

From a people who first discovered and landed upon North American shores; who created the flag of our nation and had a clear part in the formation of our constitutional United States of America; who saved the Navy, and perhaps the Union, during our Civil War--comes the influence in our own city's history, concerning which we wish to reflect for a few moments today.

To give adequate description of the influence, development and accomplishment of the Swedish nationality in the community, one would be obligated to edit a complete set of comprehensive volumes. Perhaps in the not too distant future such work will be written. In the meanwhile, we will endeavor in a small measure to portray some of its illuminating characteristics.

There is no other single city in America, or indeed in any foreign land from Sweden, that is so thoroughly permeated with people and things of historic value and accomplishment that are distinctly Swedish. A decided majority, perhaps 30,000, of this city's inhabitants (complete population approximately 45,000) is composed of immigrants from Sweden and people of direct Swedish descent. An unofficial survey prepared under the direction of the Jamestown Chamber of Commerce in 1930 indicated approximately 70 per cent of the population of the city at that time as being of Swedish extraction.

#### PIONEERING HISTORY

The Swedish-American history of Jamestown began in 1849 with two girls. One of these girls was Miss Johanna Charlotta Johnson, who later became Mrs. Frank Peterson. She is generally considered as being the "mother" of Jamestown's Swedish ascendancy. The other girl was Miss Lisa Lena Anderson, who became the wife of Otto Peterson. Later in 1849, and during the following three years, large numbers of Swedish immigrants came to this section of the country, settling principally in Jamestown, N. Y. and Chandler's Valley, Pa. By the close of 1850 the Swedish colony in Jamestown consisted of more than 250 persons. In 1869 this Swedish colony had increased to nearly a thousand people. From this time on the growth of Swedish folk was very steady so that in the following period of six decades this representation was increased from 1,000 to more than 30,000.

Jamestown, when the Swedish people first began to settle here, was in itself but a pioneering village. Consequently, the entire life was rather in accord with

upbuilding of the new America. The city was nestled at the base of the beautiful Chautauqua Lake amidst a large wooded section, and the early industries were the cutting of timber, the milling of lumber, the establishment of farming, and later the tanning of hides.

But most of the decisive building of this city has been through the wood furniture industries which began in 1869. Being naturally adapted to woodworking industries in practically all phases, the Swedish people were given a decided impetus for development. The dominance of Swedish influence in this field will be easily recognized in discussing their industrial history within the city and in sketching brief biographies of selected representatives to denote such development.

#### CHURCH HISTORY

Any account of early church activity in this community reveals that the events of spiritual interest were closely interlocked and interwoven with all phases of the city's early development. Spiritual life, especially among the Swedish people, was such a sincere and vital influence that it was really an integral part of all their social life and extended somewhat into the economic life of the community.

The first Swedish church to be organized was the First Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church, which was established in 1852. Jamestown at that time had a Swedish population of approximately 325 people. The church was organized by Rev. O. G. Hedstrom, the founder of Swedish Methodism in America. In 1851, while on a visit to Jamestown, he had conducted the first religious service among the Swedish people of the village. Noting the interest at that time, he returned the following year to complete the organization work.

Inasmuch as the Lutheran Church was the established or state church of Sweden it was but natural that most of the immigrants from Sweden were of such preference. The First Swedish Lutheran Church was organized in 1856, the first minister being

Rev. Jonas Swensson, who also had charge of congregations in Wrightsville and Chandler's Valley, Pa. This church was founded upon the rigid Lutheran principles that were incorporated within the state church. Because of its rapid growth in membership and the distinct influence it wielded over all Swedish church development, the First Lutheran Church is nominally considered as being the "mother church" of the Swedish people in this city.

Perhaps some of the older members of our city can still remember vividly the consecrated, vigorous, and untiring leadership of this church for 3 decades by Pastor C. O. Hultgren. He was truly the shepherd of the thousands of Swedish peoples of this community. His love and care extended to all--those without as well as those within the membership of the First Lutheran Church.

To one who has studied the church history of Sweden, it is very evident that a detailed account of Swedish church history in Jamestown is a veritable facsimile. We find the original stalwart State Lutheran Church; then we find the changes and development of more liberal forms of church service--the Free Lutheran Church; soon we have the establishment of Methodism, and later the Mission churches, and the Baptists, and now in recent years the new Pentecostal church. But over all one still sees the prevailing influence of that great reformation faith established by Martin Luther.

#### FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

Jamestown has in proportion a larger number of secular organizations composed exclusively of Swedish nationality than any other American community. These fraternal societies have done much for their memberships in social aspects. They have also contributed much in a concrete form to the cultural development of the community. They have not only been minded to be their "brothers' keepers," but they have also labored diligently for all worthwhile community projects. No appeal from welfare agencies, orphanages, hospitals, and kindred fields of humanitarian precepts is turned aside by them.

The first real organization of a secular nature among the Swedish people of Jamestown, N. Y. was the Swedish singing city, "Brage", which was started in 1871. At its height, this organization had a membership of approximately 150 persons. The

Scandinavian Temperance and Benevolence Society was founded in 1872. It is interesting to note that the first total abstinence society, Scandia Lodge, International Order of Good Templars, originated in 1883. It was disbanded in the "nineties" but was later reorganized and has continued to the present time.

In addition to the Old Sick Benefit Society, the Vega, a life insurance and benefit society, was organized in 1880. The Linnea Insurance Society was organized in 1887 with the original membership of forty Swedish people.

Among the better known fraternal orders we note the Jamestown Lodge, Knights of Pythias, which began in 1886 with Swedish membership only; Swedish Brotherhood (1895); Swedish Sisterhood (1896); Hundred Members Society (1896); Lief Erikson Lodge for men (1897) and Unity Lodge for women (1898) of the Scandinavian Brotherhood of America; Thule Lodge for men (1907) and Flora Lodge for women (1908); Hercules Lodge of the Order of Vasa and Monitor Lodge, Independent Order of Odd Fellows (1911); Ingjald Lodge, Independent Order of Vikings (1925) and Diana Lodge, Independent Order Ladies of Vikings (1939).

The newest Swedish organization to be established in this city is the Jamestown Star Rebekah Lodge, which was chartered in 1931.

One of the foremost of the secular organizations within the city is the Norden Club, which was organized in 1911. This is primarily a social club of business and professional men of Swedish extraction. It also has a Ladies Auxiliary. This organization built a fine clubhouse during the first years of its existence. It has sponsored many cultural projects and has brought to the city distinguished personalities of the world.

CIVIC AFFAIRS

COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES AND INSTITUTIONS

The achievements of the Swedish people of Jamestown in so far as community enterprises are concerned have been so remarkable and so unusual that they are familiar to public officials and public minded citizens in all sections of this country. They have been discussed upon the floor of our United States Congress. They have been the subjects of lectures throughout the land and they have been acclaimed by many foreign countries. Practically all of the city's major civic works have been accomplished by the leadership, the finance and the direct labor of its Swedish citizenry. This includes the Municipal Water Works and the Municipal Electric Plant. The outstanding success in operation of these two public utilities has been heralded throughout the land by the proponents of publicly owned projects. It is interesting to note that the city also maintains the Jamestown General Hospital and a public market building.

In the preceding sections we have mentioned the churches and the fraternal buildings established within the city by its Swedish people. The Gustavus Adolphus Children's Home and the Lutheran Home for the Aged are largely the results of thought and care by the Swedish Lutheran People of this community. These institutions belong to the New York Conference of the Augustana Lutheran Synod, but their ministering to the needy and unfortunate reaches beyond this sphere to such an extent that they are truly community enterprises.

The Swedish<sup>American</sup>-National Bank was organized in 1910. The bank later became known as the American National Bank. In 1929 the Liberty National Bank of this city was merged with it. In 1931 the American National Bank in turn merged with the Bank of Jamestown to become the largest bank in southwestern New York state.

The first Swedish newspaper of the city was established in 1874. It was called "Folkets Rost" (People's Voice) and consisted of four pages. In 1878 it was reorganized and then published in an eight page size under the name of "Vart Nya Hem" (Our New Home). In 1891 the paper was sold to the Vart Land Publishing Company and the name changed to "Vart Land" (Our Land). While this paper perhaps has been the most outstanding of the city's Swedish newspapers, there have been several other Swedish papers published in Jamestown. Since the first issue of "Folkets Rost," October 14, 1874, there has been each week one or more Swedish papers issued in this city. "Vikingen" (the Viking) was published during the years 1876 and 1877; "Frids Baneret" (The Banner of Peace) was published from 1886 to 1899; "Osterns Vaktare" (The Eastern Watchman) was published from 1888 to 1890.

The present and very popular Swedish paper, known as "Skandia", was established in 1909. It is published weekly and wields a substantial influence among the Swedish people of the city and vicinity.

#### POLITICAL INFLUENCES

It was but natural that the Swedish people, being so progressive within the community, should desire equitable representation in the various governmental units.

The first direct infusion of the Swedish citizenry of Jamestown into politics was in the year 1876 when John Gelm was elected as Village Trustee. He was run as an independent Republican candidate against the regular party candidate. Thus it can be observed that with the Swedish people the present trend for independent and progressive type of voting is not a new development.

From this time on the Swedish people have had considerable influence, both direct and indirect, in the city's government. There have always been Swedish repres-

entatives on the City Council or Board of Aldermen and quite often they have constituted a distinct majority in that body. Other city offices such as Chief of Police, Superintendent of Public Utilities, manager of the various municipal buildings, <sup>membership</sup> ~~members~~ of municipal governmental committees, etc. have been held in ratio by men and women of Swedish extraction.

Of the various mayors, serving the community, J. Emil Johnson, Lars A. Larson and the Honorable Samuel A. Carlson have been outstanding as leaders. Frank A. Johnson as Chief of Police for many years did much to mold that important city unit into an efficient organization.

#### EDUCATION, MUSIC AND OTHER ARTS

Although he was born in Chandlers Valky, Pennsylvania, Jamestown's Swedish people are justified in including among their number the Rev. Dr. Carl Swensson. He was the son of Rev. Jonas Swensson, the first pastor of the First Lutheran Church. Dr. Carl Swensson would surely be regarded as the foremost representative of the entire city of Jamestown with respect to educational work combined with religious activity. Little restraint need be exercised in praising him for vision and perseverance in the foundation and subsequent success of Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas. This college is recognized as one of the best educational institutions of the Swedish people in America, and of the entire Middle West section of the country.

In the field of music, the Swedish people have contributed with notable success. We cannot detail the many musical events which have transpired, the achievements which have been made in this art. May it suffice to state that from the organization of the Swedish Singing Society "Brage" in 1871; the Swedish citizenry of Jamestown has contributed dominantly to the community's musical program.

In the other arts, we must truthfully state that neither the city nor the Swedish people of the community have been as fortunate. There have been some artists and sculptors. Their work has been indicative of Swedish thought but none of it has had the sublime touch of genius.

#### LITERATURE AND SCIENCES

While several of the past and present Swedish citizens of Jamestown have been particularly well versed in the field of literature, the community, including the Swedish people, has contributed little of special value in literature. However, of recent years, the Swedish people can share the esteem in which the religious writings of the former pastors of the First Lutheran Church, Rev. Dr. Daniel Nystrom and Rev. Dr. S. M. Miller are held.

It should be noted also that among the present younger generation of people of Swedish descent both the ability and the desire for expression by pen is developing. In this respect, we again find the Swedish stock of this city taking a place among the foremost.

With respect to the sciences, the city of Jamestown cannot boast of any noteworthy contributions. The people have been industrially minded and in this field the community, and particularly the Swedish element, has developed fine technical processes. Products bearing the stamp of "Jamestown, New York" are unquestioned as to quality and perfection of detail.

#### PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS MEN

The first Swedish physician in Jamestown was Dr. Elliott M. Peterson. Two physicians of the past who were eminently successful in their professions were Doctors C. E. Lundgren and Axel V. Grafstrom.

All professions practised during the city's history seem to have been entered by our Swedish folk, and today there is a preponderance of Swedish representation in professional fields.



### MERCANTILE ESTABLISHMENTS

Since 1836, when John Gelm established a meat market, the Swedish people have been prominently identified with the merchandising business of the city. The other pioneers in mercantile establishments were Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Brockman, who opened up a grocery store in 1868; Conrad A. Hult, who began selling men's furnishings shortly after his arrival here in 1872, and Elof Rosencrantz, who was eminently successful as a hardware merchant.

It is interesting and very illuminating to hear accounts of the city's direct business sections of twenty-five to fifty years past. In these accounts one will hear of the triangle space known as Brooklyn Square, which was bordered by the old Warner Block, containing the city's most pretentious dry goods store, that of Hevenor Brothers. This is the building wherein the men's furnishing store of O. W. Wiquist & Sons (originally Otto Wiquist and J. Emil Johnson) has been located for many years. Other well known establishments were John F. Peterson's shoe store and the hardware store of Elof Rosencrantz-C.A.Lundquist.

Proceeding from the "Square" up Main Street were found the grocery store of J. T. Soderholm (originally the H. A. Brockman Store), the merchant tailoring establishment of A. John Peterson-Swante A. Melin, Frank Johnson's grocery store, Olaf Lundquist Hat and Haberdashery establishment, and Alexander Johnson's Restaurant. On Second Street were located Axel F. Johnson's Drug Store, Victor Linnander's Wholesale Liquor Store, John Gelm's meat market, and Charles Wahlgren's shoe store, and the undertaking parlors of C. J. Malmberg.

These were pioneering merchants of fifty years past. During an approximate succeeding period of 25 years (1884-1909) the following progressive changes are recorded.

On Main Street is recalled the establishment of Ahlstrom & Abrahamson dry goods store, A. John Peterson & Sons dry goods store--more familiarly known as

the "Boston Store," and Jones & Scharf's men's furnishings store. It was also on Main Street that C. A. Swanson & Company's drug store was located. On Third Street were found Oscar F. Strandburg's music store, and the "Fair," a notion store operated by Clarence Hultquist.

On Second Street were located the Jamestown Pharmacy operated by Conrad A. Hult, Anderson Brothers dry goods store, C. J. Anderson's shoe store. Two other familiar establishments on East Second Street were Charles A. Berg's bakery and Henry Anderson's barber shop.

Many changes have been made in the city's mercantile businesses during later periods, but at the present time we still note the dominance of the Swedish people in the field of mercantile establishments.

#### INDUSTRIES

Industry has been the very center of life for the entire city of Jamestown and especially for the Swedish people. Most of them were skilled workmen, and being good workmen they had little difficulty in obtaining employment. It was but natural that some should aspire to control and ownership, also.

The city's industries can be roughly grouped under four main divisions: metal equipment, wood and upholstered furniture, textile products, miscellaneous.

For many years ~~the~~ the city has enjoyed honor and prestige in the first three groups. It houses the Art Metal Construction Company, the world's largest manufacturers of steel office equipment, and the Dahlstrom Metallic Door Company, the original and largest manufacturing plant of hollow metal doors, trim, mouldings and other metal specialties. The Swedish people have not had direct control of the Art Metal Construction Company, but they have exercised a very valuable influence in its growth, particularly by being associated with it in various positions of responsibility. At the present time the direct management of the entire concern, both office and factory, is by Swedish men. The same application can be made with respect

to the Watson Manufacturing Company, also makers of metal office furniture and equipment. With respect to the Dahlstrom Metallic Door Company, the Jamestown Metal Equipment Company, the Jamestown Metal Corporation, and the Jamestown Malleable Products Corporation, the entire organizations have been distinctly of a Swedish character.

Most of Jamestown's manufacturing history centers around the wood furniture industry and its kindred manufactures.

The first Swedish manufacturer of the city was J. D. Johnson, who in 1869 with his brother, Axel Johnson, began the manufacture of wooden doors, window frames, sash, etc. However, they were followed in a few months by two other brothers, A. J. Lindblad and O. J. Lindblad, who established a furniture factory. The third Swedish manufacturing concern established was the Ahlstrom Piano Company, which began operations in 1875. The oldest furniture factory in Jamestown was the Breed Furniture Company. This concern was owned and operated by the Breed family for approximately fifty years, but in 1870 Augustus Johnson became a partner in the firm. It was reorganized in 1894 on a cooperative basis under the name Breed-Johnson Furniture Company, Mr. Johnson in active charge. Mr. Johnson died in 1896 and was succeeded as manager by Mr. C. L. Eckman. In 1912 the company was reorganized under the name of Eckman Furniture Company.

Another group of brothers who attained notable success in the manufacture of furniture were Charles J., August C., Andrew P., and Frank O. Norquist. They established two manufacturing plants and rapidly won a high reputation as makers of fine bedroom furniture. Other large furniture factories soon developed. Among the better known are the Atlas Furniture Company, the National Furniture Company, the Seaberg Manufacturing Company, the Level Furniture Company, the Superior Furniture Company, the Union Furniture Company, and the Empire Case Goods Company. Swedish people had direct control of all of these concerns.

In the furniture industry, Jamestown obtained the rank of second place in the entire country. Six large woolen and worsted mills have made "Jamestown" a familiar name to

the entire textile world.

But, in the field of miscellaneous manufactures, it is only of recent years that the city has been progressing with real intent and success. The field includes die castings, malleable iron products, metal, wood and other novelties, confection and food products, chemical and drug products, etc. Here we note the Weborg Brothers Spring Bed Company, which is one of the city's oldest manufacturing concerns. Other companies are the Crescent Tool Company and the J. P. Danielson & Company. Both of these concerns are engaged in the manufacture of wrenches, pliers, screw drivers, and other specialized hand tools. Their products are known and sold throughout this country and in many foreign countries.

Without discrediting any of the industrialists of this community, it is without hesitation that we mention Charles P. Dahlstrom and Karl Peterson as being the unexcelled leaders of the various manufacturing enterprises of the entire city. Their inventive genius, astute business ability, in combination with their keen discernment of progressive needs of their own workmen and of the people of the entire community, together with their very practical application of their humanitarian theories, have placed them at the head of Jamestown's manufacturing history.

Mr. Dahlstrom came to the United States in 1890. After holding several positions of merit in various parts of the country, he came to Jamestown in the year 1899 as a special employee of the Art Metal Construction Company. While with this concern, he invented the metallic door, the real worth of which was apparent to him, although it did not receive particularly favorable reaction from the industry. Upon the expiration of his contract with the Art Metal Construction Company, Mr. Dahlstrom in the year 1904 organized the Dahlstrom Metallic Door Company and began the manufacture of the new metal doors. The success of the fireproof metal door and the Dahlstrom Metallic Door Company was phenomenal. Unfortunately, Mr. Dahlstrom died in the year 1909, but five years after the founding of the company..

The Dahlstrom Metallic Door Company has been one of the most important industrial establishments in the city of Jamestown.

Karl Peterson was distinctively a community minded citizen. A "self-made" man to use the popular expression, Mr. Peterson was undoubtedly one of the most successful and best known of Swedish men throughout the Eastern States.

Quite in keeping with his quiet genius is the story of the remarkable growth of the Crescent Tool Company of this city. The development of this concern under his personal direction was so perfectly managed that the general citizenry of the community did not realize its far reaching scope, but at the present time when they view the two large buildings which comprise the concern, they appreciate its worth as one of the bulwarks of the community.

The company manufactures small hand tools such as pliers, wrenches, screw drivers, etc., and first produced and popularized the type of wrench known throughout all mechanical trades as the "Crescent" wrench. Its products are sold in every city and village of the United States and in countless foreign countries.

Among the many other names of local history we find a predominance of those which indicate Swedish birth or descendency. It is impossible save in the very briefest of manner to bring them in review. We cannot include all who deserve particular mention, but of all songs sung in any land none is of the personal worth of the song of success sung by a man's own efforts and life.

Thus we have spanned in a few moments the Swedish history of Jamestown. And, upon reflection of the city's major achievements and the individuals large creditable for them, we feel obligated to close with this deserving toast to our Swedish representatives: "Well done."--But we hasten to admonish, rest not upon deeds done, but quicken to meet the necessities of today and the requirements of tomorrow.

May the new and young Swedish-Americans surpass even their predecessors!

*Lloyd L. Malmstrom*  
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April 3rd, 1943

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