartening, especially in Kansas where several of Wyandotte's neighbors agreed to receive some of the newcomers. Among them was Lawrence, whose offer to take 100 of the migrant families was quickly accepted by the Wyandotte committee.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the morning the migrants had been transported in wagons from the African Methodist church, one of the places in which they had been quartered, to the Wyandotte depot where the arrival of the chartered "cars" was expected momentarily. Morning had slipped into afternoon, however, and still the Negroes waited patiently,

19. *Senate Report*, No. 693, pt. 3, p. 326.

20. Schwendemann, "Wyandotte and the First 'Exodusters,'" *loc. cit.*, p. 242. See, also, the *Topeka Commonwealth*, April 23, 1879.

21. *Wyandotte Herald*, April 10, 1879.

22. *Senate Report*, No. 693, pt. 3, pp. 326, 327. See the testimony of V. J. Lane, editor of the *Wyandotte Herald*, who, with George H. Miller, head of the state asylum for the blind, and G. W. Bishop, made up the committee.

23. *Wyandotte Herald*, April 17, 1879, and the *Atchison Daily Champion*, April 16, 1879.

24. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 17, 1879, and the *Topeka Commonwealth*, April 18, 1879.

25. Other towns in the state offering to receive the Negroes, as of April 24, were Leavenworth, Tonganoxie, Manhattan, and Ottawa. Atchison had requested 200 of the migrants but apparently withdrew the request later.—*Wyandotte Herald*, April 17, 24, and May 1, 1879.





bedding, frying pans, coffee pots, and other household gear forming the nucleus around which the families gathered. Their vigil was finally rewarded when the train, with "comfortable passenger coaches" adequate for the crowd, came into the station and was quickly loaded. After consigning the shipment to T. D. Fisher, editor of the *Lawrence Journal*, members of the Wyandotte relief committee distributed loaves of bread among the travelers, and, much to the joy and relief of the citizens of the city, the train pulled out of the station.<sup>26</sup>

The migrants had scarcely gotten under way, however, when word came from Mayor Isaac Newton Van Hoessen of Lawrence countermanding the earlier offer to receive the freedmen. No effort was apparently made by the Wyandotte committee to comply with the order, but as they began preparations for the next shipment of migrants to Leavenworth, they must have wondered how the newcomers would fare in a city which had so nearly rejected them.

The residents of Lawrence, however, displayed no sign of contempt or regret as the trainload of Negroes arrived in the city on April 20. Nor was such a spirit in evidence four days later when the citizens of the city filled Frazer Hall to "overflowing" in an effort to provide aid for their new charges. The "undivided sentiment" of those present saw the exodus as the "legitimate result of the injustice" inflicted upon the fleeing migrants by the Southern whites. Not only did they protest the misuse of the ex-slaves, but they also pledged their continued demand that the Negroes receive full political rights in the South.<sup>27</sup>

The main accomplishment of the evening, however, was the appointment of a seven-man committee to provide aid for the migrants in the city. The group was also instructed to co-operate with other local aid societies to assure the creation of a system of state-wide relief administered by an "efficient and responsible State executive committee."<sup>28</sup> The citizens of Lawrence had apparently come to realize, as had other groups in the state, that the exodus was becoming too large for the resources of individual cities. This was also the attitude taken by the *Topeka Commonwealth*, which had been urging the formation of a state organization to cope with what it considered a critical problem. A call for a meeting of Topeka citizens at the Opera House on Sunday evening, April 20,<sup>29</sup>

26. See N. C. McFarland's description of the migrants in Wyandotte in the *Topeka Commonwealth*, April 24, 1879. A more complete account, probably by McFarland also, appeared in the *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 22, 1879.

27. *Atchison Daily Champion* and the *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 25, 1879.

28. *Atchison Daily Champion*, April 25, 1879.

29. *Topeka Commonwealth*, April 19, 20, 1879.