

The Swenson Center moves into new facilities

Where to Search for your Great- Grandfather

The groundwork was laid 132 years ago when a small group of Swedish immigrants established Augustana College to train young men as pastors and teachers. Over the years, the librarians and archivists at Augustana have added to this foundation through the careful preservation of Swedish-American books, artifacts, and records. Then in 1980, the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center became a concrete reality.

Since its founding, the Center has become a major national archives and research center devoted to preserving and interpreting the history and role of Swedish immigration to North America. Yet, despite its rich resources of materials and the dedication of staff and supporters, the Swenson Center lacked one vital ingredient—a permanent physical structure adequate to its mission. On October 20, 1991, that changed when the Center celebrated the official opening of a marvelous new facility located at the heart of Augustana College's Rock Island, Illinois, campus.

Glen Brolander, chairman of the Center's Advisory Committee, explained that the new facility became

possible because of grants totaling 3.5 million kronor (approximately \$600,000) received from three foundations in Sweden related to the Wallenberg family.

Dag Blanck, the Center's director, says the new facilities, "mean everything to us. For the first time we can keep everything under one roof. The facilities are wonderful. It is one thing to say you are a big archive, but now we also look the part." Blanck, a native of Sweden who currently divides his time between the center and Uppsala University where he is completing doctoral studies, says genealogical research is the center's "bread and butter."

The Swenson Center, with its collections, is one of the premier sources for information about individuals who immigrated to North America. These collections include books; periodicals; microfilms of Swedish-American newspapers, church records, organizational records, and passenger embarkation records; manuscripts; personal papers; and maps.

The center is now housed in one of Augustana College's grand old



Swenson Center Director Dag Blanck.
(Right) The new research facilities with Swenson Center staff (from left to right) Christina Johansson, Vicky Oliver, and Kermit Westerberg. (All photos: Augustana College)

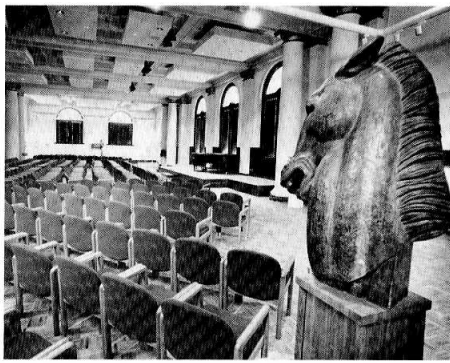


buildings, Denkmann Memorial Hall. After almost two years and \$3.6 million worth of renovation work, Denkmann has reopened as the home of Swenson Center, the College's foreign languages departments, and a showplace recital/lecture hall named Wallenberg Hall.

During its first decade, Swenson Center's holdings were stored in several locations around campus, making access to, and the organization of, materials difficult at best. The facilities in the renovated Denkmann Hall encompass more than 6800 square feet of space located on three floors—almost triple the amount of the previous space. The main public room of the new center is the reading/research room, a large, rectangular room with huge windows which flood the room with light and give it one of the best views on campus. The room is furnished with a variety of solid, warm-toned wooden furniture.

The people who are the lifeblood of the Center—the staff—are researcher Christina Johansson, a native of Fjällbacka, Sweden; administrative assistant Vicky Oliver; and archivist Kermit Westerberg, the senior staff member.

Westerberg says that the new facilities mean that the center, "can now look forward to doing a lot more things than we have ever been able to do



The new Wallenberg Hall in Denkmann Memorial Hall.

before." He says that may involve everything from improved cataloging and consolidation of collections to new research projects and the sponsorship of conferences.

"Ten years is not long for an archive to exist," says Director Blanck, "but we are already serving a national and international audience. It is our ambition to continue collecting and researching anything having to do with Swedish-American immigration to North America." Now, as it enters its second decade, the Swenson Center has the facilities to match those goals, and to serve everyone from family genealogists to academic researchers for many decades to come.

—Linda R. Hirsch

Linda Hirsch is a native of the Quad Cities who holds a graduate degree in journalism and has worked in college communications for the past ten years.

April conference at Swenson Center

On April 24-25, 1992, Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center will host a conference on "Scandinavian Immigrants and Education in North America". The conference will focus on the immigrant community and immigrant schools—seminaries, colleges, and academies—and the relationship between the immigrants and the American public schools and universities.

The keynote address will be given by Dr. Mark Stolarik, outgoing director of the Balch Institute in Philadelphia. The conference, to be held on the Augustana College campus in Rock Island, is expected to attract scholars from all across the United States and Canada. It is also open to the public. Address inquiries to Vicky Oliver, Swenson Center, Box 175, Augustana College, Rock Island, IL 61201. Telephone: (309)794-7204; telefax: (309)794-7443.

Augustana College

- The oldest Scandinavian college in the United States.
- Nationally respected among independent institutions of the liberal arts and sciences.

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Call or write James D. Horstmann, Vice President for Development, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois 61201-2296; 1-800-798-8100.

