



Every year the Swedish districts of Vasa Order of America select a "Swedish-American-of-the-Year" as they did in 1985 when they honored Illinois Governor Jim Thompson. The map of Sweden (below) shows places where Swedish-American festivals are held during the summer.

There was a time not too many years ago when it was not easy promoting Swedish-American relations in Sweden. During the height of U.S. involvement in Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the celebration of the cultural connections between the two countries was often overshadowed by the coolness generated by the war and subsequent Swedish criticism of U.S. foreign policy.

Happily, those days are now only a dim memory. Perhaps the best evidence of this new, friendlier era of intercultural relations is the multitude of Swedish-American festivals that have sprung up in different parts of Sweden during the summer season. Pick any summer weekend in Sweden and you will find at least one community or area celebrating the strong cultural ties between the United States and Sweden.

Some of these celebrations have been carried out for a number of years, having persevered even when diplomatic relations between the two countries were tenuous. The present friendly climate has served to increase the crowds of Swedes and Swedish-Americans gathering to emphasize and symbolize how important the two countries are to each other.

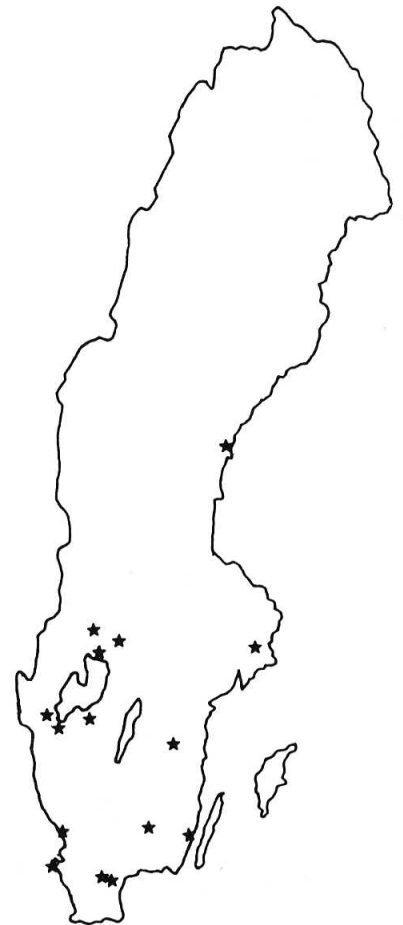
Many Swedish-Americans traveling to Sweden to visit relatives or just to sightsee should consider participating in one or more of these festivals. It's guaranteed: you'll end up feeling even more proud of being an American . . . and of being a Swedish-American.

The major upcoming Swedish-American festivals include:

**Swedish-American Days in Värmland** (July 28-29). On the last weekend of July a number of events are held in various Värmland communities, including Karlstad, Filipstad, and Sunne. The community of Karlstad and the Emigrant Register located in that city cooperate to celebrate the connections between Värmland and the United States. This includes a bus trip to Rottneros, near Sunne, where a ceremony is held at the famous Kinship Monument. On Sunday the attention focuses on Filipstad, the birthplace of Swedish inventor John Ericsson. The climax of the weekend is the re-enactment of the Battle of Hampton Roads between replicas of the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*. This "battle" attracts thousands to the shores of Filipstad's lake to watch Swedish army gunnery crews pretend to be Yankee or Confederate artillerymen. Bring your ear plugs. (Contact name and telephone number in Sweden: Emigrant Register 054/159269)

**Swedish-American-of-the-Year** (August 5). On the first Sunday in August, the two Swedish districts of Vasa Order of America honor the Swedish-American-of-the-Year, a tradition that is now 30 years old. The ceremony takes place in the afternoon at Skansen in Stockholm and is the culmination of a weekend that includes an official luncheon at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a gala dinner sponsored by the Vasa District. The first Swedish-American-of-the-Year was Rudolf Bannow in 1960 and last year's honoree was actress Signe Hasso. (Bertil Friberg 013/121409 or Per-Ivan Skoog 035/31676)

**Minnesota Day in Växjö** (August 12). Two weeks after the festivities in Värmland and a week after Stockholm's Skansen ceremony, the people of Växjö put on a series of events on the second weekend in August, culminating in Sunday's Minnesota Day at the Emigrant Institute. This event attracts bands, choruses, and prominent Swedes and Swedish-Americans for an afternoon of speeches, pres-

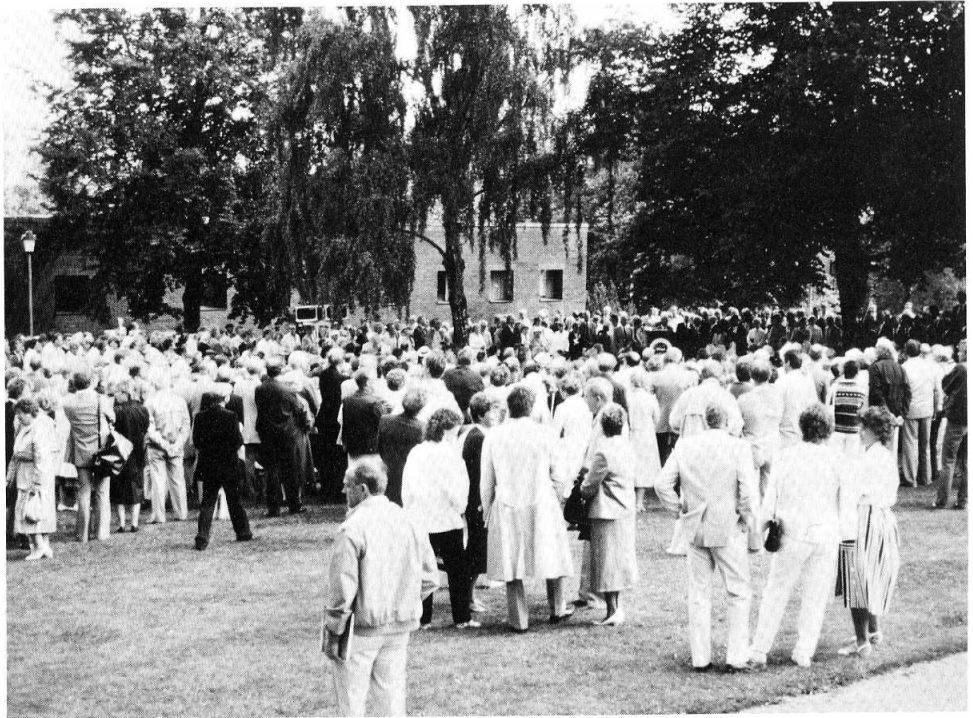


and was so instrumental in marketing the state as a place for other Swedish immigrants to settle. A new monument to Hans Mattson was dedicated at ceremonies in Önnestad in 1989. (Ann-Britt Kjellberg 044/243625)

August 25: **Vasa Summer Lodge in Gothenburg.** The members of Vasa Order of America have a meeting and a boat trip out of Gothenburg to the fortress at Älvsborg. (Irma Delfs 031/290454 or Eva Jonsson 0303/60871)

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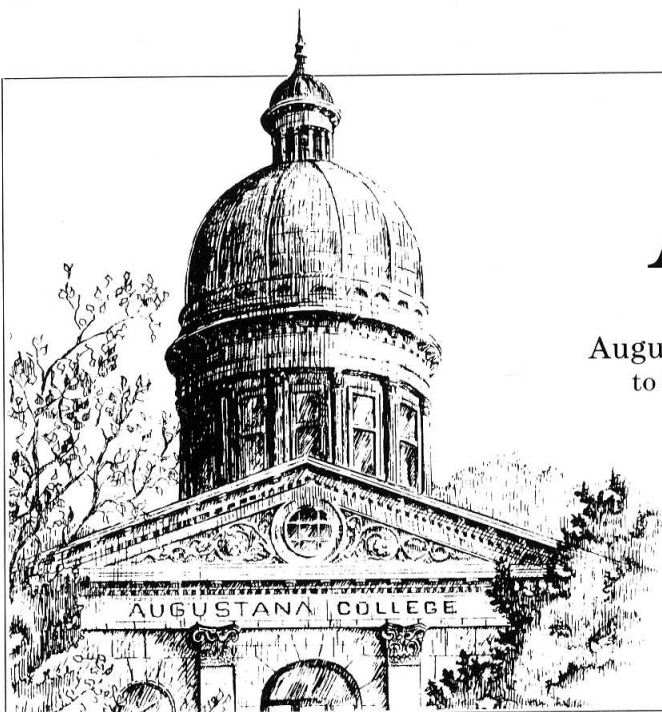
These Swedish-American festivities offer both an opportunity to celebrate the connections between the two countries and an occasion for new contacts to be made. Their success is dependent (for the most part) upon good weather, always risky in summer Sweden. But if the sun shines, even a little bit, there are few moments more enjoyable than being a Swedish-American at one of these festivals, listening to the speeches of the many prominent Swedish and Swedish-American politicians or other dignitaries who always end up saying what we have all heard so many times before but should never tire of hearing again: that the friendship between the two countries is a very special and precious thing. If the American ambassador or a provincial governor is there and if a group of Swedish fiddlers plays or a visiting Swedish-American male chorus sings — then you begin to understand why the number of these festivals continues to grow.



*Minnesota Day at the Emigrant Institute in Växjö attracts hundreds of Swedes and Swedish-Americans (top). In Önnestad in Skåne a monument to Hans Mattson was unveiled in 1989 (right).*



Wesley Matson



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