

**Immanuel Lutheran Church, Evanston, a Microcosm of the Swedish Immigrant Experience**

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I was first introduced to Swedish culture when my husband and I came to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Evanston, Illinois in September, 1991. Up until that point, my knowledge of their traditions and customs was woefully lacking. As newcomers to the area, my husband and I went church shopping and found ourselves at Immanuel, the second stop on our list. One service and one choir rehearsal was all it took for us to throw the search list in the trash. We were immediately drawn to the congregation by its love of singing. We were amazed to find verses of hymns regularly sung a cappella. Most unusual! The resonant space and hearty participation captured our musical interest that day and later stole our heart. We'd met in the university wind ensemble and with our college days and playing opportunities behind us, we shared a lightbulb moment that perhaps we could sing together – and this was the place.

After our initial visit that Sunday morning, we boldly decided to attend the first choir rehearsal of the season that following Wednesday. Choir members were surprised to see us, but they took it in stride and gathered us in. Afterwards, we chatted with many people, but two stand out in my mind: Judy Hokenson and Mid Carlson. Both of these lovely ladies were warm, genuine, and welcoming - all things that would put strangers at ease and help them see a future for themselves in the tight knit community. As I would come to find out Judy and Mid, then about 70-75 years young, had been born and raised in the congregation. They were second generation Swedes like many of their cohort in the congregation. The history of the Swedish immigrant experience in Evanston is the story of Immanuel, the story of Judy and Mid, and the stories of their families.

## Early Evanston History

Evanston was incorporated in 1863. The Great Chicago Fire in 1871 caused a tremendous displacement of the population. Many with means moved northward to Evanston. As it was still considered countryside, there was a burgeoning need for infrastructure. Construction projects abounded to meet the needs of the new arrivals. The photo below of Simpson Street circa 1924 shows the rural nature of the area even then.



*Simpson Street, near the North Shore Canal c1924*

In an interview, historian and former Immanuel Pastor Frank Senn shared, “The town’s population grew from 4,400 in 1880 to 13,059 in 1890. The town needed many working-class people to build and maintain these homes, and to work as maids. Working class Swedish immigrants flocked here to work as carpenters, bricklayers, blacksmiths, and housemaids.” Given the plethora of opportunities for skilled labor, Swedish immigrants in the area did not have to start at the lowest rung of the social ladder. Unlike Irish immigrants who dug canals, new Swedes were able to put their trades to use for market wages.

### **Growth of Early Swedish Settlements and Institutions**

For perspective, Swedes had been coming to America for some time and to Illinois in particular. In his book, History of Swedes of Illinois, Ernest W. Olson (1908) records the energy of Swedish preacher Erik Jansson to bring a group of his followers to the US in the 1840's and their eventual establishment of the Bishop Hill Colony. Olson also tracks the early development of Swedish communities in Andover (Henry County), Galesburg (Knox County), Moline (Rock Island County), and Chicago (Cook County).

Noting the growth of Swedish churches in the greater Chicago area, Olson (1908) states, "At the close of 1905, there were in Chicago and vicinity 41 Swedish Lutheran congregations having a total membership of 15,000 and owning property to the aggregate value of \$517,300. The Swedish Methodists had 18 congregations with 2,520 members and property valued at \$249,600" (p. 303).

While Methodists in the area had the Garret Evangelical Theological Seminary and the Bethany Home, Lutherans came together in education and social service as well. In 1882, the Augustana Hospital was founded by the Deaconess Society of the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church whose mission was to aid the "training of well qualified nurses, the establishment and support of hospitals, the care of the aged, the education of the young, and in general the exercise of mercy among the suffering" (Augustana Digital Commons, 2017). The facility became a respected hospital and educational center for nursing. Though the Augustana Hospital site was eventually lost to redevelopment, Lutheran General Hospital serves the same community today. Along similar lines, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois which now serves over

38,000 people a year began as an orphanage in 1867 to serve children who had lost their parents to cholera (Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, 2023).

### **Causes of Immigration**

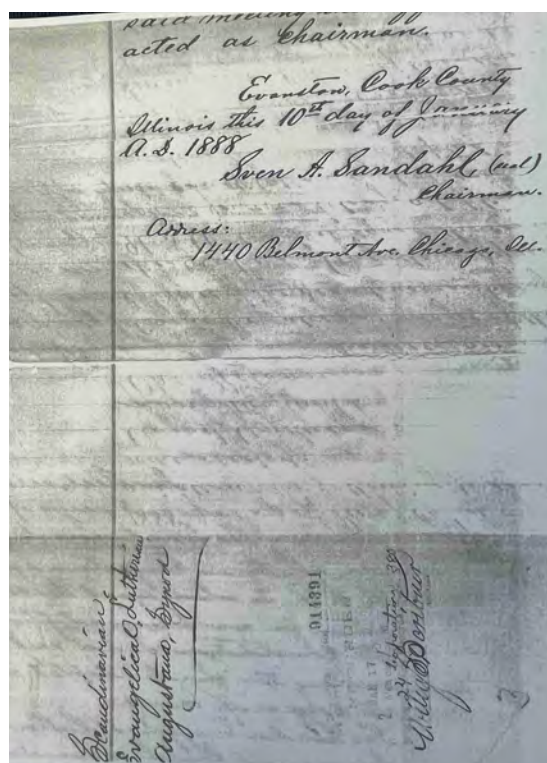
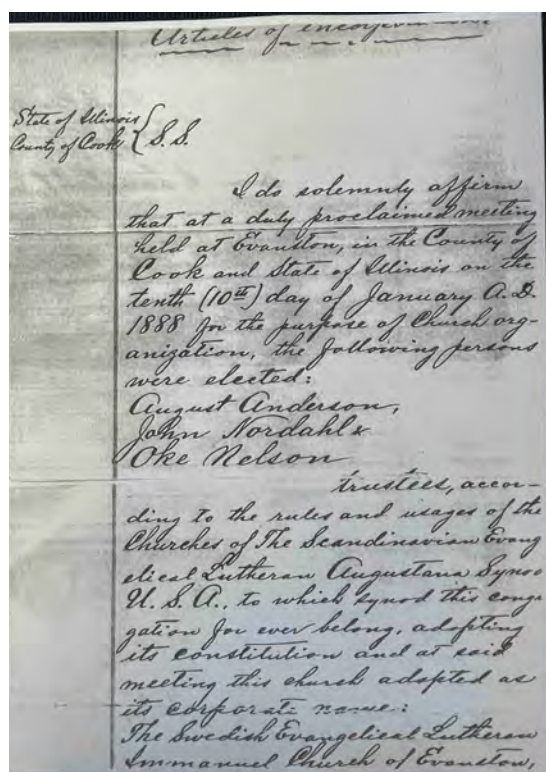
What was pulling all these Swedes to America? Immigration cannot be considered without also looking at the driving forces of emigration. Put simply, there was a lack of opportunity in Sweden at the time. The agrarian lifestyle that had been so attractive for years did not keep pace with strong population growth. Young people in particular became anxious to find a place to thrive. Emigrant guide books became popular listing tips and tricks for people making the voyage to America. The networks of Swedes began to grow as did their successes. Olson (1908) lists two lodges of Swedish fraternal societies, the “Svithiod” and “Vikingarne” with a total of 68 lodges and 30 corresponding ladies’ societies. Swedes were also active in the lodges of the Scandinavian Brotherhood of America, as well as the Free Masons and Odd Fellows (p.162).

Dr. Dag Blak (2009) in his online article, “Swedish Immigration to North America” reports that Swedes crossed the Atlantic going both ways, “Return migration was also a part of the Swedish patterns. Approximately one-fifth of the immigrants returned to their homeland. Re-migration was especially strong towards the end of the emigration era, and was more common among men, urbanites, and persons active in the American industrial sector.”

### **Beginnings of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Evanston**

Senn also detailed the early beginnings of Immanuel in the previously mentioned interview, “By 1886 there were enough Swedes here who wanted to worship in their own language that one of them, Miss Josephina Erickson, arranged for Rev. Sven A, Sandahl, of

Trinity Lutheran, then a Swedish Lutheran Church in Chicago, to conduct worship services in the home of A. Jacobson at 818 Lake Street and in rented quarters." On January 10, 1888, an organizational meeting was held with 60 persons present and Immanuel was born. The church was officially named "The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Church of Evanston" and became part of the Scandinavian Augustana Synod.



*Articles of Incorporation for the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Church of Evanston*

The Augustana Synod played a significant role in the movement of Swedes from one continent to the next. O. Fritiof Ander (1956) notes this impact in his book The Cultural Heritage of the Swedish Immigrant, "The large emigration from Sweden led to efforts not only by states, but also by church groups to channel the movement. The Augustana Synod sought to call the attention of emigrants as they left Sweden, as well as the immigrants upon their arrival

in America, to communities where the synod had organized congregations.” (p. 62) When I joined Immanuel in 1991, the Augustana Synod had already merged with others to become the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), but vestiges remained. The congregation was incredibly proud of its history and displayed its Augustana Synod banners and paraments publicly for years.

### **Immanuels Harold**

The archives of Immanuel hold a treasure trove of historical documents. Thanks to the miracle of Google Translate which provides an adequate if not scholarly translation, their stories can now spring to life. Early issues of Immauels Harold, described as a monthly tract and news magazine, were published regularly by Immanuel and demonstrate Alder’s observations. The 8-page publication, written nearly entirely in Swedish, included news and programming of the church, Bible verses, inspirational stories, giving records, and two pages of advertising by local businesses.

The masthead from issue 39 dated April 1911 lists the editor and advertising solicitor. A picture of the church along with information and times for activities directly follows (Sunday School 9:15 a.m., High Mass 10:30 a.m., Youth Meeting 5:30 p.m., Evensong 7:45 p.m.). Below that one can find the names and addresses of council leadership, deacons and clerks; Sunday School teachers and superintendents; choir directors, accompanists and organists; leaders of the ladies sewing circle known as the Martha Society and the leaders of the Dorcas Society tasked with raising funds on behalf of the church (p.4).



April 1911 Issue of Immanuel's Herald

Highlights from this issue include the news that the Easter services were wonderful and filled with special music, that collections of \$22.60 were taken up for the benefit of the Emigrant Home in New York, and that the choir director just began a Men's Chorus. Clearly things were hopping at Immanuel (p.1).

Issue 39 of the Immanuel's Herald also included two pages of advertising from local professionals and businesses including a dentist, an ear nose and throat specialist, a pharmacist, a boarding stable and livery, a real estate agent, a fish market, a bakery, book publishers with texts in Swedish, a restaurant specifically inviting congregational members to visit, and a Swedish Advocate. In addition, there were solicitations from various banks including the Svea Building and Loan Association (p. 6-8).



### **The City Missionary**

Folded into some of the copies of the Immanuels Harold, I found issues of the Stadsmissionaren or The City Missionary which touted itself as the Official Organ of the Chicago Lutheran Inner Missionary Society. In the May 1911 issue, a daily accounting was offered recapping activities of the organization, some of which included: a mission grant received from a conference meeting in Galesburg, conversations with inmates in the county jail, assistance for an old man to return to the fatherland, aid given to a man who was turned away at the county hospital and sent by special permission to the Augustana Hospital, and a donor listing of those who gave clothing for distribution to others. The issue also notes a recent program given against Mormonism and the “abominable teachings and propaganda of this religious cult. May our people both in Sweden and America be saved from the curse of polygamy” (p. 1.)

Advertisements in the issue include offerings from a lawyer, launderer, shoe merchant, piano and furniture mover, coal and wood provider, tailor, contractor and builder, furnace and sheet metal worker, veterinary surgeon, and a firm of Swedish Advocates. Perhaps my favorite is the ad from The Salubrin Laboratory, “Recognized as the best of all home remedies, it heals wounds, relieves swelling and inflammation, cures hemorrhoids, relieves pain, and is of importance even in the most dangerous diseases as a first treatment before a doctor can be procured. Aromatic and extremely pleasant. (p. 8)”

May 2011 Issue of Stadsmissionären

**MOTTAGNA KLADER FOR UTDELNING.**

**N. A. NELSON**  
1124 - 108 La Salle Street  
CHICAGO, ILL.  
Fire and Life Insurance  
Real Estate Loans  
First Mortgage for Sale  
BUILDING AND LOAN ASSOCIATION  
Dr. E. Q. Benson  
Office and Home  
5125 North Clark St. Chicago, Ill.  
Tel. Edgewater 2112  
A. S. 1-30 p. m.  
A. S. 1-30 p. m.

**Augustana Hospital**  
Corner of Belmont and Lincoln Ave.  
CHICAGO, ILL.  
Congregate the following departments:  
General Surgery  
Internal Medicine  
Eye and Ear  
Nose and Throat  
Skin Diseases  
Diseases of the Nervous System  
Gynecology  
Pediatrics  
Children's Diseases  
A large Training School for Nurses  
is connected with the Hospital  
Prices are Moderate. Care the very best.  
Telephone Directory 201  
348 W. Oak Street, Chicago

**Oscar D. Olson**  
LAWYER  
Suite 1132-34 Stock Exchange Bldg.  
Tel. Main 2949 - 108 La Salle Street

**Swanson's Hand Laundry**  
Moderate Prices. Good Work  
Prompt Service. Phone Emphasis 1227  
156 Oak Street, Chicago

**C. A. HOFVANDER**  
DRUGGIST  
FINE FOOTWEAR  
Tinting, Specialty - Repairing, neatly done  
Telephone Directory 201  
348 W. Oak Street, Chicago, Ill.

**Skoglund & Goranson**  
EXPRESS & VAN CO.  
PIANO AND FURNITURE MOVING  
WITH COVERED WAGONS  
COAL AND WOOD  
Deliver Gas, Pumps, etc.  
357 W. Oak St. - 2nd Fl. -  
NORTH SIDE

**Phone Lake View 1202**  
**Erlanson & Co.**  
Tailors  
H. Bergman  
Mfr. 1156 Belmont Ave.  
Chicago, Ill.

**Nelson & Lewin**  
CONTRACTORS & BUILDERS  
Estimating for complete buildings  
Furnished without charge  
Room 201  
80 La Salle Street

**George E. Q. Johnson**  
CHICAGO, ILL.  
1124 - 108 La Salle Street  
CHICAGO, ILL.  
Fire and Life Insurance  
Real Estate Loans  
First Mortgage for Sale  
BUILDING AND LOAN ASSOCIATION  
Dr. E. Q. Benson  
Office and Home  
5125 North Clark St. Chicago, Ill.  
Tel. Edgewater 2112  
A. S. 1-30 p. m.  
A. S. 1-30 p. m.

**New Book**  
The Sunday School  
How shall it best attain its object?  
A collection of papers read before a  
congregation of Lutheran pastors and  
Sunday-school teachers at the In-  
ternational Synod, Chicago, July 1910.  
The subjects treated were as follows:  
1. The status of the Sunday-school.  
2. The aims of the Sunday-school.  
3. The methods of the Sunday-school.  
4. The home and the Sunday-school.  
5. The future of the Sunday-school.  
6. The organization and aim of the  
Lutheran Sunday-school. 7. Organiza-  
tion and work of a Lutheran Sunday-  
school. 8. Officers of a Lutheran  
Sunday-school. 9. Mission in the  
Sunday-school. 10. The Sunday-  
school teachers' reward. 11. Some  
predictions of a Sunday-school  
teacher. 12. The catalyst study of  
the catechism.  
As will be seen by this table of  
contents, the collection covers a  
large range of subjects and the reader  
will find himself amply repaid for the  
time spent in perusing the book.  
Price, in paper cover 15 cents.  
Augustana Book Concern, Book Bldg., Ill.  
CHICAGO, ILL.  
1715 Dearborn St., Room 101, Chicago, Ill.  
1715 Dearborn St., Room 101, Chicago, Ill.  
1715 Dearborn St., Room 101, Chicago, Ill.  
1715 Dearborn St., Room 101, Chicago, Ill.

**Dr. A. H. Magnusson**  
SALUBRIN  
The Salubrin Laboratory  
CHICAGO, ILL.  
1715 Dearborn St., Room 101, Chicago, Ill.  
1715 Dearborn St., Room 101, Chicago, Ill.  
1715 Dearborn St., Room 101, Chicago, Ill.  
1715 Dearborn St., Room 101, Chicago, Ill.

Clearly the readers of Immanuel Harold and the Stadsmissionären were of enough

means to consider the services provided furthering the argument that local Swedish immigrants did not start at the bottom of the rungs of American society.

## Major Milestones in Immanuel's First 50 Years

Immanuel's history can also be seen through building improvements and language offerings. The congregation quickly began to grow and prosper. The timeline below outlines the first 50 years of milestones in Immanuel's history. From a meager start with a secondhand, wood frame building purchased from a neighboring congregation to a newly constructed sanctuary and ownership of adjacent properties, Immanuel grew as it supported its community initially in Swedish and later in English.

### Timeline

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1888 | Purchase of two lots where the church and Fellowship Hall now stand at 616 Lake Street in Evanston<br><br>Purchase and move of wood frame church from nearby Bethlehem Lutheran (German) |
| 1898 | Construction of current church sanctuary.<br><br>Existing wooden church structure sold to Trinity Lutheran (Norwegian) and moved back across the railroad tracks                         |
| 1900 | Parsonage built on existing land   |
| 1904 | Decoration of church interior  |
| 1905 | Installation of first pipe organ<br><br>Creation of the Dorcas Society composed of younger women to raise money for the church   |
| 1910 | Church bell installed  |
| 1912 | Sunday School in English introduced  |
| 1913 | Occasional services in English began.<br>The Dorcas and Martha Societies retire the church debt.   |
| 1915 | An adjacent property is purchased for use as a Girls' Home   |
| 1916 | <i>Judy Hokenson is born</i>   |
| 1920 | New heating system installed, painting projects completed  |
| 1922 | New carpeting and light fixtures installed<br><i>Mid Carlson is born</i>   |
| 1925 | Basement in church and parsonage improved  |
| 1930 | Despite the Great Depression, exterior of church bricked   |
| 1933 | Council votes to change name officially to "The Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church" with English to be used almost exclusively in services and classes                                 |
| 1938 | The church interior was refurbished  |

As the years passed, the focus on the Swedish language began to wane. From the timeline, we see that Sunday School in English was introduced in 1912. In 1913 occasional services began to be offered in English and by 1933 church leadership votes to make English the dominant language (Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1988).

## Immanuel Herald

This transfer of primary language can also be seen through the publications of the church. Immanuels Harold, published in Swedish for a generation, became the Immanuel Herald. Reformatted to a smaller size and 16 pages in length, the Jan-Feb issue from 1933 is primarily presented in English. It continues to report on the activities of the congregation and includes recommended daily Scripture meditations. The masthead now lists Church School at 9:30 a.m., Morning Worship at 10:45 a.m. and Evening Worship (Swedish) at 7:30 p.m. (p.2). Articles in Swedish begin on page 12 and continue through page 14.



### Jan.-Feb. 1933 Issue of Immanuel Herald

Advertisements in the back of the publication are listed mostly in English, though some in Swedish. Ads listed include A.T. Carlson still in the insurance business, a piano teacher, general contractor, butcher, druggist, coal provider, and dentist. It is interesting to note the decrease in

the number of advertisers versus the 1911 edition, underscoring the financial times of the early 1930's (p. 16)

The image shows two pages of advertisements from the Immanuel Herald. The left page is titled "IMMANUEL HERALD" and contains several ads for local businesses and a church notice. The right page is titled "IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH" and contains ads for a piano teacher, a general contractor, a coal company, a florist, and an undertaker.

**Left Page Advertisements:**

- C. A. AHLBERG**  
Fine Shoes and Repairing  
613 DEMPSTER STREET  
Telephone University 1552
- ARTHUR J. WICHMAN**  
Meats  
PHONES  
University 0216-6482 University 2428  
Wilmette 415 611 Dempster St., 822 Dempster St.  
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS
- SVENSK FASTIGHETSÄFFÄR**  
Bränd-, Lieferskrivings- och  
Anghälsagentur  
**A. T. CARLSON**  
Room 2 Phone University 1318  
631 Davis Street EVANSTON, ILL.
- H. L. SWENSON**  
Druggist  
Cor. Davis & Maple Ave., Evanston, Ill.  
Prescriptions  
Carefully  
Compounded  
Tel. Uni. 0210
- TANDLÄKARE  
KJÖLLERSTRÖM**  
506 Howard-Clark Bldg.  
1791 Howard St., Chicago, Ill.  
Sheldrake 0545  
Vardagar 10-12 och 2-5
- Good Coal Saves You Money**  
BUY IT FROM  
**MARQUETTE COAL & MINING CO.**  
730 Pitner Ave., Evanston  
Rog. Pk 1836 Gre. 0730
- The Sick-Benefit Society of Immanuel Lutheran Church**  
Organized November 24th, 1915, holds its meetings in the Church Parlor the third Thursday of each month. Further information granted on request. Chairman, Pastor O. E. Liden, 616 Lake Street; Recording Secretary, August E. Johnson, 1519 Greenwood Street; Financial Secretary, Eric Wingstrom, 1100 Forest Avenue.

**Right Page Advertisements:**

- IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
616 Lake Street  
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS  
Return Postage Guaranteed
- SWAN A. CARLSON**  
Glenview, Ill.  
Auto Repairing and supplies  
New and Used Cars  
Ph. Glenview 250
- ANNA E. HAGBERG**  
TEACHER OF PIANO  
Cosmopolitan School of Music  
Private and Class Instruction  
1425 Kimball Bldg., Chicago  
Evanston Branch Studio, 831 Mulford St.
- NILS LINDBLOOM**  
GENERAL CONTRACTOR  
3625 GRANT ST.  
EVANSTON, ILL.  
Phone: University 4665
- THIS SPACE FOR SALE**
- North Shore Coal Company**  
1520 Lyons Street  
EVANSTON, ILL.  
Univ. 1343 Wilmette 1400  
F. M. BENNETT, Manager
- EICHLING'S**  
Flowers  
Where Your Best Friends Buy  
1511 Sherman St., EVANSTON  
Telephone Greenleaf 921
- WM. H. SCOTT**  
UNDERTAKER  
LADY ATTENDANT  
1460 Sherman Ave.  
University 7250 DeLuxe Ambulance Service

### Advertisements in the Immanuel Herald

Perhaps this shift from Swedish to English is not so surprising. Given the Naturalization Act of 1920 which mandated that citizens learn English in order to be nationalized, the push for English, particularly in schools, was amplified. I recall from talking with Judy and Mid that "many years ago" Swedish classes were offered at the church. They both said that they spoke English at school, but Swedish at home. Later, when English became more dominant in society, a Swedish Language Club was formed among Judy and Mid's peers at Immanuel. Club meetings carried on informally in homes until the two of them were well into their 90's.

## Enduring Swedish Traditions

In the late 1950s the Dorcas and Martha Societies merged into the Immanuel Church Women which presented annual Swedish programs like the Santa Lucia Festival for decades. Mid is pictured in the newspaper clipping from 1959. My daughter served as a Lucia in 2014.



Santa Lucia Fest 1959 with Mid



Santa Lucia Fest in 2014 with Eliza

Swedish traditions and foods popped up even during my years at Immanuel, multiple generations after its inception and several after Judy and Mid were young women. This suggests that the ethnic traditions of Swedes were not seen as harmful or threatening, unlike the German traditions in my own heritage. Though my father spoke German, he often chose to keep that to himself. He did not seek out others and there were no German clubs in my girlhood church or town despite large numbers of Germans in the area. Because the Swedes were not persecuted for celebrations like Santa Lucia, they lived on to be shared for decades by Swedes and others.

### **Hardships and Successes**

That's not to say that the transition to America was an easy one. Returning to Ander (1956), he writes, "The preference for the literature of the home country placed the immigrant writer of prose and poetry in a difficult position, even though his literary efforts grew directly out of the environment. Frequently it sounded a note of melancholy and loneliness as it mirrored the adjustments to American life. Sometimes it expressed that belief in the future resting upon progress and the triumph of democracy based upon individual freedom that was so typically American of the 19th century" (p. 140).

Even so, Swedes experienced success in Evanston and beyond. Consider the celebration of Swedish Day on July 20<sup>th</sup> at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. In his book, Olson (1908) devotes three pages of coverage to the spectacle which included a lengthy parade complete with dignitaries, decorated carriages and floats; a concert given by the American Union of Swedish Singers featuring three celebrated guests from the Royal Opera at Stockholm; a medley of Swedish tunes played on the chimes in Machinery Hall; a grand chorus of 400 male voices; culminating with a telegram to his majesty King Oscar II sending "greetings from fifty thousand Swedish Americans" (p. 163).

Perhaps most notable within the walls of Immanuel are two people, Pastor Gustaf F. Stark, and LeRoy Carlson. Olson (1908) profiled Pastor Gustaf F. Stark who shepherded the flock at Immanuel from 1901 to 1907, preaching in both Swedish and English. During his time with the congregation many advancements were made. His wife, Anna Stark, dedicated her life to raising funds for mission work. At her death in 1970, she bequeathed \$100,000 to the congregation to be designated into a special fund with earnings to be used to support mission

projects outside the scope of regular budgets. Gifts from the Stark Fund continue to this day. Also notable was the fact that Pastor Stark served as the president and secretary of the North Chicago Mission district of the Illinois Conference and as secretary of the Swedish Lutheran Ministers' Association of Chicago. He was also a member and secretary of the board of directors of the Anti-Saloon League of Illinois and the Chicago Law and Order League. These appointments were very much in keeping with the times, particularly in Evanston where the work Francis Willard and the Women's Christian Temperance Union prospered (Cook County (Outside Chicago) p. 253)

LeRoy Carlson provides a more contemporary example. Mr. Carlson was a lifetime member of Immanuel and his four children attended Sunday School at Immanuel. From humble beginnings with a small telephone company serving rural Wisconsin known as Telephone and Data Service (TDS), Mr. Carlson went on to found U.S. Cellular. Carlson, along with his wife, have created several professorships at colleges and universities including the Margaret D. and LeRoy T. Carlson Fellowship at Harvard Business School. The Carlson family is the funding behind Immanuel's Organ Scholar program which this year hosted contestants from Eastman, St. Olaf, and Notre Dame among others.

### **Immanuel's Lasting Impact**

The overarching role of the church in the life of newly arrived immigrants was significant. While I did not participate in Immanuel's earliest days, I did see many of the outcomes Miss Josephina Erickson might only have dreamed of. Immanuel did become a thriving cultural center growing to a height of 700 confirmed members in 1961. The congregation built an administrative and classroom building in the 1950s which is where I sit

typing this very paper. The congregation sponsored classes, bowling leagues, social events, Maypole dances, and had delicious cardamom bread at every festival. The Sewing Group, still active since Josephina went looking for a Pastor in 1886, warmly invited Eliza as a child to learn to sew.



*Eliza with Mid learning to quilt*

The light and energy of the Immanuel community drew my husband and I like moths to the flame. I am glad we did not continue church shopping. We quickly met other couples at similar life stages and raised our families here. It has been a good choice.

Now though, it is beyond heartbreaking to see that average Sunday attendance is around 40 people. I feel the weight of being given a rich and generous gift that is going to lie fallow. Such a poor steward am I! I'm so fearful that I'll be part of the crew that will shut the doors. The very thought makes me weep openly.

I know that organized religion has a checkered past and I would never want to dismiss or overlook hurts that have been caused. Immanuel isn't perfect, but it has gotten an awful lot right over time. I agree with Ander who says, "The church with its many institutions of learning and mercy is by far the mightiest monument built by the immigrants in America" (p. 102).

For that I remain humbly grateful.

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