



## Publication, Access and Preservation of Scandinavian Immigrant Press in North America

James Simon and Patricia Finney  
Center for Research Libraries

Meeting: 97 Newspapers  
Simultaneous Interpretation: English-French and French-English only

World Library and Information Congress: 74th IFLA General Conference and Council  
10-14 August 2008, Québec, Canada  
<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/index.htm>

### Abstract

*The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought more than two and a half million immigrants from the Nordic countries to North America. Whether due to political upheaval, population explosion, famine, individuals or communities seeking religious freedom, or simply enterprise, the Scandinavian emigrants traveling westward had a measurable impact on the settlement and development of both the United States and Canada.*

*These highly-literate populations developed a social infrastructure that was both true to their traditional heritage as well as uniquely “American.” Communities established religious and social institutions that promoted linguistic and cultural heritage. Thousands of vernacular and hybrid newspapers were founded by local communities, with some of the larger titles becoming de facto national newspapers for the immigrant population.*

*This paper will explore the publication of ethnic Scandinavian newspapers published in the Midwestern region of the United States and the western Canadian provinces and territories from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Drawing on examples of press held extensively by the Center for Research Libraries (based in Chicago, Illinois, a hub of immigrant expansion), the authors will describe the type and context of news publications, their reflection of (and impact on) the settled communities, and their collection and retention status by research institutions and other cultural organizations.*

## Introduction: Emigration, Short History

### Sweden

Brief country data (1926)	
<b>Area (square miles)</b>	174,000
<b>Population</b>	6,000,000
<b>Emigration rate at height of emigration</b>	12,000 (1925).
<b>Government</b>	Constitutional monarchy; monarch bestowed with power to conclude treaties, declare war or peace and veto absolutely any decree of the two chambers of Parliament.
<b>Historical conditions – 19<sup>th</sup> century</b>	-1809 concluded a war with Russia, surrendering Finland; -1814 concluded a war with Denmark by which Norway was ceded to Sweden by Denmark, but Sweden lost all of her European possessions; Norway remained in Swedish hands until 1905. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Historical Conditions - World War I</b>	Officially “neutral,” with pro-German sentiments.

Emigration from Sweden to America began at a surprisingly early date in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, continued through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, gained great momentum in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and reached its zenith in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Early emigrants, sponsored by the Swedish crown, founded the Swedish colony of New Sweden in what is now the U.S. state of Delaware. The area was ceded to the Dutch in 1655, but original settlers stayed in the area, preserving their culture and language. Emigration began in earnest in the 1840's with organized groups, primarily farmers, who settled in the U.S. states of Illinois and Iowa. The U.S. census of 1910 cites, 1.4 million residents of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Swedish descent; a remarkable number when compared to the 5.5 million population of Sweden at the time.

The huge numbers of Swedish who left their homes and traveled so far to America were motivated by lack of opportunity at home, both financial and social. Before the Industrial Revolution, most people were farmers; farming was greatly stressed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Sweden due to the tradition of inheritances which divided farmland between all heirs (a practice resulting in land holdings which were too small to be sustaining); in addition, good farmland is not common in Sweden. Stress on farming was augmented by a total population which was multiplying due to: advances in medicine (such as the advent of vaccination for smallpox); a period without war (1814+); and the introduction of potatoes. Population in Sweden doubled between the mid-18<sup>th</sup> and mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the Industrial Revolution gained momentum, the rural isolation of the majority of the population lessened; railroads allowed ease of movement, industry encouraged urbanization, and the advent of compulsory elementary education resulted in a population better able to discern opportunities. Literacy was an extremely important factor in overseas emigration from Sweden. The Lutheran Church had been contributing to literacy for a long period of time when the Elementary School act of 1842 essentially eliminated illiteracy in the younger generations.

The Swedish emigration pattern of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century was comprised of groups: sometimes of organized settlers, sometimes of religious dissenters, who entered the U.S. through New York and settled in Wisconsin, New Sweden, IA, and Bishop Hill, IL. Emigration gained momentum in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century when famine, due to crop failure, beset Sweden; 60,000 left during the years 1867-1869. Emigration was also greatly fueled by the U.S. Homestead act of 1862: easy availability of good farmland brought Swedes to states such as Minnesota, where all of the land in several counties was eventually owned only by Swedes. The U.S. census of 1920 cites an amount of farmland owned in America by Swedes which would cover 2/3 of arable land in Sweden.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note, this is critical to immigration to the U.S. as any Norwegian entering before 1905 would have most likely been recorded as emigrating from Sweden, as Norway was part of Sweden until that time.

Emigration was not restricted to rural areas; Swedes also took to the cities, to a point illustrated by the U.S. 1910 census which cites 61% of 1<sup>st</sup> generation living in cities. Chicago, and to a lesser extent, Minneapolis, were the cities of choice. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chicago's Swedish population surpassed that of Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden. The urbanization process brought immigrant Swedes from the bottom level of the society with very little professional experience, to lasting achievements in business, the professions, the arts and politics.

## Norway

Brief country data (1926)	
Area (square miles)	125,000
Population	3,000,000
Emigration rate at height of emigration	7,000 (1925).
Government	Constitutional and hereditary monarchy
Historical conditions – 19 <sup>th</sup> century	-1814 Norway was ceded to Sweden by Denmark; Norway remained under Swedish rule until 1905 when Norway declared its union with Sweden to be dissolved.
Historical Conditions - World War I	Neutral, with strong anti-German sentiments (due to its submarine warfare resulting in losses of Norwegian lives and shipping).

The port of Quebec, in the 1850's and 1860's, was a point of entry for more than 50,000 Nordic emigrants, primarily Norwegian, traveling to the U.S. Middle-West, primarily the states of Illinois and Wisconsin. Canadian governmental officials initiated practices aimed at attracting immigration to Canada rather than losing these emigrants to the U.S. Sherbrooke, in the Eastern Townships, was the first place of settlement, in 1854, by 14 Norwegian families who were quickly followed by other families settling in the town of Bury. In 1857, a plan was developed to establish a Norwegian colony in the West: in Gaspé District, Ottawa County, St. Maurice or on the eastern shore of Lake Superior. An emigration agent was hired, and in 1857, 90 settled also at Bury in the Eastern Townships. During the subsequent two years, the numbers of immigrants increased; 3000 acres of land were purchased; in 1859, 15 more families arrived and purchased another 1000 acres of land. A plan to provide three townships exclusively for Norwegians on Chaleur Bay in the Gaspé Peninsula, another in the Eastern Townships, and one on the north shore of Lake Huron was advanced. An emigration pamphlet was published in 1860, centering upon the Eastern Townships and citing 2 million acres of available land. The site for Norwegian colonization was chosen in 1859, at Gaspé, and sanctioned by the Canadian government. Land would be available in plots of 100 acres, priced at \$20 and restricted to Norwegians. Norwegian settlement was not to be restricted to Gaspé, other areas were also to be encouraged. In 1860, 7 families began colonization in Gaspé; 100 emigrants followed, sailing from Norway in 1861; with a total increase in settlement of 400 Norwegians and Swedes during that year. Unfortunately, the colony failed; all members left after the winter. The climate, an inability to purchase shoreline land, financial problems, and a lack of supplies, led to this failure.

More than 5,500 Norwegians and Swedes used Quebec as the port of entry to North America in 1864; many expressed regret that there were no settlement opportunities in Canada, primarily due to a lack of potential employment; virtually all continued to travel and settled in the U.S. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many of Nordic origin emigrated to the Canadian prairie provinces with great success, but these early efforts did not bear fruit and are interesting when compared to Norwegian settlement in the U.S. during the same time period.

Westby, WI in the U.S. is today a town of 1600 residents. The population of the town is still singularly of Norwegian descent, settlers from Norway having first come to the area in the late 1850's. The land upon which the town was settled was purchased from the U.S. government by a group of emigrants from western Norway; they were attracted to the area due to its physical similarity to the hilly country from which they came. Ole Westby was the first storekeeper and it was by his front door that the Milwaukee Railroad first passed, thus the name of the town. The first and second Lutheran parishes were organized

in 1852, with the third added in 1888. Schools were opened in 1880 and 1883. Agriculture, including tobacco was an important occupation; cigar filler and cigar binder leaves being the chief crop, with dairy products and white leghorn chickens also prominent. At one time, Westby had a cooperative creamery, feed store and electric company.

Today, the Norwegian origins of the town are clearly recognized with Norwegian commonly spoken, lutefisk dinners at the churches, Norwegian Independence Day (Syttende Mai) celebration in May, a Fall (Host) festival, an international ski jumping tournament, and the Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center nearby.

Restrictions on immigration severely curtailed the stream of Scandinavians traveling to the United States—in 1925, Norway was awarded an annual quota of only 2,400.

## Denmark

	Brief country data (1926)
Area (square miles)	17,000
Population	3,500,000
Emigration rate at height of emigration	6,000 (1914)
Government	constitutional monarchy
Historical conditions – 19 <sup>th</sup> century	1813 compelled to cede Norway to Sweden; 1860's-1870's period of conflict with France, German, and Austrian states over governance of Schleswig-Holstein with Denmark's power in the region being eventually withdrawn.
Historical Conditions - World War I	Neutral

Danish emigration to the United States measured 250,000 persons from 1864-1914 and was at its highest numbers in the decades of 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, and 1920 with the number of emigrants per decade being 88,000, 50,000, 65,000, 41,000 and 32,000 respectively. The number of Danish born persons living in the United States remained grossly over 100,000 for each U.S. Census of 1890-1930, with that of 1920 registering the highest total of 189,000.

The 1920 U.S. Census recorded 7 U.S. states as having a number of Danish born residents being more than 10,000: those, in descending order: California, Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, and Nebraska; and 5 U.S. states as having a number more than 5,000: those being, in descending order, Washington, Michigan, Utah, South Dakota, New Jersey.

The pattern of Danish emigration began with family or group emigration, followed by that of single individuals, including an increasing number of women as time elapsed. Far greater numbers emigrated from towns than from rural areas. The rate of emigration ranged from 30%-10% of the total population of Denmark, cited above, for 1926; poor economic conditions in Denmark are given as the most common catalyst for emigration yet the questions of: why was America so attractive; and through what means was information about America gleaned, come to mind.

Officials of the Danish government had contact with, or visited, America: diplomats, naval officers, and other public officials; by in large, their observations were not widely distributed; in fact most official reports warned against emigrating, citing robbery and fraud as prevalent. Yet the general populace believed that opportunity lived in America; a Danish world history textbook by H.F.J. Estrup characterized the U.S. as "In no country is there greater freedom or faster growing trade and lower taxes..."

Beginning in the 1840's guidebooks for emigrants became available. These books directed potential emigrants to specific locations, explaining natural features of the land, flora, and animals, weather, the condition of Native Americans, natural resources, and prospects for success. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw continued publication of such guidebooks with one, *The Little America*, by M.A. Sommer,

reprinted 10 times from 1864-1891. States of the U.S., such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska, and many U.S. railroad companies, contributed to the proliferation of guidebooks, offering separately published pamphlets in addition to advertisements in German and Scandinavian newspapers.

Danish emigration to Canada rose after the 1880's, as land in the United States became scarcer and the transcontinental railroad opened up new opportunities in Canada's west. Canada actively campaigned for Scandinavian immigrants and established an Information Bureau for the Trades in Copenhagen. Between 1919 and 1934, 18,645 Danes immigrated to Canada. They settled primarily in Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan.

## Finland

	Brief country data (1926)
Area (square miles)	144,000
Population	3,500,000
Emigration rate at height of emigration	20,000 (1913)
Government	Republic (1919+)
Historical conditions – 19 <sup>th</sup> century	1809 under repressive Russian rule until independent in 1917.
Historical Conditions - World War I	Identification with Germany in a successful effort to overthrow Russian rule.

The Finns, like the Danes, began large-scale emigration later than the Swedes and Norwegians, the peak being between 1899 and World War I. Two locations to which Finnish emigrants migrated in great numbers will be discussed, those being the Keweenaw Peninsula of the state of Michigan in the United States and Thunder Bay in the province of Ontario, Canada.

The *laani* counties of Vassa, Finland, specifically South Ostrobothnia were the point of origin for one half of the Finnish emigration to the United States. In 1900, 19,000 Finns lived in the state of Michigan, with 78% living in the Upper Peninsula, and 38% living in the Keweenaw area. The Keweenaw Peninsula is rich in minerals, specifically copper; most early immigrants to the area came to mine. The Finnish disrupted that pattern as, initially, many were involved in mining, but eventually, agriculture, businesses and service industries provided occupation for many. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Keweenaw area was primarily “cutover” timber land; such land is not usually prosperous; but the Finns succeeded where others failed due to: their interest in agriculture and its inherent self sufficiency, their interest in communal organization and assistance, their lack of inclination to incur debt, their love of dairy products, and their skills with dynamite (acquired in the mines), being able to easily rid the land of stumps.

The Finnish adapted to their new environment while attempting to perpetuate tradition. To others they seemed different and “socialistic” in that they belonged to various cooperative stores and organizations. Temperance halls stood as social centers, by 1917 there were 16 in the area. Here they maintained native folk songs, games, stories, poetry, music, athletics, drama; and housed libraries of original language materials. Religious life was rooted in Lutheranism but with many dissenting groups offering differing doctrinal interpretations, so much that by 1917, 22 different churches served the Finns of the Keweenaw, all but one being of Lutheran origin. Socialism and socialist halls contributed to a view of the Finnish as “radical”, an oversimplification of description for a group with many values including fiscal and, at times, social conservatism while advocating: sound public education, shorter working hours, cooperatives, and government aid. They were fiercely independent, free-thinking, and champions of “strong minded women”. They felt that they lived on an island, “Kuparisaari (Copper Island)” far outside of the American mainland, in physical distance, and within a unique cultural life which perpetuated tradition while succeeding in a new environment.

Finnish settlers started to arrive in Port Arthur and Fort William (now Thunder Bay), Ontario in 1888. By 1911, 1643, Finnish immigrants lived in the area. Political and religious unrest in native Finland along with poor economic conditions served as the primary motivation for emigration. Finland achieved

independence from Russian rule in 1917; a civil war followed, accounting for a strong wave of Finnish immigration to Canada in the period 1920-1930. The aftermath of World War II, resulted in another influx of Finns to the area, all contributing to an estimated population of 15,000 persons of Finnish descent presently. The Lutheran church was prominent by the early 1890's, with temperance societies established and followed by the first Finnish workingman's organization in 1903. Men found employment in lumber, railways and construction; women served as domestics or clerks. Agriculture and subsequent cooperative dairies and stores employed many. Unions and cooperative ventures were extremely important; Finnish business districts still serve the local population and tourists. Interestingly, many area rural communities declined in the 1930's due to radical immigrants, disillusioned by the Depression having emigrated to Soviet Karelia and having left to serve in the Spanish Civil War.

## **Scandinavian Immigrant Newspaper Publication**

### **Swedish**

The publication of newspapers, whose audience was primarily Swedish immigrants in the U.S., began slowly, with only 4 titles published before the U.S. Civil War; accelerated, with 176 titles having been published by the year 1886; and reached its zenith, with 1500+ titles (and tracts of all kinds) having been published by 1910. Of all of these titles, only a few, 10 or more, had national circulation; most were significant only locally. Publications brought to their readers news from Sweden and from the Swedish settlements in the U.S., with stories dedicated to building the Swedish-American spirit. Editorially, these publications were uniformly in support of the Republican Party, during, and for a long period of time, after, the Civil War; they also advanced ideological, doctrinal and personal feuds within the Swedish American communities with debate which was at times, hostile.

The majority of early Swedish dailies did not survive many years, the longest being the *Skandinavisk Post* (Scandinavian Post) (New York) published from 1867-1875. T.N. Hasselquist was the publisher of the first title to endure, his *Hemlandet, Det Gamla och Det Nye* (Homeland, Old and New) was published in Galesburg, ILL beginning in 1855, moving to Chicago in 1859; he was extremely influential, affecting political, social and religious opinions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Publications in opposition to Hasselquist, especially on the topic of religion, arose in Galesburg and Bishop Hill, IL, but were of short duration. *Svenska Amerikanaren* (Swedish American), 1866+, *Illinois Swede/Svenska Tribunen*, 1869+, and *Nordstjernen* (North Star), 1872+, New York contested Hasselquist's dominance and views, while maintaining allegiance to the Republican Party and conservative policies in general; and sentencing to short lives any papers seeking to advance the Democratic Party such as the *Scandinavisk Post*, 1863-1875, New York. This solidarity of view persisted through the turbulent period of 1880-1900 with little support for publications which sided with the Democratic Party, even on issues of monetary or tariff policies. In 1899 it was estimated that 99% of Swedes were Republican; by the election of 1912, views had changed. The Progressive movement within the Republican Party, the candidacy of Theodore Roosevelt, and the rise of industrial labor and Socialist groups heralded that change. Socialist newspapers such as *Arbetaren* (Worker), 1894-1928, New York, and *Svenska Socialisten/Ny Tid* (Swedish Socialist/New Times), 1905-1935, Rockford/Chicago gained importance and persisted.

There were 58 weeklies and 290 journals published in the U.S. in the Swedish language in 1910. On the eve of World War I, the most important Swedish newspapers were issued in Chicago, *Svenska Amerikanaren* and *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter* (Swedish Tribune-News) each with 75,000 subscribers, *Svenska Kuriren* (Swedish Courier) with 42,000 subscribers; in New York, *Nordstjernen* (North Star) with 12,500 subscribers; and in Minneapolis, *Svenska Amerikanska Posten* (Swedish American Post) with 56,000 subscribers. Religious newspapers, primarily Lutheran organs, and regional papers in Worcester, MA, Jamestown, NY, Sioux City, IA, Omaha, NB, San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA, Portland OR, and Seattle, WA had substantial circulation. Conservatism held firm within these papers during World War I, with feuds and disputes given less importance in the wake of a perceived need to display solidarity against forces seeking to disrupt the community; support of Swedish American institutions and the Republican Party prevailed.

The depression of the 1930's was instrumental in precipitating a decline in the Swedish-American press; in 1938 it was estimated that there were only 30 newspapers with a total circulation of 300,000-400,000, down from 40 titles in 1931. The neutrality of Sweden during World War II inspired a surge in Swedish-American publication which endured only until the U.S. joined the war effort. By 1942 only 19 titles survived, by the end of the war, less than 10, most containing less and less Swedish language articles and more and more written in English.

The Swedish population in Canada accelerated its growth during the 1880's, making feasible for the first time a Swedish-language press in the country. The first published title, *Skandinaviske Canadiensaren*, was published in September 1887 in Winnipeg. The paper provided news on both general and Scandinavian issues, and also played a role in promoting immigration to Canada. While this title lasted only a few years, the owner soon took over another newspaper (*Väktaren*) published by the Lutheran Church and reissued it as a secular paper under the titles *Canada* (1895-1907), *Svenska Canada Tidningen* (1907-1932), and later simply *Canada Tidningen* (1933-July 1, 1970). This title was an important publication that successfully competed with the largest Swedish-language titles published in the United States. However, as the population of Swedes in Canada tended to be spread across the West rather than centered in urban areas, the title declined in importance until it merged with the *Svenska Amerikaneren Tribunen* published in Chicago.

Other major titles from Canada included *Svenska Pressen*, published in Vancouver since 1929 and continues today as the monthly *Swedish Press*; *Vancouver Posten* (1930-1947); and *Canada Svensken*, a Swedish-Finnish paper published in Toronto from 1961 to 1978. The majority of titles were secular in nature, the exception being the newspaper published by the Mission Covenant titled *Canada Posten* (Winnipeg, May 2, 1904–Feb. 27, 1952).

### Norwegian

The first Norwegian newspaper published in America was *Nordlyset* (Northern Light), which began in the Muskego settlement in Wisconsin in July 1847.<sup>2</sup> When a cholera epidemic struck the settlement in 1849, the limited-circulation newspaper was incapacitated, transferred ownership, and was discontinued in 1851.

Several other early attempts were made to found a newspaper in Norwegian. Between 1850 and 1860, seven Norwegian newspapers were started—five in Wisconsin, two in Illinois. The major successor to *Nordlyset* (purchasing its equipment to publish its first issues) was *Emigranten*, founded in 1852 in La Crosse, Wisconsin. *Emigranten* brought together news and reports from various settlements around the country in addition to news from Norway, fomenting a sense of unity among the immigrant settlements. By 1860, its circulation numbered more than 4,000. The title continued through consolidation as *Faedrelandet* (1864-1868) and *Faedrelandet og emigranten* (1868-1892). This title was eventually consolidated into the long-running *Minneapolis Tidende* in Minnesota.

Following the Civil War, Norwegian press publication accelerated. By some accounts, more than 500 Norwegian newspapers and magazines were begun between 1865 and 1914. This press served the more than 750,000 immigrants that had moved to the United States during this time. The most influential titles were produced in large cities with large concentrations of immigrants. *Decorah-Posten* was founded in Iowa in 1874 and published until 1972. *Minneapolis Tidende* lasted from 1887 to 1935.

In Chicago, *Skandinaven* was published from June 1866 to 1941. The tale of John Anderson, founder and publisher, is a quintessential American tale. Anderson was brought by his parents to Chicago in 1845, where he attended public school for a year. With the sudden death of his father, Anderson was obliged at the age of 12 to support his family. He peddled apples, worked in a butcher shop, and carried

---

<sup>2</sup> While *Nordlyset* was once considered the first Scandinavian newspaper in America, evidence points to another title published in New York earlier in 1847. *Skandinavia* served Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes, and thus published columns in several languages.

newspapers. Eventually he became a compositor at the Chicago Tribune, where he learned much of the trade. With prudent speculation in local real estate, Anderson acquired enough means to launch *Skandinaven* as a weekly, and later tri-weekly publication. The publisher lost everything in the Chicago fire of 1871. However, unbowed, with borrowed type and a small press, Anderson printed a small issue the day following the fire and was soon back in business. *Skandinaven* soon became nationally recognized and the largest circulating Norwegian-language newspaper in the world (exceeding any title published in Norway).

*Decorah-Posten* was the longest enduring title, having absorbed *Minneapolis Tidende* in 1935 and *Skandinaven* in 1941. A partial key to its success was the avoidance of the controversial political and religious divisions that characterized so many of the other early newspapers of the time. The publisher, B. Anundsen, declared in print in the first issue "I hope in a very short time to have a subscription list larger than any other paper in the county. The paper will contain NO POLITICS, but local and other news from the new and the old world besides novels and other interesting reading matter."<sup>3</sup> It covered local events as well as world news, provided serialized literature, illustrations and cartoons, and editorials designed to appeal to a traditional, if distinctly democratic, audience. Its circulation at its peak (1920's) reached 44,000, and it deployed dozens of correspondents in Norway and across the States.

Norwegian newspapers published in Canada are few, and little about them is published. The majority of early Norwegian immigrants passed through Quebec, but as mentioned above, few settlements reached a level of coherence akin to those in the United States (only 27% of the Norwegian population in Canada lived in urban areas). The earliest recorded title is *Norden*, published in 1907 in Winnipeg. *Noronna* was founded in 1910 in Winnipeg and continued publication for several decades. Several publications were founded in Vancouver, including *Canada Scandinaven*, *Norseman*, *Norsk Nytt* (1942-1955), and *B.C. Posten*.

## Danish

Like other groups, the Danish press was slow to develop in North America. Prior to 1870, only a handful of titles were published. This is not surprising, given that Danish immigrants were fewer in number, were spread more widely than their Scandinavian counterparts, and tended to mix more readily into other populations in urban centers. The earliest titles were Dano-Norwegian publications or multi-lingual publications that focused on the broader Scandinavian audience. *Scandinavia* (New York) was published in 1847, featuring news from Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Similarly, *Skandinaven* in Chicago was published with both Norwegian and Danish news and languages.

*Den Danske Pioneer* (Omaha, Nebraska) was founded in 1872. This title represented a new phase of Danish newspaper publication, in that it was written exclusively in Danish, for Danish Americans. A "scrappy, liberal weekly," the *Pioneer* was sometimes at odds with its conservative Midwest base (approximately 75% of its subscribers were farmers). However, the paper served as a unifying force for the Danish community, publishing regular news from various settlements in the area and around the country.

From 1870-1900, approximately thirty-four Danish and twenty-four Dano-Norwegian newspapers were launched in the U.S., but many of these failed rather quickly. The same was true for the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as additional titles came and went within a year of publication. The *Pioneer* maintained a strong following among the community, gradually focusing increasing attention on Danish-American interests rather than general news. The *Pioneer* reached peak circulation in 1914, with 40,000 subscribers. It continues to be published to this day, one of only two Danish newspapers in the U.S.

About a dozen titles managed to succeed in the pre-war period. These included *Nordlyset* (New York) which published from 1891 through 1953, *Chicago Posten* (1881-1929), *Ugebald* (Minnesota, 1881-1959) and *Danske Tidende* (Chicago, 1895-1952). *Bien*, a Danish publication from San Francisco, began in

---

<sup>3</sup> Odd S. Lovoll, "Decorah-Posten: The Story of an Immigrant Newspaper," *Norwegian-American Studies*, Vol. 27, p. 77. [http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume27/vol27\\_5.htm](http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume27/vol27_5.htm) (accessed May 15, 2008).



1882 (and is the second Danish newspaper still in publication, serving primarily the Danish community of Western United States).

In the post-War period, the Danish press experienced a gradual and steady decline, as communities assimilated, early settlers (and newspaper editors) passed on, or production costs forced titles to cease or merge with others. As circulation figures dropped, the importance of the newspaper as the source for general information faded, and the papers gradually transitioned to ethnic community publications, focusing on Danish heritage and the Danish-American experience. All told, the number of Danish newspapers published in the U.S. was far smaller than the other groups, numbering around 50 titles (95, including Dano-Norwegian titles).

In Canada, the Danish press was far smaller yet, with only a dozen or so uniquely Danish—and mostly short-lived—titles. *Danebrog* was published in Ottawa from 1893-1932. It strongly promoted immigration to Canada, and its distribution was assumed by the Canadian Department of the Interior for distribution to immigrants in transit to persuade them not to cross into the United States. The most widely-read Canadian publication was *Danske Herold* (Winnipeg, Manitoba), which published from 1932-1940 and included news from across all of Canada.

### Finnish

Finnish publication followed the general trends of immigration. The first Finnish newspaper in the United States was *Amerikan Suomalainen Lehti* (America's Finnish Newspaper), published in Hancock, Michigan, April 14, 1876. This title, along with several other early efforts such as *Lehtinen* (1876), *Swen Tuuva* (1878-1880), and *Kansan Lehti* (1889), lasted only a few months. However, as immigration exploded, the viability of published newspapers in the region grew, and several papers were started in Calumet, Hancock, and other cities of the region.

*Amerikan Suometar* was established in 1889 in Hancock as a mouthpiece for the Lutheran church. By 1914, the paper had a circulation of 4,500, and it continues to be published to this day. *Paivalehti* started in 1901 in Calumet. Its reputation grew quickly in pre-War years, with a series of capable editors, and its circulation grew to 7,410 subscribers by 1912. It moved to Duluth, Minnesota in 1914, where it continued publication until 1948.

The first Finnish newspapers in Canada were hand-written papers—known as "fist-press"—produced in the absence of vernacular publications focusing on local issues. These were not commercial enterprises, but often put forth by community organizations espousing such wide views as temperance, women's emancipation, or socialism.

*Aika* (Time) was the first printed Finnish-language newspaper in Canada, established in 1901 in the Kalevan Kansa colony, a planned utopian socialist community. The newspaper, like the colony, foundered within a few years. *Työkansa* (The Working Class), the second Finnish paper, was published in Port Arthur in 1907 as the official organ of the Finnish Socialist Branches of the Socialist Party of Canada. Bankruptcy forced its closure in 1915.

The Canadian Finnish press was very politically oriented, as it was in the U.S. The socialist literary weekly *Murtava Voima* began publication in 1908 by the Finnish Publishing Co. Ltd., the same publisher as *Työkansa*. *Vapaus* (Liberty) was one of the most successful publications of the Finnish Organization of Canada, published from 1917. When the Finnish language was declared an "enemy language" under the War Measures Act in 1918, *Vapaus* was suspended until April 1919. The title soon recovered, and by the 1930's its circulation reached five thousand subscribers.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> In 1974, *Vapaus* merged with the literary weekly *Liekki* to form *Vikkosanomat*, which continued publication until 1987.

Vapaus and other socialist papers played an important role in the labor movement in North America. Other titles include Industrialisti (The Industrial Worker), the Finnish language newspaper of the Industrial Workers of the World party published ca. 1915-1975; Toveritar (The Women's Comrade) published in Oregon and circulated in Canada, and Vapaa Sana (Free Speech), which was founded in 1931 after the ideological split within the Finnish Organization of Canada. Vapaa Sana aligned itself with the minority Finnish Canadian Workers' and Farmers' Federation, but soon declared its independent status. It continues to be published today.

### **Current Collection & Preservation Status**

The collecting status of ethnic newspapers in the United States has been left largely to the province of historical institutions and state archives, rather than by academic institutions. Using Norway as an example of the kinds of resources available, the paper will illustrate the multiplicity of resources at ones disposal.

There does not exist one single reliable source of information relating to the holdings and preservation status of Scandinavian newspapers in the U.S. OCLC WorldCat contains the most records of the many resources surveyed. For example, a search of Norwegian language newspapers published in the United States returned 229 entries. Comparing this to newspaper directory hosted by the Library of Congress, "Chronicling America," the number of records far exceeds the 86 titles available in the Chronicling America newspaper directory.

However, OCLC does not contain the most accurate information relating to these titles, either, partly due to partial or inaccurate cataloging. By no means is every title cataloged within Worldcat. Moreover, numerous records do not seem to contain reliable information relating to microfilm holdings of particular titles. A search of Wisconsin newspapers published by Norwegian Americans will produce numerous records with no formal indication of preservation filming. However, a search of the catalog of the Wisconsin Historical Society<sup>5</sup> provides more detailed holdings, including microfilm information for particular titles.

A variety of inventories have been created and/or added to over time, including appendices in books, spreadsheets on the Internet, and newspaper databases from regional organizations. A number of these contain unique information pertaining to newspapers available locally. An excellent example of an inventory exists at the Norwegian American Historical Archive,<sup>6</sup> which lists 375 records for newspapers published in the United States. No one inventory appears to be entirely accurate nor complete—the NAHA database often contains conflicting statements about publishing locations, starting dates, etc. Thus, it falls to the researcher to conduct a more exhaustive and comparative search of regional and state catalogs, databases, and publication lists.

In terms of preservation, it can be stated, generally, that there has been modest success in the preservation of Scandinavian titles on microfilm. Institutions such as state historical archives and regional educational institutions have worked over time to preserve these resources. A number of institutions have included major titles as part of their state-oriented preservation work under the laudable United States Newspapers Project. This, states such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota have done remarkable work in preserving numerous Scandinavian titles. Other states have yet to complete the work or did not engage in the preservation of these particular titles.

By ethnicity, Finnish-American newspapers are the comprehensively preserved of all the Scandinavian groups. In 1983, The Finnish American Newspaper Project began microfilming Finnish-American newspapers held in a variety of institutions. Copies of the films were stored with the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, MN, with copies stored at the Helsinki University Library. Extensive foreign support was instrumental in the success of the project.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://madcat.library.wisc.edu/index.html> (accessed May 15, 2008)

<sup>6</sup> <http://fusion.stolaf.edu/naha/index.cfm?fuseaction=newspaper> (Accessed May 15, 2008)

The following institutions hold collections dedicated to preserving and demonstrating the Nordic immigrant experience in the United States. Their collections include ethnic newspapers and publications.

#### Swedish

American Swedish Historical Museum, Philadelphia, PA  
American Swedish Institute, Minneapolis, MN  
Augustana College, Rock Island, IL  
Nordic Heritage Museum, Seattle, WA  
Swedish American Museum Center, Chicago, IL

#### Norwegian

Illinois State Historical Society  
Luther College Library  
Minnesota Historical Society  
Norwegian-American Historical Association, St. Olaf College  
North Dakota State Historical Society  
South Dakota State Historical Society  
University of North Dakota

#### Danish

Danish Immigrant Archives, Dana College, Blair, NB  
Danish Immigrant Archives, Grand View College, Des Moines, IA  
Danish Immigrant Museum, Elk Horn, IA  
Danish American Heritage Society

#### Finnish

Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.  
Finlandia University: Finnish American Heritage Center, Finnish American  
Historical Archive and Museum, Hancock, MI  
Immigration History Research Center, UMN (St. Paul, MI)  
Suomi College (Hancock, MI)

Within Canada, much of the preservation work has been undertaken by the local archives via the Decentralized Program for Canadian Newspapers sponsored by the Libraries and Archives Canada. Due perhaps to the relatively few publications issued by the Canadian immigrants, the proportion of titles preserved on microform in Canada is higher than that in the United States. In every ethnic group, however, it can be asserted that only a portion of the available titles have been preserved. It seems clear that some effort will be required. Numerous unique titles still are held by relatively few institutions without the capacity to preserve their works, and some resources are still being rediscovered as they are donated from first and second-generation immigrants to local historical societies. A good example of this is the discovery of a Norwegian-Canadian paper *Vikingen* from Edmonton, Alberta published ca. 1911-1915 and brought to light in 1996.

#### **Conclusion: Center for Research Libraries**

The Center for Research Libraries' collection of press from the various immigrant communities in the United States and Canada is a trove of information useful for researchers and genealogists. The U.S. Ethnic Press Collection includes newspapers produced by or for ethnic communities from the 1700s through the present day. The papers mirror the lives, values, and concerns of Chinese- and Polish-Americans in nineteenth century Chicago, African-Americans along the Atlantic seaboard, and recently established communities from Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

CRL preserves and makes accessible historical runs of more than 110 titles from the Scandinavian countries. The holdings are strongest surrounding the Chicago area, but the collection is representative of

the entire Scandinavian experience, with papers from Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Michigan, and select titles from Canada. CRL maintains an ongoing database of more than 2,000 periodicals and newspapers published by or for various ethnic communities.

As the work of the U.S. Newspaper Project winds down, and institutions consider digitization of their press holdings, it would be prudent to reassess the preservation status of these minority publications and take action to ensure their longevity. Concerted, cooperative action may be the best means of accomplishing the ongoing challenges of preservation and access to these resources.

## Sources:

### Scandinavian (General)

- Babcock, Kendric Charles, *The Scandinavian element in the United States*. New York, Arno Press, 1914
- Blegen, Theodore Christian, *The historical records of the Scandinavians in America*, Minnesota history bulletin. Vol. 2, no. 6 (May 1918).
- Encyclopedia Americana, a Library of Universal Knowledge*. New York: Americana Corporation, 1929
- Hancks, Jeffrey W. *Scandinavians in Michigan*. East Lansing ;: Michigan State University Press, 2006
- Hoerder, Dirk & Harzig, Christiane, *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s-1970s: An Annotated Bibliography*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1987.
- Hoerder, Dirk. *Essays on the Scandinavian-North American radical press, 1880s-1930s*, Bremen : Labor Newspaper Preservation Project, Universität Bremen, 1984
- Magocsi, Paul R. *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, University of Toronto Press, 1999. p. 407
- Thernstrom, Stephan, *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge, Mass. : Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1980
- W.P.A. Writers' Program. *Wisconsin: A Guide to the Badger State*. American Guide Series. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941

### Danish

- Danish Emigration to the U.S.A.*, ed. Larsen, Birgit Flemming, et. al., Aalborg, Denmark: Danes Worldwide Archives, 1992
- Danish Immigrant Museum, Elk Horn, IA. Web resource.
- Marzolf, Marion. *The Danish-language press in America*, New York : Arno Press, 1979, ©1972
- "The Danish Pioneer: the early years,"  
<http://www.thedanishpioneer.com/english/theearly.html> (accessed May 15, 2008).

### Finnish

- Finnish Settlement in Thunder Bay, Ontario Canada*. Web resource extracted from *The Finnish Experience* produced by the Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society.
- Holmio, Armas Kustaa Ensio & Ryynanen, Ellen M., *History of the Finns in Michigan*, Wayne State University Press, 2001.
- Turner, Arthur W. *Strangers and Sojourners: A History of Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula*. Detroit Wayne State University Press, 1994.
- Hoglund, A. William. *Survey of Finnish-American newspaper holdings*, Storrs, Conn. : University of Connecticut, 1984
- Hoglund, A. William, *Union list of Finnish newspapers published by Finns in the United States and Canada, 1867-1985*, Minneapolis : Finnish American Newspapers Microfilm Project, 1985
- Kolehmainen, John Ilmari, "Finnish newspapers and periodicals in Michigan," Michigan history magazine. Lansing, Michigan Historical Commission. v. 24, no. 1, Winter number, 1940. p. 119-127.  
<http://www.suku.fi/emi/art/article213e.htm> (accessed May 15, 2008).

Kolehmainen, John Ilmari, *The Finns in America a bibliographical guide to their history*, [Hancock, Mich.] : Finnish American Historical Library, Suomi College, 1947

Laine, Edward W. *Archival Sources for the Study of Finnish Canadians*, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. Web resource: <http://my.tbaytel.net/bmartin/finnarch.htm> (Accessed May 15, 2008).

## Norwegian

Allwood, Inga Wilhelmsen, *The Norwegian-American press and Nordisk tidende, a content analysis*, Mullsjö, Sweden, Institutet för samhällsforskning, 1950

Andersen, Arlow W., *The immigrant takes his stand; the Norwegian-American press and public Affairs, 1847-1872*, Northfield, Minn., Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1953

Andersen, Arlow W., *Rough road to glory : the Norwegian-American press speaks out on public affairs, 1875 to 1925*, Philadelphia : Balch Institute Press ; London : Associated University Presses, 1990

Anundsen, B., *Decorah-posten, 1867-1897*, [Decorah, Iowa : Decorah-posten, 1897

Barton, Albert O., *The beginnings of the Norwegian press in America*, [Madison, Wis.] : State Historical Society, Year: 1916

Blegen, Theodore Christian, *Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860*, Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., 1969.

Blegen, Theodore C., *Norwegian Migration to America, the American Transition*, Northfield, MN: The Norwegian American Historical Association, 1940

Norlie, Olaf Morgan, *Norwegian-Americana papers, 1847-1946*, Northfield, Minn. Eilron mimeopress, 1946

Semningsen, Ingrid, *Norway to America: A History of the Migration*, University of Minnesota Press, 1979.

*The Story of Skandinaven, 1866-1916*, [Chicago, Ill. : J. Anderson Pub. Co., 1916

Sundby-Hansen, Harry. *Norwegian immigrant contributions to America's making*, New York : [The International press], 1921

## Swedish

Backlund, Jonas Oscar, *A century of the Swedish American press*, Chicago, Swedish American Newspaper Co. 1952

Capps, Finis Herbert. *From Isolation to Involvement, The Swedish Immigrant Press in America*. Chicago, Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1966.

Erickson, E. Walfred, *Swedish-American periodicals : a selective and descriptive bibliography*, New York : Arno Press, 1979

Setterdahl, Lilly. "Swedish-American newspapers :a guide to the microfilms held by Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois," Rock Island, Ill. : Augustana College Library, 1981

Swedish Emigrant Institute, The House of Emigrants, Vaxjo, Sweden with special thanks to Mr. Yngve Turesson. Web resource. <http://www.utvandrnashus.se/eng/>