

*Amandus Johnson, Gregory B. Keen, and the Origins of the Swedish Colonial Society*

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A group of prominent and successful Philadelphia-area men founded the Swedish Colonial Society (SCS) in January 1909. They included Pennsylvania's state librarian, professors at Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania, a pair of prominent local attorneys (one of whom had more or less forsaken the law to write history), Sweden's minister to the United States and its vice consul at Philadelphia, a former governor of Pennsylvania, and two men who would later represent Delaware in the United States Senate. The founders gave the new society immediate credibility in business, political, social, and intellectual circles, and a strong and lasting connection with Sweden's government.

The SCS also attracted members and grew because of some founders' reputations as historians, because of genealogical connections, especially with New Sweden settlers, and because of Amandus Johnson's big book, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware, 1638-1664*, the SCS's first publication (1911).

The two most important founders were Johnson (1877-1974) and Gregory B. Keen (1844-1930), the curator of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). It was Johnson's idea to create a national historical organization headquartered in the eastern United States with membership open to anyone interested in Swedish-American history. He put together the core group that translated his idea into reality between 1907 and 1909. Keen shaped the society's early membership and lasting genealogical passion by recruiting descendants of New Sweden's settlers. Johnson used his scholarly connections to attract members from Swedish and American universities. Keen also gave the SCS access to the HSP's membership and services. Together Keen and Johnson committed the SCS to educating the public about New Sweden, especially by preserving documents and publishing historical works.