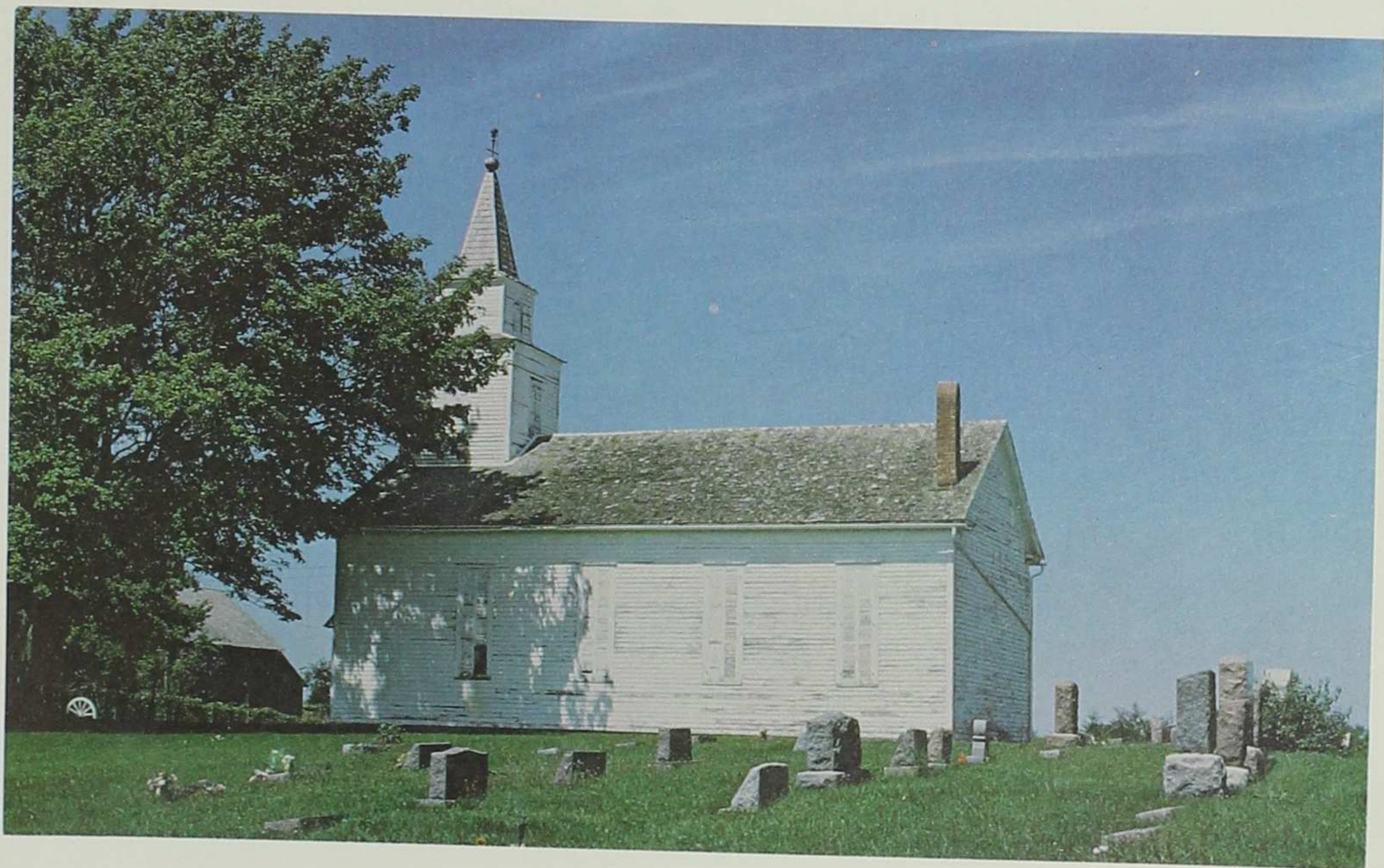


The
PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 59 NUMBER 1

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 1978



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The
PALIMPSEST

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Pete T. Harstad, Director

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Charles Phillips, Editor

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Cover: The Swedish Lutheran church in Lockridge Township, Jefferson County, built in the 1860s. For a look at the roots of its congregation, see page 2. (photo by Robert Ryan)



The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

NEW SWEDEN, IOWA

By

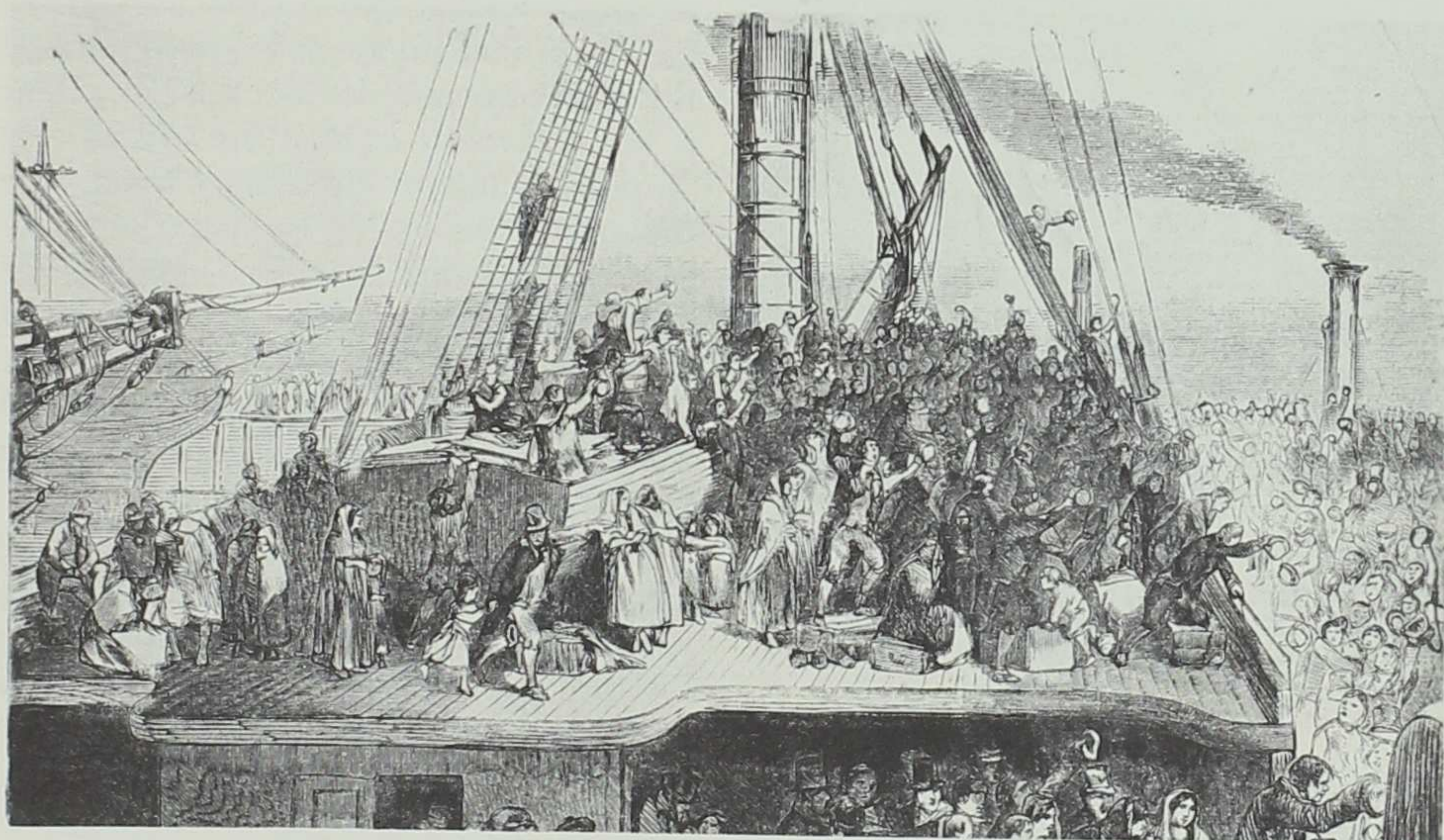
Ardith K. Melloh

In Jefferson County Iowa, in 1845, a group of Swedish immigrants led by Peter Cassel founded one of the first *lasting* Swedish settlements in the United States. Most Iowans have never heard of New Sweden, Iowa, and at least five settlements in the United States have been named New Sweden; yet the one in Iowa must take high place in the story of Swedish immigration to America. It was from the New Sweden in Iowa that letters about America sent back to relatives in Sweden kindled "The American Fever"--a rapidly spreading desire to immigrate. It was at the New Sweden in Iowa that immigrants founded the first church of the future Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod to which thousands of Swedish immigrants and their descendants have belonged. It was at the New Sweden in Iowa that the first Swedish Methodist Church west of the Mississippi was organized. And, it was at New Sweden in Iowa that Swedish Baptists established a church on the spot where a commemorative boulder now reads: "First House of Worship in America Erected by Swedish Baptists. Logs

Hewn From the Virgin Forests on These Hill-sides."

The Iowa immigrants were separated by 200 years and a thousand miles from the first New Sweden (at the site of present-day Wilmington, Delaware), founded by a Swedish chartered company as a commercial venture in 1638. In 1655, the Dutch captured its two forts, and nine years later, the English took over the colony. However, the Swedish settlers stayed, prospered, and spread into neighboring Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In time, all ties with the old country were broken, the language forgotten, and even the churches, first established by the Swedish State Lutheran Church, became Episcopalian.

After the colonial venture few Swedes came to this country to stay until after 1845. Immigration might have started earlier had not Sweden's strict regulations effectively prevented the common people (farmers and tradesmen) from leaving. In 1840, the regulations requiring the King's permission to leave, the listing of reliable guarantors, and a de-



An immigrant ship, bound for the New Land (Library of Congress).

posit of 100 *riksdollars* as security for return were revoked. "As far as I know we were the first to leave the country without the King's permission," wrote Gustav Unonius after he and his wife and about a dozen friends arrived at Pine Lake, Wisconsin in 1841. Neither Unonius nor his friends were prepared by training or experience to cope with the rigors and demands of the Wisconsin frontier, and his dream of establishing a colony soon faded. However, the letters he sent to Sweden were published in newspapers and influenced a few people to immigrate to Pine Lake. Among them were Peter Dahlberg, a sea captain from Stockholm, and Polycarpus von Schneidau, who wrote about the

new land and his experiences to his father in Kisa parish, Ostergotland, Sweden.

Peter Cassel, who lived in Kisa parish, had read the letters of Unonius, and he read those of Schneidau with even greater interest. Cassel, a highly respected farmer, millwright, and inventor, read and thought much about life in America because he was deeply troubled by Sweden's social and economic conditions and could see little hope for their improvement. After reading the letters of a man known to him, he was determined to organize a group of moderately well-to-do, hard-working, reliable farmers to go with him to Pine Lake, Wisconsin and make a better life for their children.



An iron-banded chest, made by a Swedish immigrant to Jefferson County, Iowa. The travelers packed all their belongings into such chests which often became household furniture in their new homes (courtesy Fairfield Public Library Museum).

Sweden was a rural country but had limited farmland and very little industry to absorb its rapidly-growing population. Therefore, the burden of supporting everyone fell almost entirely on the farmers. When adversity struck, their heavy and unfair taxes could ruin them. "We moved to Orssebo, the same spring Cassel moved here to America," wrote Oliver Swanson. "That was a year I shall never forget because we almost had to go to our knees. Poor crops and little rain and then came the potato blight so that none of them could be used." In addition, the common people deeply resented Sweden's class discrimination and the restriction of their civil rights because of economic and social status. Peter Cassel and Johannes Monson had been among those brave enough to sign a petition asking for a change in the government representation, a reform that would not come for another 20 years.

The only church permitted in Sweden was the Lutheran State Church into which all Swedes were born and from which all were buried. In the 1830s, a religious revival and reform movement based on Pietism spread rapidly among the common people. To a large extent it was a protest against the formal and worldly trends in the State Church, the misconduct and petty tyrannies of many pastors, and the do-nothing attitude of both government and church toward reform and the problem of alcoholism. Cassel, his friends, and most other early immigrants, belonged to this Pietistic movement.

There were other reasons as well for immigrating, but for many Swedes the idea that a farmer would think of selling his precious land, the basis of his civil rights and status, and move to another country was shocking. It is not surprising that it took Cassel two years to get his relatives and friends ready to leave. They sold their estates, even their personal effects except for what they would need on the journey and for the establishment of a new home. The men made iron-bound packing chests and special food boxes and arranged with ship brokers for passage from the Swedish port of Gothenberg to New York. To the women fell the difficult tasks of selecting the clothing, bedding, and household necessities they would need and preparing food for a journey of several months. Because the old sailing ships provided only sleeping space, rationed drinking water, a minimum of sanitary facilities, and a cook stove on deck for the use of passengers, the immigrants prepared rye bread with a hole in the center, dried or cured meat, and dry cereals for gruel. These would be the main diet during the voyage.

Before leaving, the head of each household obtained the church papers for the family from the parish pastor. Everyone leaving a parish had to have these. Then the chests with their belongings, their bundles, and food boxes were loaded onto hired wagons. Some women and small children rode, but the others walked the 50 miles north to Berg on the Gota Canal where they boarded a boat for the 300-mile journey to Gothenberg. So unusual and talked about was this departure that it received wide publicity in Swedish newspapers.

The 25 people who left Kisa parish in early May, 1845 were: Peter Cassel, age 54, his wife, Ingeborg Catharina Andersdotter, and children, Carl Johan, Andrew F., Maria Mathilda, Gustaf Albert and Catharina; his sister-in-law, Sara Lovisa Andersdotter, and his brother-in-law, Eric Peter Anderson; Johannes Monson, age 39, with his wife, Ingeborg Catharina Carlsdotter (sister of Peter Cassel) and their daughters, Greta Carolina, Gustava Maria and Louisa; Peter Anderson, age 28, with his wife, Christina Louisa, and children, Christina Sophia and Anders August; John Danielson, age 46, his wife, Lisa and their children, Johan August, Anders Victor, Frans Oscar, Maria Albertina and Sophia Mathilda.

They arrived at Gothenberg on May 21, 1845 to find that their ship had been declared unseaworthy, so arrangements were made for passage on the bark *Superb* scheduled to sail for New York on June 24 with a cargo of iron. The captain, Johan Erik Nisson, offered them camping space on his farm outside the city in return for their help in building his house, and he also did much to make the voyage pleasant. In the weeks aboard ship they



Artifacts of New Sweden: a hand-made table, a butter mold, a crystal goblet, and unique Swedish-style whisks made from single branches (courtesy Mrs. Everett Bogner and Marie Quick).

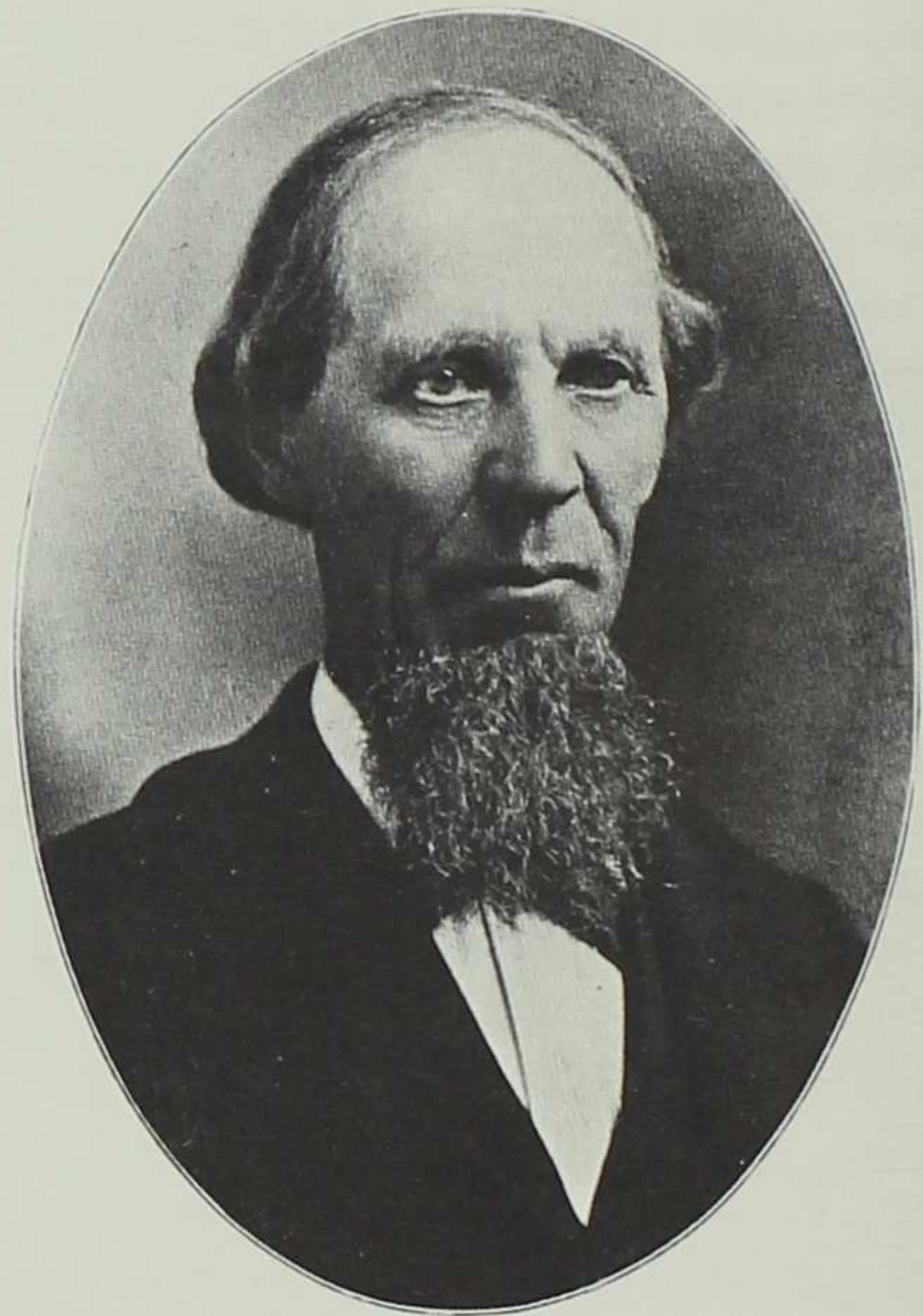


A small, handsome box, fashioned ingeniously by a New Sweden immigrant to carry family records. The body is made from one piece of wood, bent into a hollow rectangle and "laced" together. The top locks into place by means of an intricate wooden peg mechanism (courtesy Mrs. Clarence Smithburg).

became acquainted with Otto Okerman, who was returning to America, and he agreed to join the group as their interpreter.

Meanwhile, Peter Dahlberg had arrived at Pine Lake, Wisconsin. After visiting other parts of that state and also Illinois, he decided to remain in the United States, but to settle in Iowa. In August 1845, he was in New York to meet his wife and children who arrived from Stockholm on the *Carolina* the same day as the *Superb*. He met Cassel's group, and evidently his report on the situation at Pine Lake discouraged them from going there, as Cassel wrote: "We learned that the best land in Wisconsin had already been taken, and accordingly we decided to settle in Iowa." With the addition of Okerman and Dahlberg, his wife, Ingar, and children, Elsie, Cecelia, John, Robert H., Ellen, and Charlotta, plus a friend of Dahlberg's, Mr. Berg from Stockholm, the group totaled 36.

Dahlberg made the arrangements for them to go by boat and train to Philadelphia and then by railroad and the Pennsylvania Canal to Pittsburg. On the canal boat they experienced their first sorrow when the little son of Peter and Christine Anderson died. From Pittsburg they went by steamer to the Ohio River, down that to the Mississippi, and then to Burlington, Iowa. There they found lodging and temporary employment while Mr. Berg tried unsuccessfully to buy land for the group. With their goods piled in a hired wagon, the weary immigrants set out on foot for Jefferson County, the nearest place where government land was available. When they reached the Skunk River they followed it to Brush Creek which led them to Lockridge Township in Jefferson County. There,



Andrew F. Cassel (from *History of Jefferson Co.*, 207).

in mid-September, on the south side of Brush Creek in section 26, at an abandoned, roofless, log cabin, built by Henry Shephard in 1837, the long journey came to an end.

After a simple meal the immigrants prepared to spend the night in the cabin, and since every house in rural Sweden had a name, Dahlberg and his friend Berg christened this place "New Stockholm." "We cut brush for the roof of the cabin," wrote Andrew F. Cassel, "and soon found Ross's saw mill, got some boards and set posts in the ground and made a shanty. Next we commenced to make brick. To dry them we laid them on the roof of the shanty where we had put our goods. . . . [One night] it began to rain and poured hard all night. It was

lucky we were on high ground or the creek would have washed us away. We had a good ducking but the next day was bright and we aired and sunned our soaked clothes and other articles. Our board shanty lay level with the ground. All took courage and resolved to provide better quarters."

The Cassel and Monson families probably stayed at "New Stockholm" that winter. Eric Peter Anderson may have stayed in Burlington as he was working there later, while his sister Sara and Carl Johan Cassel found work in Fairfield. Mr. Berg must have departed as he was never mentioned again. Okerman made his way to Ft. Des Moines where he reenlisted in the army on January 19, 1846. Three years later he was killed during a skirmish with Indians in New Mexico. The Danielson, Anderson, and Dahlberg families must have built cabins nearby before winter storms arrived. They had very little money, but fortunately there was plenty of free wood for shelter and fuel and free water from springs, the creek, rain, and snow. In return for their labor they obtained most of their necessities locally, but for some things the men walked to Burlington where they found work and stayed until they could buy what their families needed. Then, with their supplies in bags on their backs, they walked home.

Despite the problems of establishing new homes on the Iowa frontier, Peter Cassel wrote home to Sweden enthusiastic letters describing the conditions the new settlers found in Jefferson County. He told of the abundance of wild game (meat for the table): geese, turkeys, partridge, prairie chickens, rabbits, deer, and millions of passenger pigeons that blackened the sky in huge

flocks. As he wrote: "The ease of making a living exceeds anything we anticipated. There is not a single stone on the surface. Small hills have limestone and sandstone at depths of four or five feet. Coal is found nearly everywhere along rivers and creeks....Livestock is allowed to roam the year around...pasturage is common property....Corn must be planted thin and various things are planted between the hills--cucumbers, beans, melon and pumpkins. The wooded land is rolling. The summer it is beautiful. There are treeless stretches, called prairies, covered with wild flowers and long grass."

Cassel was equally enthused about social conditions: "Freedom and equality are fundamental principles of the United States constitution." "There is no nobility or class distinction." "All enjoy personal liberty." "No beggars." "No locks on doors." "No direct federal taxes, but there is a state property tax for schools, government and buildings." "All trades and occupations are untaxed." I haven't seen a whiskey bottle on the tabel here."

This was the news people in Sweden had been waiting to hear. Cassel's letters were printed in newspapers, and even though some scoffed, the common people believed what one of their own reported. In the spring of 1846, 42 more people sailed for America on the brig *Augusta* and 75 others on the schooner *Virginia*. When the party from the *Augusta* arrived in Keokuk, Iowa they hired wagons and teams to haul their trunks and household goods while they set out on foot to find Cassel. In their ignorance of Iowa geography they followed the Des Moines River instead of the Skunk. After days of walking, mostly

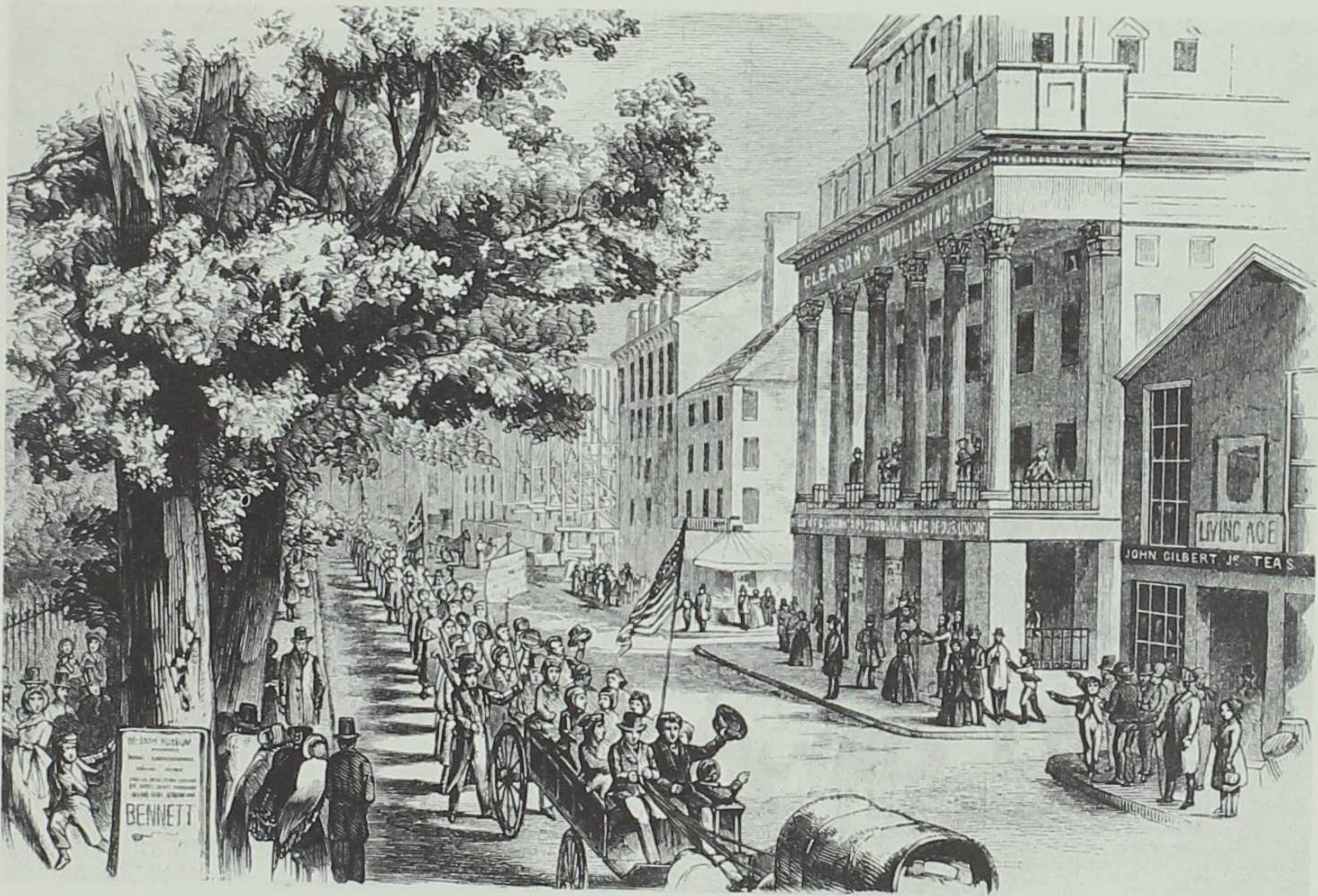
through unsettled country, they arrived at the cabin of the lone settler in Boone County, Charles W. Gaston. Four families decided to stay there. They started a second settlement, Swede Point, now Madrid, Iowa; the others found their way back to Cassel. Among them were the J. P. Andersons, the three Carlson brothers, the Schillerstroms, John Almgrens, and C. J. Lofgren, who is said to have "walked to Lockridge township with all his belongings in a sack on his back and afterwards turned the sack into a pair of pants."

The immigrants on the *Virginia* were less fortunate--the ship was overcrowded and its sanitary conditions deplorable. Two women and three children died during the long sea voyage; one child was born and lived. Reaching New York they were advised to take the Hudson River and Erie Canal route inland. On the canal boat they were robbed of all their money and stranded in Buffalo. Most of the group eventually settled at Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania, but one family, that of Johan Peter Jonsson (J. P. Farman) arrived at Cassel's settlement in September 1846.

This was the year Iowa became a state, and it was in this period that large groups of immigrants from northern Europe first began coming directly to Iowa. The Dutch came to Pella, Norwegians to Decorah and northeast Iowa, and Germans to northeastern Jefferson County. The Swedish settlement at Bishop Hill in Illinois also began in 1846. The next year, two more Swedish groups arrived at Brush Creek, and Peter Cassel became a land owner in Lockridge Township, rather than a squatter, when he filed a claim to 40 acres in section 20. Next John Danielson claimed 80 acres

in section 21. Peter Smithburg, one of those who immigrated in 1848 also bought a farm in section 21. Shortly thereafter he was drowned while crossing the rain-swollen Brush Creek with a wagon and yoke of oxen on his way to Ross's saw mill. Undaunted, his wife and sons continued clearing the land and started farming.

At first the Swedes, like the Americans, considered the timber land more fertile than the flat prairies. However, there may also have been an economic reason why it was chosen first. Cassel wrote that the timber land could be broken with a yoke of oxen at a cost of \$1.50 per acre, but the hard prairie needed four yoke of oxen at a cost of \$3.50 per acre. The price of a yoke of oxen was \$25 to \$35. Before they could buy or make a "bull plow" to break the sod many immigrants planted corn, potatoes, melons, and vegetables with the aid of spade and ax in order to have some food. Money was scarce. A farmer received only five cents for a pound of butter and three cents for a dozen eggs, but a yard of calico cost 25 cents and a yard of muslin 60 cents. Flour was both scarce and costly, and salt cost \$14 a barrel. Men were happy to work for American farmers. "A day's wages is equivalent to two bushels of corn meal.... Nobody furnishes his own food when he worked for others," and observed Cassel, "Americans have unusually good food." Sometimes a man arranged with an American neighbor to raise and thresh buckwheat on half shares, or his special trade or craft gave him work for which he was well paid. In one way or another they managed to feed their families, buy livestock, and start farming.



A company of Swedish immigrants passing through New York City on the way west (Library of Congress).

Faith in the future and a belief in God gave these immigrants strength to endure the hardships of the frontier such as the frequent loss of loved ones from cholera, typhoid, diphtheria and other common diseases. "In the worst of times He has supported me and my wife. I believe His hand will not be taken away," wrote Oliver Swanson. Ever since they came the people had held regular prayer meetings in homes, but they felt a great need for a church with a minister who could preach and conduct the holy rites in the language they all understood. In January 1848, a meeting was held at the home of John Danielson, and with Peter Cassel leading the

discussion, they decided to form a congregation and ask Magnus Frederick Hokanson, a shoemaker, to be their minister. Hokanson had been trained as a missionary in Sweden, but he had not been ordained. Since his arrival in New Sweden he had participated in the prayer meetings and had impressed everyone favorably. Later Cassel asked his brother in Sweden to send hymn-books and catechisms: "We are in need of these books, because we have used our old copies so much they are almost worn out. We need the catechisms for our children, as they will study them when they are preparing for confirmation, now that we have a Swedish Pastor.



The Swedish Lutheran church in Lockridge Township, Jefferson County, built in the 1860s. The building is a well-preserved and attractive landmark (Robert Ryan photo).

...During the past eleven months he has preached every Sunday and holiday; on week days he works the same as the rest of us....One Sunday I heard him preach for over two hours, and he was as fluent the second hour as the first. ...We are 13 families who contribute to the support of the pastor, and four families are privileged to belong to the congregation during the present year without contributing anything." This little congregation became the oldest one in the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America, the largest of the Swedish American churches.

From the beginning they were concerned about the quality of congregational singing. Cassel wrote, "We have

singing school two evenings each week, when young and old gather to sing by note and in harmony. At church services no one sings except those who can carry the tune." From this it appears that the psalmodikon, an almost forgotten instrument, was used in New Sweden. This was a monochord, devised by Pastor Dillner in the 1820's for his Swedish parishioners to use when they met in "singing schools" to learn the correct tunes and harmonies of the church hymns. The psalmodikon was so simple it could be made by any good carpenter and its numerical notation could be played by anyone, with a little practice. When it proved successful, Pastor Dillner transposed the music of the official Lutheran

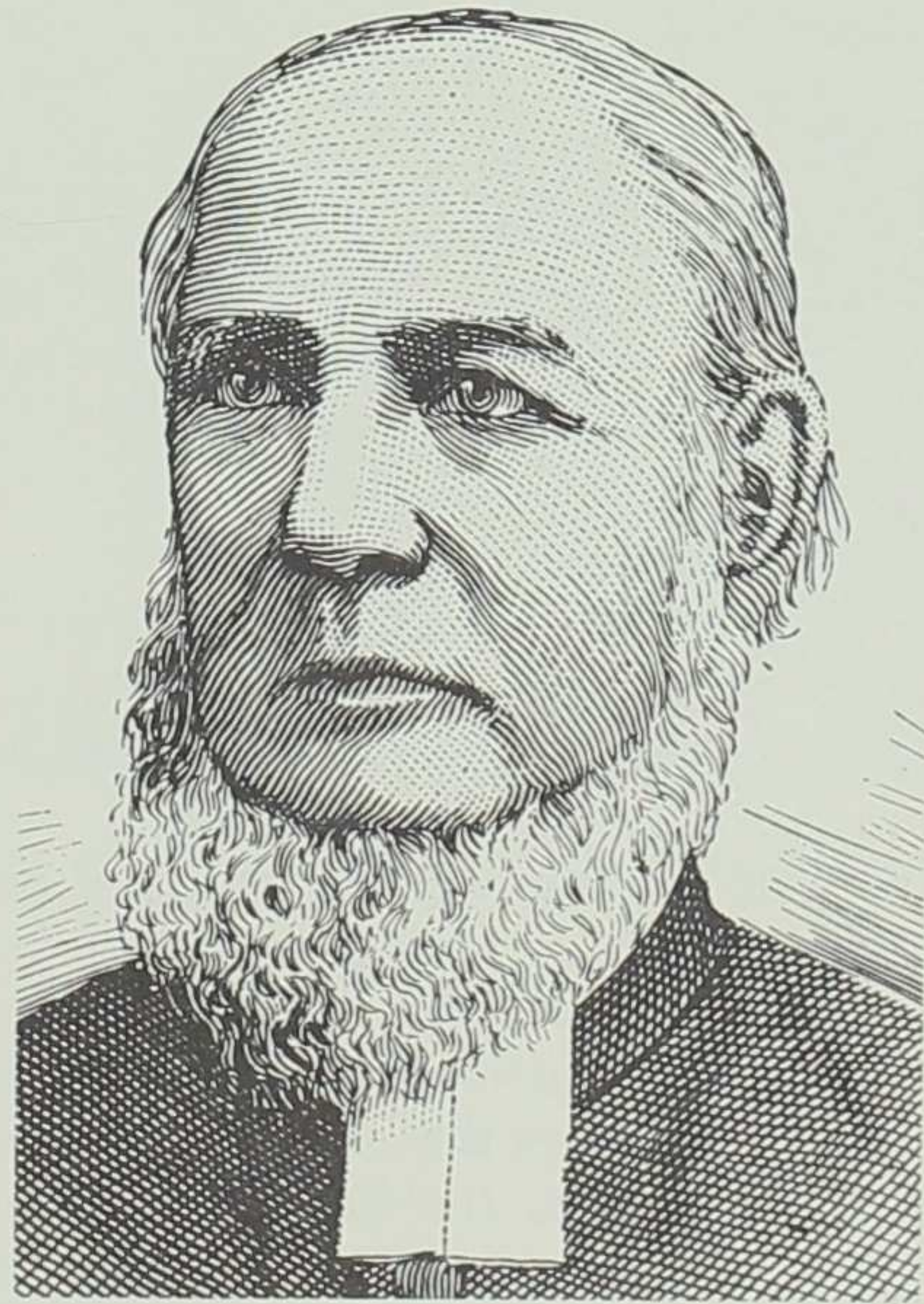
psalmbook into numerical notation and published his *Notebook* in 1830. The psalmodikon was used in Swedish schools, and it became popular with the Pietists in their home prayer meetings. Two song books with numerical notation, which belonged to a member of the New Sweden Lutheran church, survive today. One of these contains detailed instructions for making and playing the psalmodikon.

Most of the New Sweden settlers shared a common background in the Swedish church and most had leanings toward Pietism, yet in Iowa the community soon split over religion. Swedish Methodist and Swedish Baptist missionaries visited New Sweden, raising issues that touched off debate and animosity. In 1850, a Swedish Methodist contingent broke away from the original Lutheran congregation. Peter Cassel himself led his family and the families of several other prominent early Swedish settlers into the Methodist fold. Four years later, a Swedish Baptist congregation was formed.

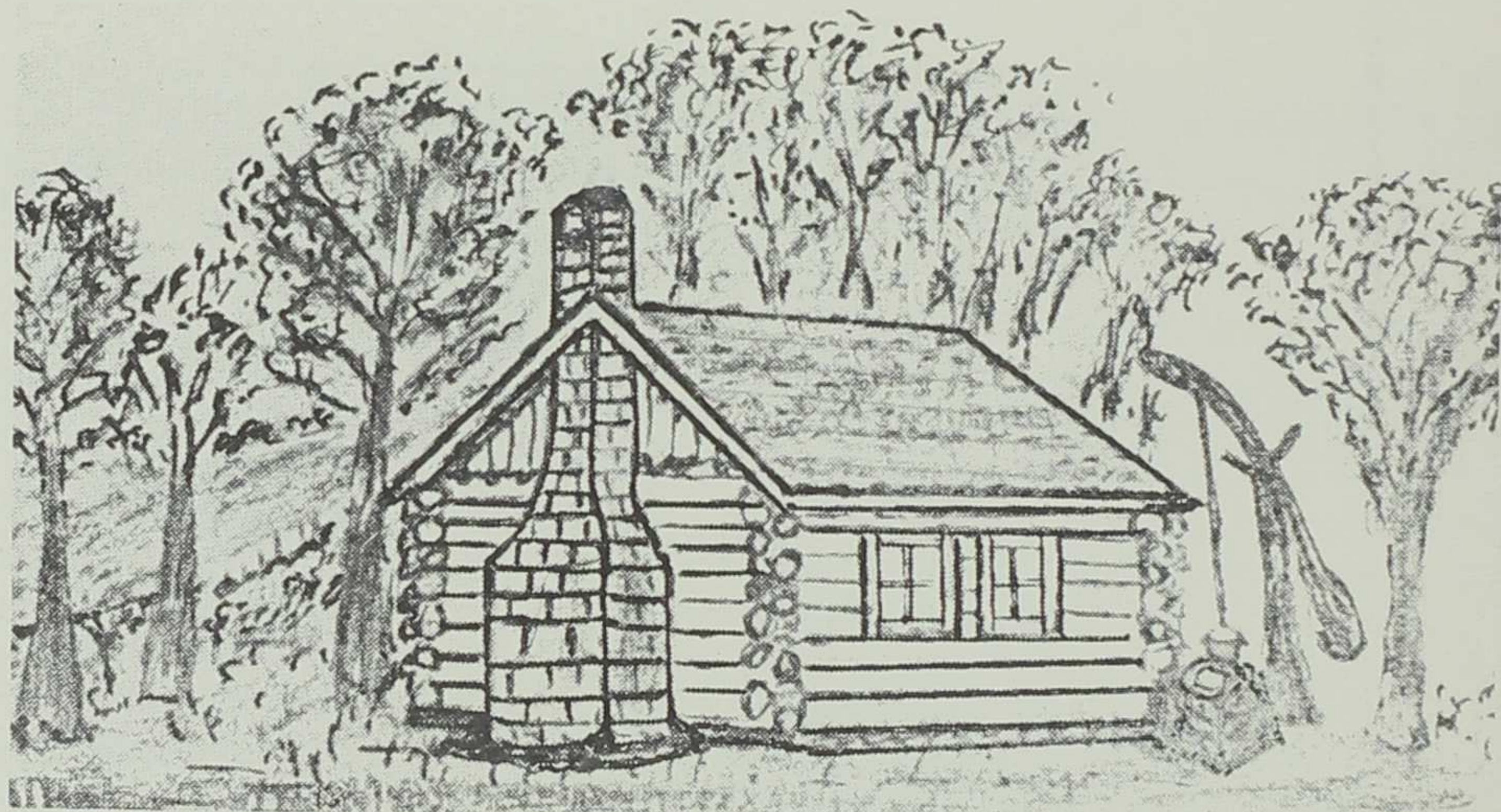
Meanwhile, a gift of \$300 from the "Jenny Lind Fund," named for the famous Swedish soprano, enabled the Lutherans in 1851 to buy a building lot for \$6 and construct a 32 x 24 foot log church. Three years later they bought two more acres just west of the church and built a log parsonage with a tiny loft reached by a ladder. The church was replaced in 1860 by a larger frame building which still stands. In 1855, the Methodists built their log church a quarter of a mile west, and the Baptists built a quarter mile east of the Lutherans but on the opposite side of the road. The ill feeling between the members of the three churches soon lessened, but there was

a more lasting effect on the community. For the early immigrants their church was not just a house of worship--it was the center of their lives, in a social as well as a religious sense. So, while the members of the three churches were friendly, they did not, as a Swede would say, have much to do with each other for some time.

The Baptist congregation was small and did not remain active very long. The Swedish Methodists, however, formed close ties with their American brethren and readily adopted American customs. Alberta Smithburg, daughter of Peter Smithburg, met her future husband, Rev. Lewis Mendenhall, at a Free Methodist Camp meeting. She helped him in his work and later received a license to preach. Marie Danielson married Ward Lamson of Fairfield, and her sister, Ma-



Rev. M. F. Hokanson, the first pastor of the New Sweden Lutheran congregation (from Emil Lund, Iowa-Konferens, 650).



A log house in New Sweden where the first Baptist congregation was organized (from L. J. Ahlstrom, *Eighty Years of Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa*, 111).

thilda, married John Stephenson, son of the American settler who had befriended the first immigrants.

The years 1856 and 1857 may be considered the end of the pioneer period. Rev. Hokanson, who had been ordained in 1854, left to serve the new settlement at Bergholm, leaving behind a congregation now united and growing rapidly. Peter Cassel died on March 4, 1857, having accomplished what he had set out to do when he left Sweden.

Several descriptions of New Sweden from this time still survive. John Z. Sandall, who immigrated in 1858, wrote, "There is such an abundance of pasturage and prairies that we could have as many head of cattle as we could desire. In spite of the fact that we have harvested hay, the grass reaches to the bellies of the grazing cattle." He described the wild game, but did not mention passenger pigeons. Those huge flocks had evidently disappeared some years before.

He concluded with, "There is such an abundance here that if I attempted to tell you about it, many would doubt my word--and I would not blame them--but this is the system of farming in this country, and God's blessing rests upon everyone who is willing to work." An article in the Swedish-American periodical *Hemlandet* said: "At this time this place (New Sweden) has about 100 families with a population of 500 in all... Eighty-six families own not less than 5056 acres with 1788 acres of this under cultivation. Only 350 acres had been bought as government land at \$1.25 per acre. The rest was acquired at prices ranging from \$2.00 to \$24.00 per acre. . . . The Swedes live close to each other, surrounded by open, cultivated fields. This, together with isolated groves of trees, gives the land a Swedish look."

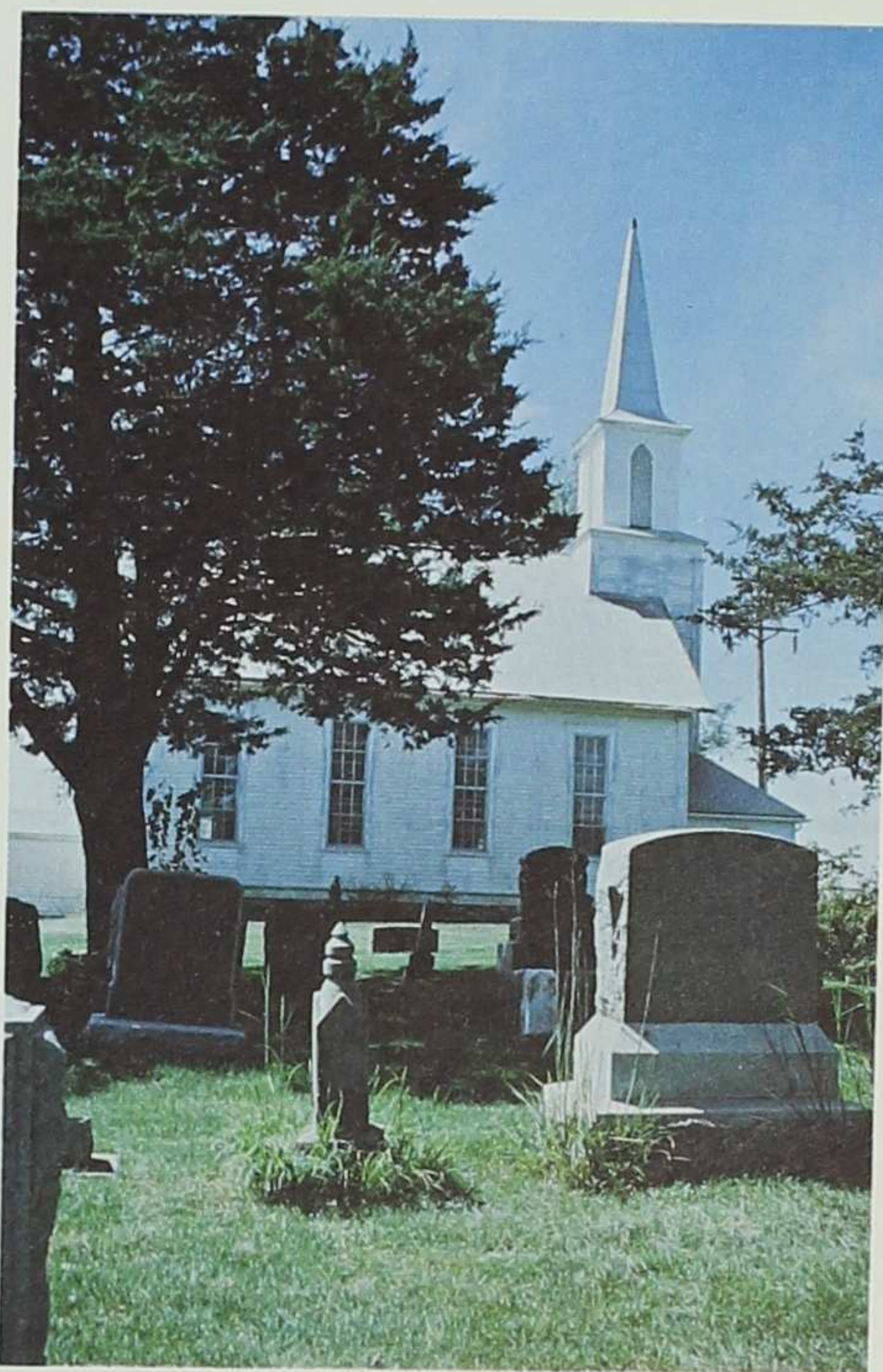
In their homeland Swedes had lived together in small, self-governing peasant villages for hundreds of years. It was natural for them to do the same in Iowa,

especially as it gave them companionship and a feeling of security in a strange land. It was also natural for them to set up a *byalag* or village communal association with a council to enforce protection of community interests, as had been done in Sweden for centuries. That they did this is implied in what Andrew F. Cassel wrote:

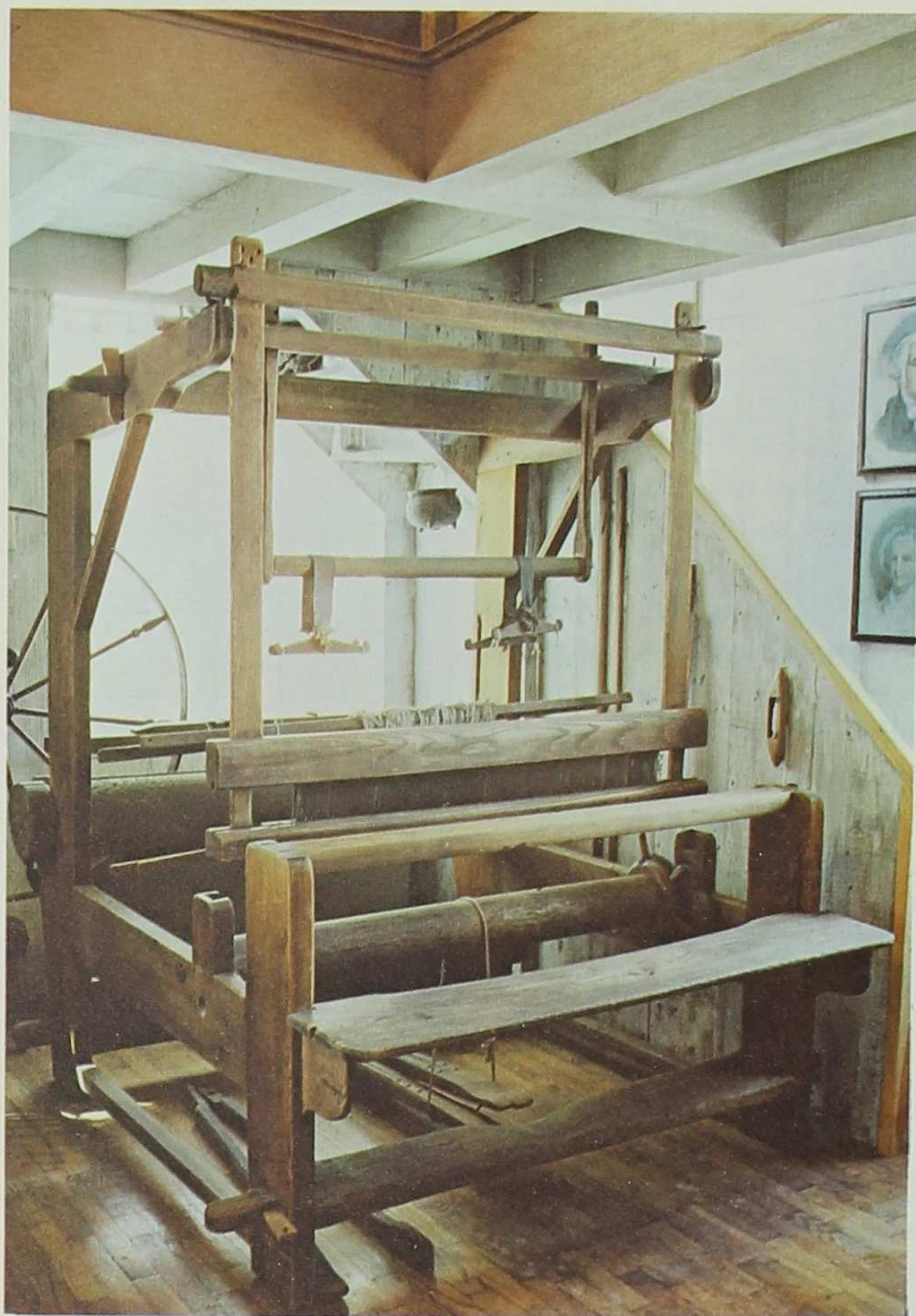
The early settlers adopted by-laws and rules which they considered very sacred and seldom abandoned. They stood by each other if speculators tried to enter the settlers' land. It was not very healthy for speculators to show themselves. Arbitration was the highest court. It was not uncommon for a few men to decide what to do with a man who did not do as he ought. I will mention one who did not want to work. A day was set to decide what to do with him. He tried to escape, but was cornered, and, after a moment's deliberation, it was decided to auction him off to the highest bidder for one year's work. He was bid off for \$16, but escaped after two days. Another man would not plow and plant. A strong man was selected to go and use hickory oil as a medicine, and it worked finely.

Here was the ancient Swedish *byalag* protecting the settlement against outside forces and enforcing the ancient peasant commandment: "He who won't work shan't eat." As the immigrants came to understand American local and state government and American property and individual rights, the customs of the *byalag* were dropped.

The mud in wet weather, the lack of bridges over the many rivers and streams, and the distances over which slow-



The Swedish Baptist church in Jefferson County (Robert Ryan photo).



A loom made by a New Sweden immigrant (Robert Ryan photo, courtesy Fairfield Public Library Museum).

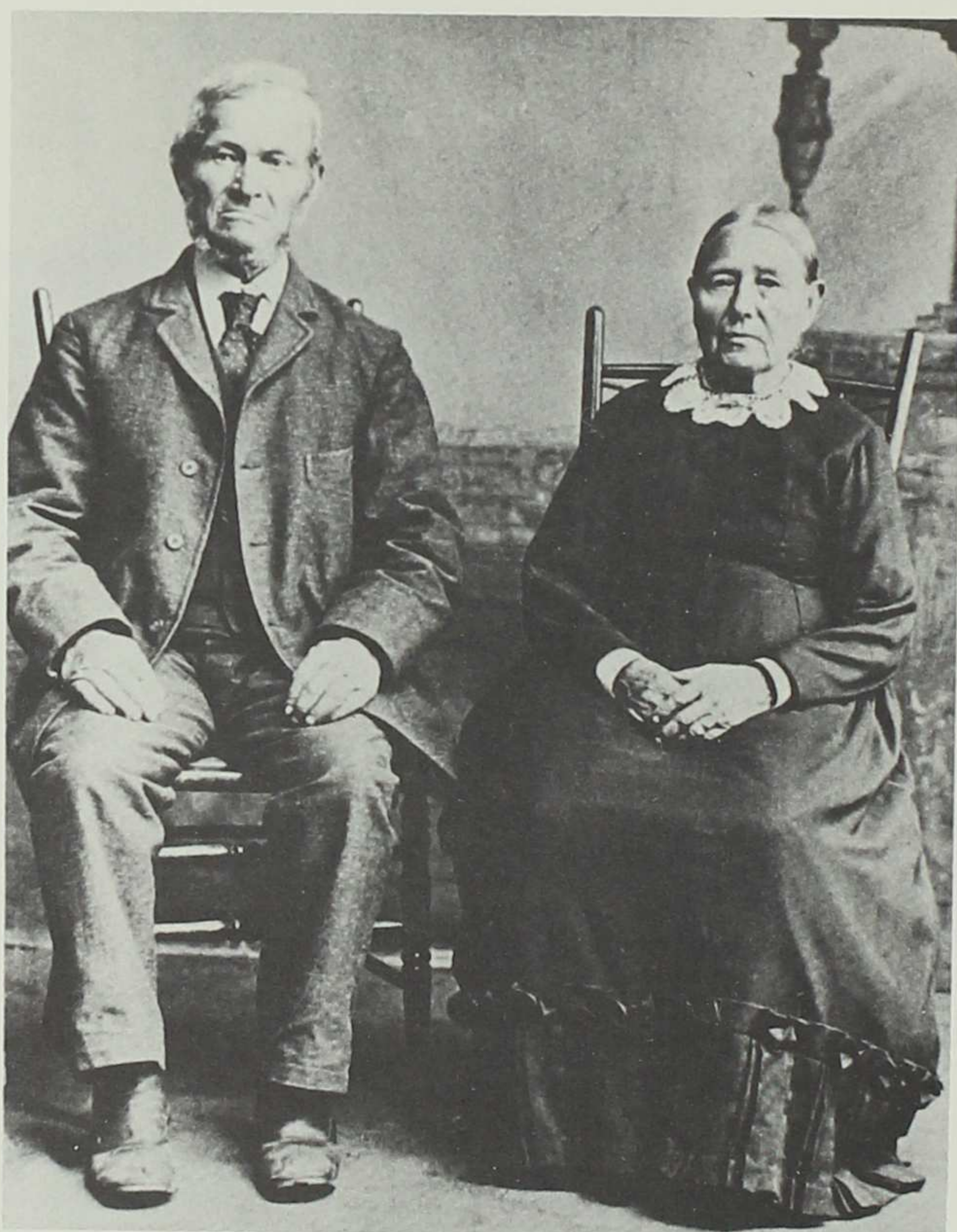
moving oxen had to transport loads or a man had to walk, made it inevitable that New Sweden would grow into a self-contained community much like the old villages in Sweden. The first domestic animals acquired, besides cows, chickens, and hogs, were sheep which were more important for their wool than their meat. The women carded and spun wool and then wove it into cloth on handmade looms. The yarn, and sometimes the cloth, was dyed with natural colors made from butternut hulls, various tree barks, and wild plants. The women sewed the clothes for the family, except for a man's good suit. John M. Nelson recalled: "When a suit of clothes was to be made the tailor was sent for. He came to the home, took measurements with a string, on which the different measurements were recorded by knots, which he expertly tied with the thumb and index finger of his left hand while taking the measure. The cloth was cut and the suit completed while he remained there." Shoemakers also went to the home to make shoes for the family from hides tanned by the farmer himself. All the men could build log cabins, make crude furniture, and do simple blacksmithing. Except for a few, the immigrants were farmers, but many also had a professional trade they had learned in Sweden. Census records and old accounts list shoemakers, tailors, stone masons, furniture makers, blacksmiths, a coopersmith, carpenters, cabinet makers, a lime maker, and even a basket maker. Practically all Swedish

men took snuff. "To supply this," said Nelson, "One of the first settlers, named Swan, devised a mill in which he ground tobacco which he had raised for the purpose...and flavored it to suit...his customers...a favorite flavor was peppermint."

Swedes regarded Abe Lincoln as a great hero. In Fairfield's huge 1860 Republican "Wide Awake" rally and parade, New Sweden representatives had banners with the slogan, "We are for Abe. We did not come here for slavery but for freedom." Young men joined the "Coalport Army," and, armed with scythes, pitchforks, axes, and a few guns, they hastily set out on August 4, 1861 to



An unusual object: an immigrant-made beehive, constructed of straw rope, wrapped around a wooden frame (Robert Ryan photo, courtesy Fairfield Public Library Museum).



Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Nelson (courtesy Fairfield Public Library Museum).

repulse a reported band of guerillas from Missouri. Fortunately, they were gone only five days and saw no action. August (Gustaf) Cassel was the first lieutenant in this "army," and Swan Swanson was one of the volunteers. Both of them later joined the Union army as did John M. Nelson and many others. "It is very noticeable in church that the men's side is sparsely occupied," wrote Mary Helena Stephenson, "but the side where the women sit is full and at assemblies of young people the girls outnumber the boys five or six to one. It is terrible how many have been killed and wounded."

Among these were August Cassel, killed on December 26, 1862 and John A. Danielson, wounded at the Battle of Shiloh. The youngest Danielson boy was in most of the heavy fighting in the war, and Gus A. Smithberg served throughout the Civil War in the Fourth Iowa Cavalry.

Ironically, the Stephenson letters reveal the war brought prosperity as well as grief to New Sweden. By 1861 wartime demand pushed prices high--wheat was 75 cents a bushel, a cow was worth \$20, a horse \$100, and a hog \$8. Because of a dry summer prices were higher the next year. Wheat sold for \$1 a bushel, and

prices of textiles were four times what they had been before. Hired men received 75 cents a day and girls earned \$2 a week as maids. However, land prices were down because so many men were in the army and others were going west to take homesteads and buy cheap land. As a result many New Sweden farmers expanded their holdings during or shortly after the war. In 1868 the *Burlington Hawkeye* reported: "There are now large cultivated fields where before were brush and thickets; instead of small log houses one finds now splendid frame houses. Some have large and splendid fruit orchards and vineyards, and what is best to find in this world, most of them have paid their debts." At the crossroads east of the churches, Four Corners grew up --a little hamlet around a general store with a post office. Its blacksmith shop, creamery, and school served the community for many years.

Letters from America brought news of the Homestead Act to farmers in Sweden who were suffering from both an economic depression and a serious crop failure which brought starvation to many. All who could emigrated. Even when conditions improved during the 1870s and '80s, the advertising campaigns of railroad and steamship companies and of mid-western states (along with lowered fares) brought Swedes to America by the thousands. Just how many immigrants came to New Sweden between 1865 and 1910 it is impossible to say. "There is a constant coming and going," wrote one person. As early as 1864 there was little unoccupied land left, so Rev. Hakan Olson promoted a new Swedish settlement, Swedesburg, in neighboring Henry county. A dozen or more families and some from Illinois

moved there in 1865-66. Young married couples and single men left New Sweden for the cheaper land and homesteads in western Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska. Their places were taken by newcomers. In 1868 the Lutheran church had a membership of over 200 adults. Ten years later, 82 members in northern Round Prairie township received permission to withdraw and with others built their own church named Upland. By the late 1880s the New Sweden church reached a peak membership of 423. In

Note on Sources

The proper names in this article are the new names taken by Swedish immigrants after their arrival or their Swedish names spelled as they were in this country. Swedish place names have the Swedish spelling, but without the special marks over three vowels.

The scholarly authority on Swedish settlements in North America is Helge Nelson's *The Swedes and the Swedish Settlements in North America* (N.Y.: Bonnier, 1943). The claim that New Sweden, Iowa was the first Swedish settlement is made by George T. Flom in "Scandinavian Factor in the American Population," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 3 (January 1905), 57-91, and in "Early Swedish Immigration to Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 3 (October 1905), 583-615, as well as by Helge Nelson.

Helpful sources include: L. J. Ahlstrom, *Eighty Years of Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa* (Des Moines: Swedish Baptist Conference, June 1933); B. E. Bengston, *Pen Portraits of Pioneers*, 1 (Holdridge, Neb.: 1926), 23-5; Charles Leonard Dahlberg and Robert Nelson Dahlberg, "Pehr Dahlberg and the First Swedish Settlement in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa*, (Third Series), 16 (July 1928), 323-30; H. Heaton, "Jefferson County Pioneers," *Iowa Historical Record*, 15 (July 1899), 509-11; George M. Stephenson (trans. and ed.), "Documents Relating to Peter Cassel and the Settlement at New Sweden," *Swedish-American Historical Bulletin*, 2 (February 1929) 1-28, and "Typical American Letters," *Swedish-American Historical Bulletin*, Yearbook, 7 (1921-1922), 53-97; Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York, 1820-1850* (Swedish Pioneer History Society, 1967); *History of the First Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Centennial Observation Edition, 1948); *History of the New Sweden Lutheran Church* (*Lockridge Times*, September 16, 1923).

The author also consulted *The Fairfield Ledger*, May 6, 1903 for its account of an address read by Hon. A. F. Cassel to the Jefferson County Historical Society entitled, "Jefferson County History: Settlement and History of Lockridge Township, and the Jefferson County Historical Association," and the *Iowa Records* compiled by Mary Barnes Prill for the D.A.R., Log Cabin Chapter, Fairfield, Iowa (volume 7), as well as a taped interview with Marie Quick.

Finally, the author relied on her own translations from the Swedish of Olaus Svenson's *An Autobiography* and Pastor C. A. Anderson's "A Short History of the Swedish Methodist Congregation in New Sweden, Iowa (1891-92)."



A painting by Pat Shriner of Claus Lindquist's blacksmith shop at the Four Corners (courtesy Fairfield Public Library Museum).

1892, the members living around the little town of Salina organized their own church as did those in Fairfield in 1903. Records of the Swedish Methodist church show the same trends.

People in New Sweden helped the newcomers as much as they could. Relatives and even strangers were given shelter in homes. Farmers rented, leased, and even sold them small acreages so they could start farming. More little cabins were put up to provide housing. Oldtime residents called New Sweden a "depot" where new immigrants stopped to rest and earn enough money to continue their journey.

The early immigration had been characterized by family groups, but this new mass immigration had many young single men and women. The men found

work on farms and in coal mines at Coalport until they could move on, and the girls worked as maids until they married. Since the lot of these poor girls had been very hard in Sweden, they loved Iowa, and especially the American attitude toward women. They had private rooms, time off, and they did not have to wait on the men or polish their shoes. "Women never work in the fields, not even milking cows," wrote Sandall. "We men must do that. When I first began to milk, most of it went into my coat sleeves, but that didn't bother me. I emptied them when they became full."

The young women loved American clothes, and as soon as they could afford it they wore the latest styles. The farm wife's work was confined to the house and the children, to raising chick-

ens and doing whatever gardening she wished. The money she received when she sold eggs and butter was hers to spend as she wished. When her husband talked about going back to Sweden, Marie Helena Steffanson wrote: "I don't favor it, as I have things as good as I could wish. . . I do not believe I can leave this place until death takes me away. We live better than the people in Sweden and we are not wanting in spiritual food. When I compare conditions here with those in Sweden, we are fortunate."

From 1845 on Swedish immigrants came with the intention of staying and becoming citizens. Only a few returned to the old country to stay. Most of them had read something about America before they came, and they knew what it meant to vote, as that was a highly prized right in their home land and they became citizens as soon as possible. None of the Swedish churches advocated loyalty to the old country, in fact, quite the opposite. The editor of *The Augustana*, the influential Lutheran

periodical wrote: "In this country we are Americans and nothing else, regardless of where the cradles of our ancestors may have stood."

The end of this phase of New Sweden's history came with the lessening of immigration after 1900. The third phase of its history started with the organization of the all English Lutheran church in Lockridge in 1912. At the same time the Model T Ford signaled the end of the old community life.

Today Swedish is no longer spoken in New Sweden. Only the old 1860 Lutheran church, with a boulder marking it as a historical shrine of the Augustana Synod, remains as it was more than a hundred years ago. Only the commemorative boulders for Peter Cassel and John Danielson at the Methodist church and the boulder at the site of the Baptist log church stand to tell a stranger that Swedish immigrants lived here. Yet many people living today in the Lockridge area are descendants of the early New Sweden immigrants, and they still remember their heritage. □

MEMORIES OF A SWEDISH CHRISTMAS

BY
MILDRED FREBURG BERRY

Memories of Christmas in Scandinavia. Yes, these I have, but there are earlier, more deeply set memories, not of Christmases spent in Scandinavia, but of a Scandinavian Christmas--Christmas on a farm in northern Iowa. Because we lived in a German community we were American in thought and speech for eleven months of the year. But December was different. We became residents again, in everything but fact, of Ivetofta Parish, Sweden.

It was not easy on that farm in Iowa to make such a transformation. Lutfisk, herring, lingonberries, and cardamom seed--all must be ordered at least a month in advance from the big city of Ft. Dodge; the dried lutfisk to soak in great tubs of lime water in the cellar, herring to be pickled in vinegar and spices. Biscuits, with glossy egg-topping, were not biscuits without cardamom. What a wonderfully sweet, savory smell: cardamom! Actually they did not remain long in their biscuit state for many were cut in halves

and roasted for hours in long, shallow black pans. Enough *skorpa* for all the morning coffees of the Holidays. From the first week in December a veritable olfactory pandemonium reigned in the kitchen. It was a mixture of Christmas sausage (*fläskkorv*), pickled herring (*inlagd sill*), head cheese (*pressylta*), Swedish brown beans (*bruna bönor*), rye, spiced and yeast bread, twists (*kringlor*), and spice cookies (*pepparkakor*). Yet in the end, the smell of cardamom pervaded all. We young fry loved to be there and willingly took on all the dull tasks of beating eggs, grinding meat, stirring sauces, creaming butter and sugar--just to maintain our rights of domain, scarcely eminent and very hard won.

Christmas Eve festivities really began in our family shortly after noon with the traditional visit to the kitchen where we all would "dip in the kettle" (*doppa i gryta*), with a chunk of dark or coarse white bread, to taste the good juices of the Christmas ham (*Julskinka*). In my memory it seemed to precede directly the decoration of the tree, and that was



(Robert Ryan photo).

done always behind closed doors by my parents and my older sisters.

The front parlor had been closed since the advent of cold weather, but now the great hard-coal stove with its nickel trimming had been polished and set up. Red folding bells, made of honeycomb tissue paper, were hung in windows and doorways. Father cut pine boughs, small ones, to lay before the outside doors. And then on the morning of Christmas Eve the tree was unloaded. No long-needled balsam, this--but a dark green spruce, compact, thick. We had no strings of electric lights; we had something better: short, white twisted candles which were set in holders. After *doppa i gryta*, my parents and my older sisters went into the front parlor and closed the door.

By four o'clock of Christmas Eve all was ready. My older sisters had taken out the cloth curlers from the hair of us young fry, fixed our hair ribbons and tied our sashes around our finest blue wool-poplin dresses. Smorgasbord was ready! The first course, to be sure, was lutfisk and boiled potatoes. (Although we were served mustard sauce with it, a custom in Skane only, the majority of Swedish people use butter and white sauce.) Then we returned to the board to feast our eyes upon delicacies we would not see again until the next Christmas: the decorated Christmas ham (always in the center of the table), breads and cheeses, sausage, head cheese, brown beans, pickled herring and beets, rice pudding (served hot with cinnamon sugar and butter), pepparkakor and almond patties

and finally that most wonderful of all desserts, cheese (*ostkaka*)--a Christmas dessert served mainly in southern Sweden. (Was its taste enhanced by the fact that it took the better part of two days to prepare?)

The climax of my earliest memory of Christmas Eve is the opening of the parlor door. The tree stood in the middle of the room. I saw nothing else for a long while except those flickering, sputtering candles on the tree, a fantastic beauty, a heaven-tree with its silver star at the top leading straight to Heaven--or so I thought. Slowly I realized that there were others in the room. Mother was at the organ; the Swedish song books open, and Father was holding the lamp over the music. The older girls could come in on the choruses; we younger ones just pretended. The hymns were over, and then came the jolly songs which Father loved. We liked them, too, but Mother, I suspect, did not quite approve. Maybe they were songs appropriate only for the dance and clink of the glass. At any rate we always wound up with "Och nu är det Jul igen" (And Now it is Christmas Again), although we didn't understand a word of the song. We marched around the tree, singing less boisterously as the tree once again embraced us.

I was never very sure that Father slept at all that night, for long before the sky lightened, we could hear his slippers flap upon the stairs; he was bringing Mother her coffee. Oh, it was a brooding darkness in which we made ready for the Julotta service! Clammy, icy clothes: it

was easier if one got into them hurriedly; and then there was always the problem of making our white ribbed stockings fit without undulant ridges over those long flannels.

Father in coonskin "pels" and black fur cap stood outside by the sleigh, reins in hand, talking to Hans, the hired man. He had fed the bays an extra ration of oats that morning; Hans was Swedish, too, and knew that all animals must have a feast on Christmas Day. He had made the sleigh ready with straw and blankets. We children were already in, kneeling on the blankets. "Take care you don't put your overshoes against our coats," our older sisters warned. Finally Mother, who had a great brown fur cape, muff, and a velvet hat with plumes, emerged. We were off for Julotta. It was a creaking cold pre-dawn. The moon and stars somehow seemed to be very close. One could almost touch the sky--if one tried. The only sounds to break the whiteness and stillness which lay everywhere were the harness bells--a gentle, light sound--and the squeaking of the snow as the runners slid over it. The whiteness seemed sometimes--if there were no lights in the farm houses--like a never-ending gray mist. Once we passed a house close to the road; the isinglass belly of the hard-coal stove shone red through the window; it looked warm and inviting. We rode in silence the six miles except when Mother said quietly, "In Ivetofta there were flares on every fence post to guide us to church on Christmas morning." This was one custom she had not been

able to perpetuate here in America.

Then the church appeared. The gray mist suddenly vanished. The light from the tall arched windows spilled out over the snow. Father drove the horses into the hitching stall. He turned to us. His eyebrows and mustache were white with frost. The horses' flanks were covered with rime. We moved, stiff-kneed, with Mother to the church door. Father stayed behind to blanket the horses. In every window there were three candles. The tree was much grander than any I had seen, and its candle flames--myriads of them--seemed to be nodding politely but with restraint to each other. Occasionally one would wag and sputter, but generally they only bowed like the communicants, a polite nod, and then raised their heads as if they, too, were waiting--waiting for the child.

I cannot explain how a sight or a sound, scarce thought of for decades, suddenly impinges upon one with startling vividness. But it does. This moment I can hear the organ swell to the anthem, "Var Hälsad Sköna Morgonstund," (*We Greet Thee, Beautiful Morning Hour*) and, less vividly, in the recessional. What happened in between I do not recall. As we moved down the aisle, the world had changed. The primeval darkness which had lain outside the high windows had gone. The eastern sky was gold and red and blue. Christmas morn: the light had come! □

Welsh Settlements in Iowa

from

Hanes Cymry America

(A History of the Welsh in America)

by Rev. Robert D. Thomas

edited with introduction by

JAMES W. WHITAKER

translated by

PHILLIPS G. DAVIES

The Reverend Robert David Thomas, author of Hanes Cymry America (A History of the Welsh in America), was a much-traveled Welsh minister, born in Llanrwst, Denbighshire, North Wales in 1817, who served several Welsh Congregational churches in his native land and in the United States. He was a noted writer of prose and poetry under the "bardic" name Iorthyryn Gwynedd, winning several prizes for his work at Welsh eisteddfords or cultural assemblies. One of Thomas's interests was fostering Welsh immigration to the United States--a step he, his wife, and his two children took in 1855, three years after his first visit to this country.

A History of the Welsh in America (published in 1872) was intended by Thomas as a guide to prospective immigrants. He set forth in his book the conditions to be found in various sections of the country and gave detailed descriptions of existing Welsh settlements. Thomas was only one of many nineteenth-century immigrants and visitors who wrote of their experiences in the New World. Often, as in his case, their works were in the language of the Old Country, written in order to aid fellow countrymen. Thomas and others identified immigrant communities in the United States, explained land laws, geography, and transportation routes, and gave general advice about prospects.

As a group, the Welsh were not particularly different from other immigrants coming to the United States. The first immigrants from North Wales were mostly farmers who settled in New York and Pennsylvania in the 1790s. They sought better economic opportunities and escape from political "oppression" in Britain following the French Revolution. Only incidentally were early Welsh immigrants concerned to perpetuate their language and their culture.

*By the 1840s, however, worsening economic conditions and a growing sense of their own, un-English heritage led more Welsh to immigrate. Crop failures in 1840 and again in 1841 forced many would-be farmers off the land and into the coal mines of South Wales. The lesser evil of immigration seemed a solution both for farmers facing starvation and for disgruntled, hard-worked miners. They willingly believed the encouraging accounts of the new land to the West found in pro-immigration writings such as Reverend Benjamin Childlow's *Yr American*....*

Although statistics are not complete, by 1850 there were at least 29,000 Welsh-born residents in the United States, and by 1870, the number had grown to over 74,000. By 1890, Welsh settlements had been established in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Utah, Colorado, and Minnesota. In all of these settlements, the Welsh tried to preserve their cultural institutions--their language, their religion, and their social habits.



The Welsh church located above Old Man's Creek in Johnson County (Robert Ryan photo.)

The information and the advice Thomas gave in his book, as in other books of its kind, was not always disinterested or accurate. Railroads, land companies, and even state governments subsidized immigrant guides touting the supposed salubrious climate and bountiful land of a particular region. The enthusiastic and glowing descriptions, at best exaggerations and often plainly mistaken as to the abundance and immediate economic value of America's resources, are not the main historical interest of these works, however. The guidebooks and reports on emigration are useful for identifying the location of the immigrants, for tracing the ancestry or studying the influence of groups such as the Welsh, and for specific, detailed information about individual settlers and social institutions.

The following is excerpted from a translation of Chapter Five of Thomas's *Hanes Cymry America*. Thomas did for all parts of the country with Welsh settlers what he did below for Iowa. Internal evidence indicates that he condensed much of the general information in his first five paragraphs from another guide, *Iowa: The Home for Immigrants*, published in 1870 by the State of Iowa, and he cites that book at the end of his introductory remarks. *Hanes Cymry America* was published in Utica, New York in 1872 and was based in part on travels Thomas made to

Welsh settlements in the Midwest. His hope of publishing a second volume to be devoted primarily to biographical accounts of famous Welsh-Americans was never fulfilled.

To get an idea of how accounts like these were slanted to entice future settlers, one should notice that the Black Hawk War and various Indian treaties which cleared Iowa for "legal" white settlement are missing from the first paragraph's brief historical summary, that Iowa does not mean "the beautiful land," that Thomas gives the date Congress first authorized Iowa for statehood when, in fact, Iowans at first rejected the proposed constitution and statehood, and that the description of lands to the northwest as "worse" is a very subjective judgment based on the prejudice that prairie-land (which needed to be drained and tilled) was less valuable than timber. (The truth is that Iowa has about one-fourth of all the grade one farmland in the United States.) Also, many of the statistics Thomas gives in his introductory remarks are wrong.

The following excerpts retain the errors and misspellings of the original 1872 edition, with correct information noted in brackets where appropriate. The sections on specific Welsh settlements in Johnson, Mahaska, and Howard counties were selected as typical of Thomas's approach, although several lists of names have

been deleted. Family or local historians may wish to consult the full text of Chapter Five of *Hanes Cymry America* (translated by Prof. Davies), which is now on file at the Division of the State Historical Society in Iowa City.

J. W.

This is an excellent state in regard to its land, its mines, its rivers, its climate, its trees, its railroads, its wealth, its schools, its customs, and its religion. It is said that the meaning of the name Iowa is "y tir prydferth" (*the beautiful land*) and that it was given to it by the Indians when they saw it for the first time as they were traveling to the west. The land was first populated by tribes of Iowa and Sioux Indians. It belonged to France and later to Spain. A Frenchman by the name of Julian Dubuque bought the first land there from the Indians on September 22, 1788 in the area where Dubuque now stands. In 1803 the area was transferred by France to the United States. In 1832 [1834] the Government placed soldiers in "Fort Des Moines." After that many people from the New England states emigrated to it and began to settle in areas where Burlington and Keokuk now stand. It remained a territory for many years and became a state of the Union March 3, 1845 [actually Dec. 28, 1846]. Its population was only 22,859 in 1838 but it grew quickly. By 1870 it contained 1,181,359 [1,194,020] people. The state contains about a hundred counties, and many of them have from 10,000 to 30,000 inhabitants and some more than that. The counties of Scott (where the City of Davenport is), Dubuque, Lee, Clinton, Linn, Des Moines, Marion, Mahaska, Clayton, Polk, Wapello, and Muscatine, etc. are the most populous; and there are many counties which have less than a

few hundred or thousand inhabitants; for instance, Lyon, Ida, O'Brien, Sioux, Audubon, Buena Vista, Calhoun, Carroll, Cherokee, Clay, Dickinson, Emmett, Hancock, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Pochahontas, Sac, Shelby, Tama, Warren, Worth, Wright. By looking at a map, one sees that the majority of the less populated counties lies in the northwest, on the boundaries of Minnesota and Nebraska. It is true that the land in these districts is worse and has less wood than the other counties of the state; but thousands of farmers, laborers, craftsmen, and miners have been able through labor and diligence to establish free and happy homes in them as well as in many of the other counties in the central and southern parts of the state.

The State of Iowa is 300 miles in width from the east to the west, or from the banks of the Mississippi near the City of Davenport to Council Bluffs on the banks of the Missouri; it is over 200 miles long from its boundary with southern Minnesota to the northern boundary of the State of Missouri. It contains 55,045 [55,986] square miles and 33,238,800 [35,831,040] acres of land. It is nearly as large as England, and more than twice the size of Scotland. There are no places which contain very high mountains; but it has much hilly land, rather like the waves of the sea, which are formed into the extensive prairies, and many rocky and steep hills. There is sufficient wood along the banks of its rivers. It contains very little boggy land; but it rises gradually from the banks of the Mississippi and the Missouri toward the center of the state and in places there its elevation is over 900 feet above the Mississippi River; and thus there is a considerable descent to the inland rivers; for instance, the Des Moines, Skunk,

Iowa, Wapsipinicon, Maquoketa, and the Red Cedar, which run from the northwest and flow into the Mississippi in various places; and there are several places where river estuaries flow into the chief internal rivers. The Des Moines River rises in Minnesota and runs through the State of Iowa for over 300 miles.

The following rivers run through the state from the north-east to the southwest; Big Sioux, Floyd, Little Sioux, Boyer, Nishnabotna, and flow into the Missouri. The southern part of the state is watered by the following rivers which rise there and run into the State of Missouri; for instance, the Chariton, Grand, Platte, Nodaways. There are many extensive lakes in the northern part of the state--some of them over ten miles long and two miles wide. Nine tenths of the State of Iowa is prairie land; there usually is wood along the banks of the rivers, and at times groves of wood on the prairies themselves. There are many more trees in the eastern part than in the west. There is every variety of tree: "white, black and burr oak, black walnut, butternut, hickory, hard and soft maple, cherry, red and white elm, ash, linn, hackberry, birch, honey locust, cottonwood, sycamore, red cedar, pine." [Quotation in English] It is possible to raise them and their seedlings on the prairies, and cottonwood, maple, and walnut grow quickly.

The state is rich in valuable mines. There is good coal, with veins from three to six feet thick in 30 counties; most of them are along the Des Moines and other rivers. It is bituminous coal; it is not deep, and it is possible to work it without great expense. Six million bushels of it were produced in the year 1868. In the northern counties there is an abundance of

peat, and one can get enough fuel in places where there is neither lumber or coal. There are many lead and iron mines near Dubuque and other places near the banks of the Mississippi [Iowa had no iron mines]. There is limestone in the majority of the counties and enough building stone in most of them. The land, even on the highest prairies, is good and productive, and is very rich in the valleys and suitable for raising every sort of grain. It is possible to get pure water anywhere by digging wells from 30 to 40 feet deep. It is also a good land for hay, for pasture, and fruit trees. In places there are orchards and excellent gardens. It is known for its educational facilities. It has a university, colleges and over six thousand schoolhouses, with nearly twenty thousand teachers [nearer twelve thousand]; it also has good facilities for the insane, the sick, the blind, the deaf and dumb, and orphans.

Its railroads are now numerous and convenient, and many of them are connected with the chief railroads which run across the State of Illinois to Chicago; four or five of them extend from the banks of the Mississippi across Iowa all the way to the banks of the Missouri and connect with the Pacific Railway in Omaha. Others run from the south to the north and soon they will connect with the chief railroads in Minnesota and in Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska (see the section of this book on railroads). It is possible to get excellent land from the railroad companies for \$5 to \$15 an acre, and at times one can have a long time to pay for it. They have hundreds of thousands of acres of good land for sale also, but it is being bought up quickly. One cannot get cheap land from the Government now except in the northwest; there is still al-

most a quarter million (250,000) acres of [federal land] there. The majority of it is in Osceola, Lyon, Sioux, and Plymouth counties, and soon the St. Paul & Sioux R.R. will be constructed through them. *Speculators* are not able to buy this land; it is sold only to those who settle on it. [Thomas was wrong about speculators; they could and did acquire land for resale through various stratagems and frauds.] Now is the time for Welsh emigrants to settle on cheap railroad land in the central part and especially in the south-western part of the state. (See "Iowa; the Home for Immigrants; being a Treatise on the Resources of Iowa." Published by order of the Board of Immigration. A. R. Fulton, Esq., Secretary, Des Moines, Iowa. [1870])

I will now give a little information about the Welsh settlements in the State of Iowa.

OLD MAN'S CREEK, JOHNSON CO., IOWA

This settlement is located in an agricultural district about four or five miles south-west of Iowa City, where the main markets and the post office are found. Iowa City is a beautiful growing town on the banks of the Iowa River near forests and in the center of fruitful agricultural land. Twenty years ago it was but a small place. It had been the seat of government for years until it was moved to the city of Desmoines [sic]; but the state *University* is still there along with many buildings and large stores. There are some Welsh merchants there, for instance Mr. Charles Lewis and his brother George Lewis, formerly of Remsen, N.Y.; Mr. D. Griffiths, formerly of New York City, and others. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific R.R. runs through this city, and it was in places near this

railroad where the Welsh settled at Old Man's Creek.

The Welsh began to populate the place around the year 1840. The first settlers were Edward Williams and Oliver Thomas, formerly of Montgomeryshire. A year or two after that came Joseph Hughes, of Glyn Ceiriog, Denbighshire, Thos. Jones from South Wales, and Henry Clement. After that came Peter Hughes, the son of Joseph Hughes, and William Evans. His dear brother, Mr. Richard Tudor and his family, formerly of Penegoes, Montgomeryshire came there about the year 1843. After that, David H. Jones of Llanbryn-mair, David Davies, and others arrived. They all came there from Ebensburgh, Pa., through Pittsburgh, along the Ohio River to Cairo, down the Mississippi to St. Louis, and some of them landed in Keokuk, others in Bloomington (now Muscatine). They traveled with their animals overland to the new settlements; they built houses of *logs* amid the wooded groves and close to each other within a mile of the stream called Old Man's Creek and on its northern bank. Near this river there were thousands of acres of excellent Government land for \$1.25 an acre, enough wood and an abundance of *rolling prairies* to be purchased. They made a wise choice; it is land noted for its fruitfulness and healthfulness. But they worked there for many years with many civil and religious disadvantages. When they came there first there were a few families of other nationalities living in the district, English and Scots, for instance James Seahorn, Ellison Davies and his brothers and sisters, and others; and there were only three stores in Iowa City and few houses. Nor was there a bridge to cross the Iowa River, nothing

but a *ferry boat*. They sold their goods there for the following low prices: Corn, for 10 cents a bushel; wheat, for 18 to 23 cents a bushel; pork, for \$1.50 a hundred-weight; butter, for from 6 to 7 cents a pound! Frequently they did not get money for them--nothing but credit. The railroads did not run at that time across either Illinois or Iowa, and they were over fifty miles from the settlements overland to Davenport and Muscatine on the banks of the Mississippi River. But after the completion of the Illinois railroad from Chicago to Rock Island, after the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific R.R. was opened to Iowa City around the year 1855, and after it was finished later across the state to the town of Council Bluffs on the banks of the Missouri, emigrants began to settle by the thousands in Iowa and there was a revival of its agriculture, its arts, and its business. The old settlers had chosen the flat lands and the high wooded hills; the majority of them avoided the woodless prairies because they did not believe that they would be productive. But from the year 1865 to the present, hosts of Welsh emigrants, the majority of them from Ebensburgh, Pa. have bought these *rolling prairies* and have settled on them and have gotten abundant crops of grain, etc. out of them. There is but little of this land to be gotten there now, and one is not able to buy it for less than \$10 or \$15 an acre; one cannot get an excellent farmstead in the area without paying \$20 to \$50 an acre.

.....

THE WELSH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF OLD MAN'S CREEK

The majority of the old settlers were religious people and high principled

Congregationalists. They held prayer meetings and Sunday School in private houses for many years before a minister came there. The Congregational church was founded there on February 20, 1846 by the Rev. David Knowles, formerly of Montgomeryshire and included 15 members. He labored there for three years in connection with the Congregational church of Long Creek. In 1849 the Rev. George Lewis of Putnam, Ohio came there and he remained for nearly six years. About the year 1855 came the Rev. Morris M. Jones from Radnor, Ohio and ministered there for some years; he still lives on his prosperous farm with his respected family. After him came the Rev. Evan Griffiths, formerly of Llanellyn, Merioneth, and served successfully for five years. After that came the Rev. Cadr. D. Jones who was a popular minister for four years and cared for the church until the beginning of the year 1870. The first church was built in 1855 on a prominent hill, near a forest, and within a mile of the river on the north side near the farm of Hugh Tudor, Esq.

From the year 1859 until 1869 there was much growth in the settlement and also in the church; and in the year 1870 a new and beautiful place of worship was built, much larger than the first, in the same place, and they paid off their debt. It was an adornment to the settlement and an honor to the denomination and the congregation. It now has 140 members, a large Sunday School, and a strong congregation. I believe that Oliver Thomas, Edward Tudor, and David H. Jones, among others, are the deacons. It contains many rich, wise, and faithful men and many industrious and talented young people. They need an able minister who can speak and write eloquently

and preach fluently in both Welsh and English. I hope they get a minister of this sort quickly and that they hold him in respect. They are easily able to pay him \$1,000 a year. Several of the members belong to the Calvinist Methodists, the Baptists, and the Wesleyans, but they worship together with the Congregationalists. None of the other denominations have formed a church there yet; perhaps the Calvinist Methodists will do so quickly. The dear and faithful brother, the Rev. Evan Roberts, a Wesleyan, lives in the district, and is a faithful member and an approved preacher in that church. I believe that Edward Tudor, Esq., is the Secretary of the church. Address letters to him as follows: Ed. Tudor, Esq., Farmer, Old Man's Creek, Iowa City P.O., Johnson Co., Iowa.

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OSKALOOSA JUNCTION, BEACON P.O., MAHASKA CO., IOWA

The old name for this place was Enterprise. It stands in the Des Moines Valley, about 2½ miles from the city of Oskaloosa. Two railroads run past it, the Iowa Central R.R. and the Des Moines Valley R.R. It is possible to get there by rail from Ottumwa (25 miles), or from Des Moines City (61 miles). There are not many roads across the country to Williamsburgh, Iowa Co. [the site of a large Welsh settlement]. Agricultural land and excellent veins of coal surround the place for miles, and one is able to buy the land for reasonable prices. It is quite wooded country.

John S. Morgan and Watkin Williams of Cardiganshire came here from the Welsh settlement in Monroe Co. to work in the coal fields in 1856. Americans had

opened the mines whose veins were 5 to 7 feet thick. But the above men did not move their families here until the end of 1865. Both before and after that many miners came to work and to settle. They were paid from \$2 to \$2.50 a day. John G. Jones, Esq. has kept a large store here since 1857. It also contains the post office. Several respected and wealthy Welshmen live on farms and as overseers in the coal mines. Some of them own a large part of them: for instance, Watkin Price, Esq., and his brothers Joshua Price, John Price, Jenkin Price; and Watkin Price, formerly of Hirwain, Glynedd and Aberdar, Glamorgan. The Rev. Peter Lloyd (B.) died here in September 1868 and was buried in Forest Cemetery at the age of 67. His widow, Mrs. Lloyd, and their children live on their nearby farm at the present time. David S. Davies of Pont-y-pridd was the *boss* of one of the coal mines in 1870....About 43 families and 215 Welsh people....

LIME SPRING, HOWARD CO., IOWA

This is a new and growing Welsh settlement. Howard County bounds on the southern edge of Minnesota and the Welsh in this settlement are scattered along the boundaries of the two states; that is, Iowa and Minnesota. Some Dutch and Norwegians have lived along the Upper Iowa River in Howard County in Iowa and in Fillmore County in Minnesota for some years, but they live in poor houses and they have not cultivated the land very well. Some of them are very fond of drinking liquor, but many of them are good, religious Lutherans. The Welsh began to settle there in 1859. R. Jones and T. Evans and their families were the first Welsh to come. A youth by the name of R. Thomas, J. Williams, and

J. Jones and their families came to live there in 1860. D. Davies and W. Davies and their families came the following year. All of these had previously been in various parts of Wisconsin. The Rev. John D. Williams (T.C.) of Proscairon, Wis., moved to the district in June 1862 and preached in the house of John Jones. This was the first preaching in Welsh ever heard in this district, for we don't know of any other elsewhere. Mr. Williams bought land there at this time, but in October 1867 he sold his farm and he and his family moved to Wisconsin to live. He had built a good wooden house near a wood which stands on the border of the two states. During the same period the Rev. Daniel T. Rowlands (T.C.) bought a farm and he and his family moved the following spring from the state of New York. He had been born in Bethesda, Caernarvonshire. In the year 1868 the Rev. Owen R. Morris and his family moved from Blue Mounds, Wis. to the district. He was from Ffestiniog, Merioneth. The Rev. John J. Evans and his family of Welsh Prairie, Wis. arrived in 1869. He is a native of Llanddeiniolen, Caernarvonshire. The four respected ministers lived on their farms and cooperated in extending the good news of Christ in the area. The Welsh population there now is about 500.

THE CALVINIST METHODIST CHURCHES

Three churches have been formed; Sunday Schools are held and there is preaching in several convenient schoolhouses in the various districts. 1. Foreston. Members 99, Deacons--H. Edwards, O. Williams, W. T. Lewis, and H. G. Jones. 2. Proscairon. Members 22, Deacons--D. Davies and R. Hughes. 3. Yorktown. Members 44, Deacons--W. Williams and

O. Humphreys. When I was there at the end of 1870, no one had begun to build a church, but they were worshipping in various schoolhouses. I believe that this is wise because it is difficult to know at this time where it would be most proper to build churches for the future population.

Forestown [sic] was the first name to be given to this Welsh settlement. It is a small village on the west side of the Upper Iowa River. A flour mill was built on the other side of the river, and three respected Welshmen own it: the Rev. John D. Williams, John ab Jones, Esq. from Cambria, Wisconsin, and Mr. David Thomas, formerly of Cwmydail, near Llanfair-caereinion, Montgomeryshire. In about the year 1867 the railroad from McGregory [sic] to St. Paul was opened; after that the new city of Lime Spring was started. Some Welsh merchants and craftsmen live in it and the Welsh of the whole district trade there. The railroad station is near the Welsh settlements, but there is still no Welsh church or chapel. This small and new town is located on the railroad about a mile west of the old town of Lime Spring and about three miles west of the old village of Forestown. Many of the houses were moved from the old village to the new town.

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Following is the report of the Rev. John D. Williams...about the lands in the Lime Spring settlement: "The land is good and level all round until one comes near the rivers. There is much scarcity of wood, and one is able to get free coal if he needs it; the water is very good; it is rather scarce in some places but there is

an abundance of it elsewhere. It is likely that the land is as good as any in the world, and one is able to buy it cheaply, that is, for from \$10 to \$35 an acre according to the value of the labor that has been put into it."

There is enough *water power* in the Upper Iowa River; there is valuable wood along its banks and in other places, and much very fruitful *rolling prairie* around there for miles. One hears of the possibility of another railroad from Davenport, Iowa, past Greuger, etc. to

St. Paul, Minnesota. That will be also an advantage to the Welsh settlers here. It is likely that scores if not hundreds of Welsh families will come to live there in the future. They will be able to make good homes for themselves and their children in Howard and in the other nearby counties. The winter is fairly long and cold compared to the conditions in the southern part of Iowa.

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COMMENTARY

Sharp-eyed readers will notice a change on the title page of *The Palimpsest*. After five years of editing this magazine, I have resigned to take on a different set of professional responsibilities, and a new name appears as editor with this issue. Charles Phillips is a writer and man of letters with degrees from The University of Iowa and Syracuse University in New York. He is experienced; he previously worked on the magazine of LeMoyne College in New York, on the staff of *Congressional Quarterly* in Washington, D.C., and was editor of *The Maelstrom*, a literary magazine published by Syracuse University. For the last year and a half he has been the editorial assistant at the State Historical Society and as such worked with many authors and on many lay-outs for the *Pal*. Deciding to leave Iowa and *The Palimpsest* was hard, but turning the magazine over to Charlie is an occasion for joy--he will give you a superb publication.

Before writing my final words as editor, I must thank the many people who have made the last five years such an important part of my life. The authors, from many walks of life and with many talents, have been a fascinating group. The readers--insofar as I have received your comments--have been stimulating and appreciative. My colleagues at the Historical Society have been ever helpful, and to many of them, especially Tim Hyde, Claudia Majetich, and Rob Bower, I have become deeply indebted. Most of all, my thanks to Peter Harstad who directed the Society and its publications through good times and bad with nearly unfailing grace and intelligence. My debt and Iowa's debt to all of these people is large.

And so, goodbye.

L. Edward Purcell

CONTRIBUTORS

ARDITH KULL MELLOH, a great granddaughter of the Swedish immigrant John Z. Sandall, was born in Nebraska. After receiving her library degree from the University of Minnesota she worked in the Reference Department of the University of Minnesota Library and later in public and school libraries in Illinois, California, Texas, New Mexico, and Iowa.

PHILLIPS G. DAVIES, Professor of English at Iowa State University since 1954, was educated at Marquette University and North Western University. He has published several articles on British literature. Other sections of his translation of *Hanes Cymry America* have appeared or are scheduled to appear in various historical journals.

MILDRED F. BERRY, was born in Pomeroy, Iowa. She received her A.B. and M.A. from the University of Iowa and her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin. She has taught Speech and lectured on Speech Pathology at a large number of universities both here and abroad, published widely in professional journals, and conducted workshops and seminars all over the world on oral language and linguistic disorders.

JAMES W. WHITAKER, author of *Feedlot Empire: Beef Cattle Feeding in Illinois and Iowa, 1840-1900* (Iowa State University Press, 1975), is Associate Professor of History at Iowa State University. A native of Illinois, Professor Whitaker received his B.A. from Oberlin College and his M.S. and Ph. D. from the University of Wisconsin — Madison.

The Division of the State Historical Society and the editor are not responsible for statements of fact or opinion made by contributors.



(Robert Ryan photo).



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