

# The Swedish newspapers



The Swedish-language newspapers played an important role in keeping the Swedish identity and language alive among the immigrants. They also effectively played the part as interpreters of the American society and culture for the newly arrived immigrants. By the year 1910, when the Swedish cultural sphere had its absolute high point in the USA, there were 58 weekly papers and 238 periodicals published.



## Vestkusten

TORSIDEN DEN 14 APRIL 1910.

### San Francisco i Ruiner.

Jordbävning och eldsvador ådragna för förstörelse af "Stilla hafsets drömming".

En öfverläggs berättelse om de stora förlusterna i denna stad.

**Förstöringen torde uppgå till \$300,000,000, och antalet omkomna öfverskrider 1,000 personer.**

### K. A. Lundströms Hattar

S. W. Corner 9th and Washington Sts.

### Olson's Market, Inc.

S. W. Corner 9th and Washington Sts.

### CENTRAL TRUST COMPANY

1 LAFAYETTE SQUARE San Francisco.

### JOHNSONS DAIRY CO.

2415 24th Street, near Mission and Valencia, San Francisco.

The papers in Swedish were important sources of information and contact carriers

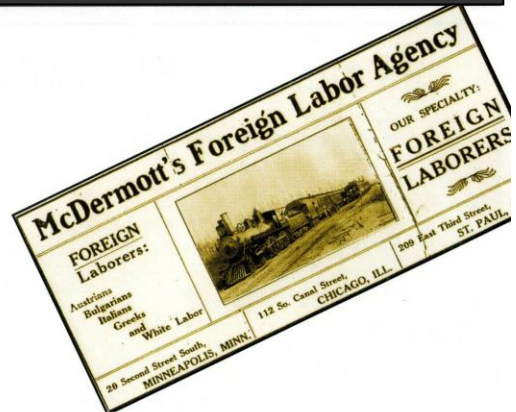
The largest Swedish-language newspapers were located in Chicago (Svenska Tribunen - Nyheter) and in Minneapolis (Svenska Amerikanska Posten), each one of them published more than 50,000 newspapers a week.

# Work in the new country

A lot of hands were required to build the American cities, factories and railroads during the expansion westward. When the Swedish emigration reached its high point in the 1880's many Swedes could secure a job, but they entered a labor market with a distinct hierarchy. The Swedes were considered a complementary work force to use when there were no Americans left to employ.

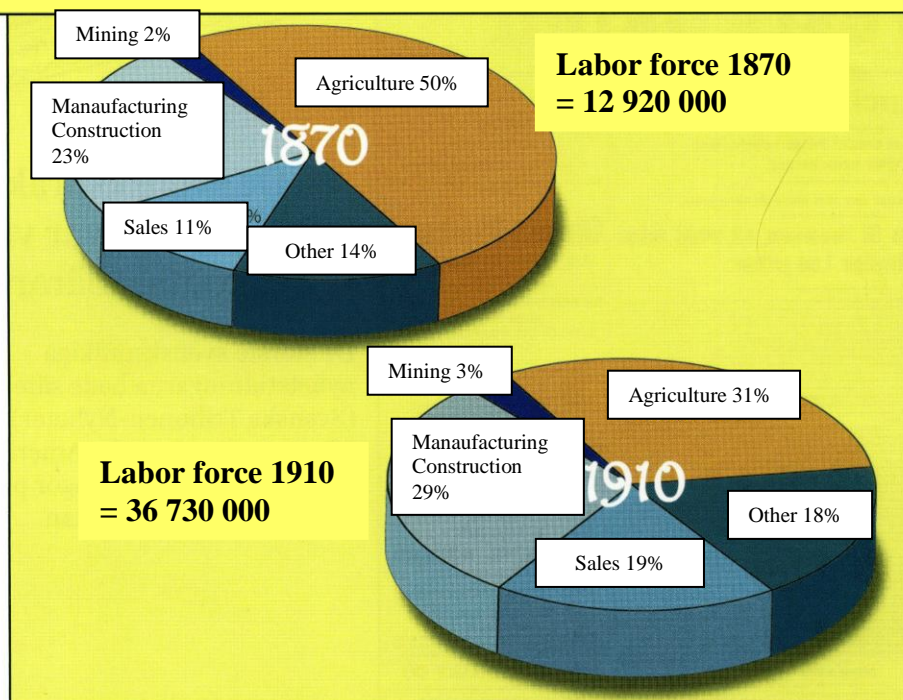
## The English speaking immigrants competed well in the labor market

Studies made of individual companies show a clear differentiation between workers born in America and workers that had immigrated to America. There were also differentiations made between different immigrant groups. The position in the hierarchy was generally determined by how long the immigrant had stayed in the country, but also by how culture and language was valued by the Anglo-American society. You had a higher status if you were Canadian or English than if you were a Scandinavian. The English speaking immigrants did well on the labor market despite being newly arrivals.



English culture and language gave the Americans an experience of mingling with an ethnic relative; the English immigrants were often referred to as "Cousin Jack". Norwegians and Swedes were kept as a work force in reserve that was employed when there were no English speaking workers to employ.

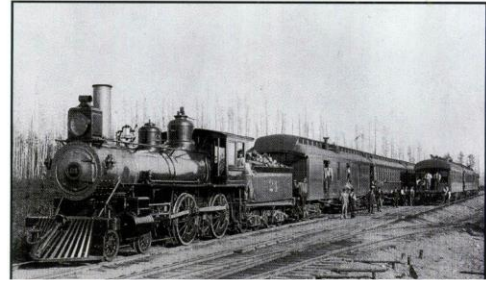
## Division of labor in per cent in North America



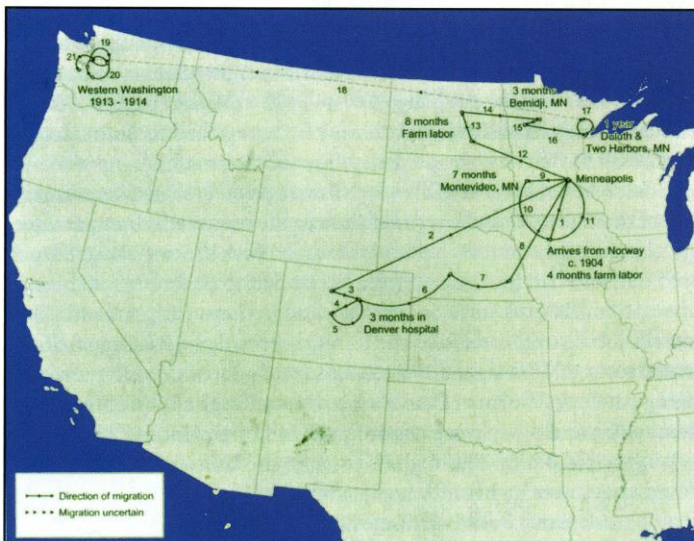
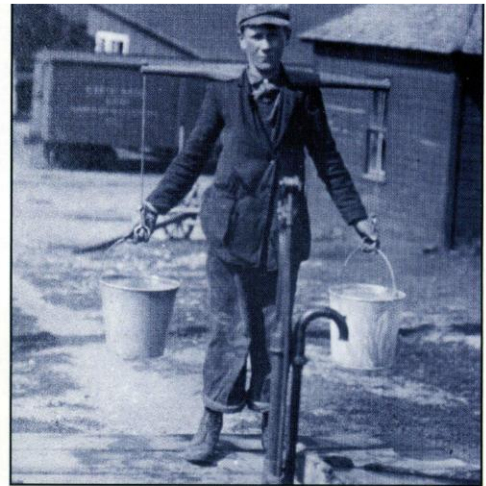


## The railroad offered a lot of work opportunities for immigrants

The conditions differed between immigrants and born Americans. The men working on the locomotive were on top of the hierarchy and almost without exception born Americans while Swedes and other immigrant groups had to settle with seasonal work as navvies or trackmen.



The picture below shows a young water carrier at the railroad. They could begin work at the age of 10 and would supply the adult workers with water during the work day. For the boys it sometimes was a competitive advantage to be able to speak a non-English language, for example if you were to serve a working team that was completely Scandinavian.



## A casual laborer's wandering

During the period between 1880 and 1930 many, newly arrived, Swedish immigrants worked as wandering casual laborers. The map shows the wandering of the Scandinavian Ole Hansson across America, looking for work. It wasn't unusual that Swedish immigrant men changed work place many times during a year. It was Common to work with logging during the winter and as farm workers during the summer.





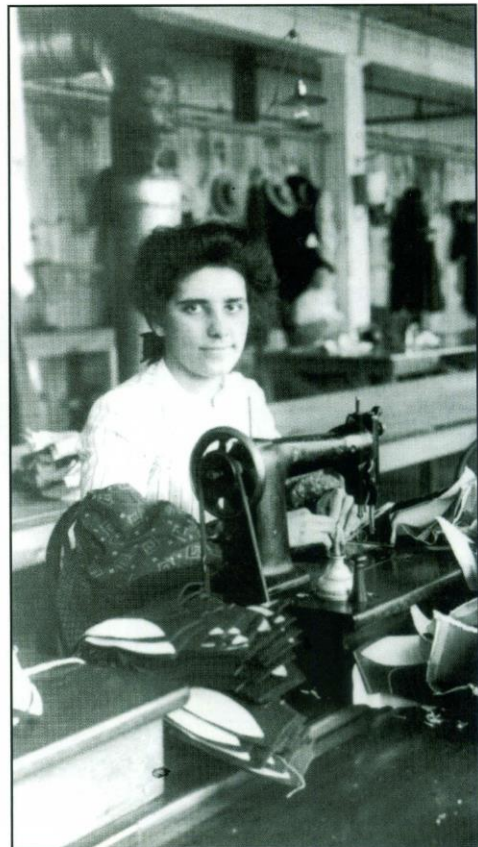
### Many Swedish women got work as "Swedish maids"

The Swedish women belonged to a different labor market from the men, but Swedish-American women too were affected by their immigrant status. As the cities grew, more and more American industrialists and small business owners were looking for domestic servants. Many Swedish women could secure work as "Swedish maids" in American homes. The conditions in America were better than they were in Sweden but Swedish women's choice to work as maids was probably a result of a discriminatory labor market.



### The textile industry was a large employer for immigrant women

With time an increasing part of Swedish women could find work in the manufacturing industry. Especially the textile industry became an important employer for immigrant women. The work as a seamstress was toilsome and the work days were long. Work accidents were frequent, in particular needle wounds, but the pay was good enough to provide many women with an economic independence.





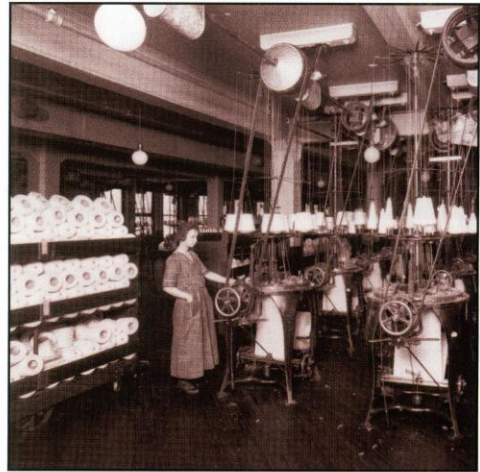
## The women in the Munsingwear textile factory

Northwestern Knitting Company, or Munsingwear, was the largest work place for women in Minnesota (the Swede state) in 1918. 400 of the 2500 women that worked there were either born in Sweden or had Swedish born parents. The manufacturing process was divided into distinct parts. More than 3000 people worked that year with the manufacturing of knitted underwear for men; which were sent to, among others, the American army in Europe. Approximately 500 men were employed in the company and they had work as foremen or highly paid specialists.



## The sewing area was gigantic

Here is where we find Swedish, Norwegian and German immigrant women, this is where the knitted pieces were cut after models and then sewed together. The sewing area was gigantic and over 1100 women sat there daily, six days a week, in two large factory halls, sewing the different pieces together and manufacturing the finished garments.



## Women of all ages were the principal work force

Low paid work like preparing the yarn for the knitting machines were performed, to a large extent, by young immigrant women from Eastern Europe. American women dominated among the well paid operators of the knitting machines in the following stage of the manufacturing process. In this part of the factory there were not many Swedish women to be found.



The children of the Swedish immigrants had completely different opportunities in the labor market. Work which for their parents would have been impossible to secure became available to them. On the picture to the left we see second generation Swedish immigrants working in a telephone exchange central. The manager though was probably born in the USA.

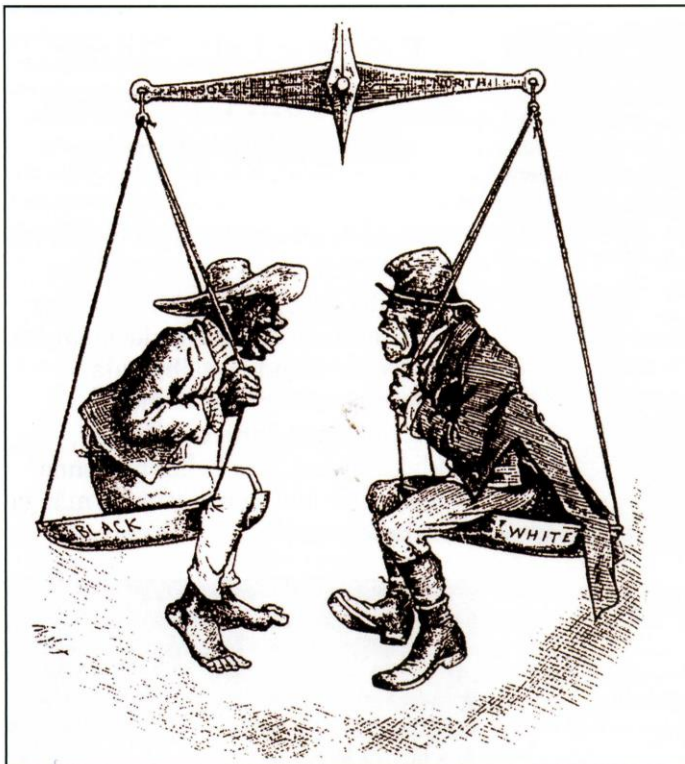
# Cultural meetings in the American melting pot

Despite the important role the European immigrants played for the American expansion, as labor in the cities and as farmers on the countryside frontier, many were met with discrimination. They were sought after as labor but the culture and the habits they brought were intimidating and threatening for many Americans.



## Two major threats to the American society

The picture shows grotesque stereotypes of "the other" in the American society. The black countryside stereotype "Jim Crow" and the alcoholic apelike Irish stereotype "Paddy" are here portrayed as threats to the American society, in a caricature printed in a large American paper in 1876.



The Irish was a group that during the 19th century periodically had to endure stereotyping and hostility towards strangers. The Irish's Catholic faith was often brought up as a problem by born Americans. The Swedes were also subjected to discrimination and stereotyping from time to time.

## Uncle Sam saw both benefits and draw backs of immigrants

Pictures of immigrants and different opinions concerning immigration were common in the end of the 19th century. The immigration was sometimes portrayed as being problematic and annoying, like in the picture of Uncle Sam in the lodging house, where a whole variety of immigrant groups were to get along with each other. The aggressive Irish, for example, is causing Uncle Sam a headache.







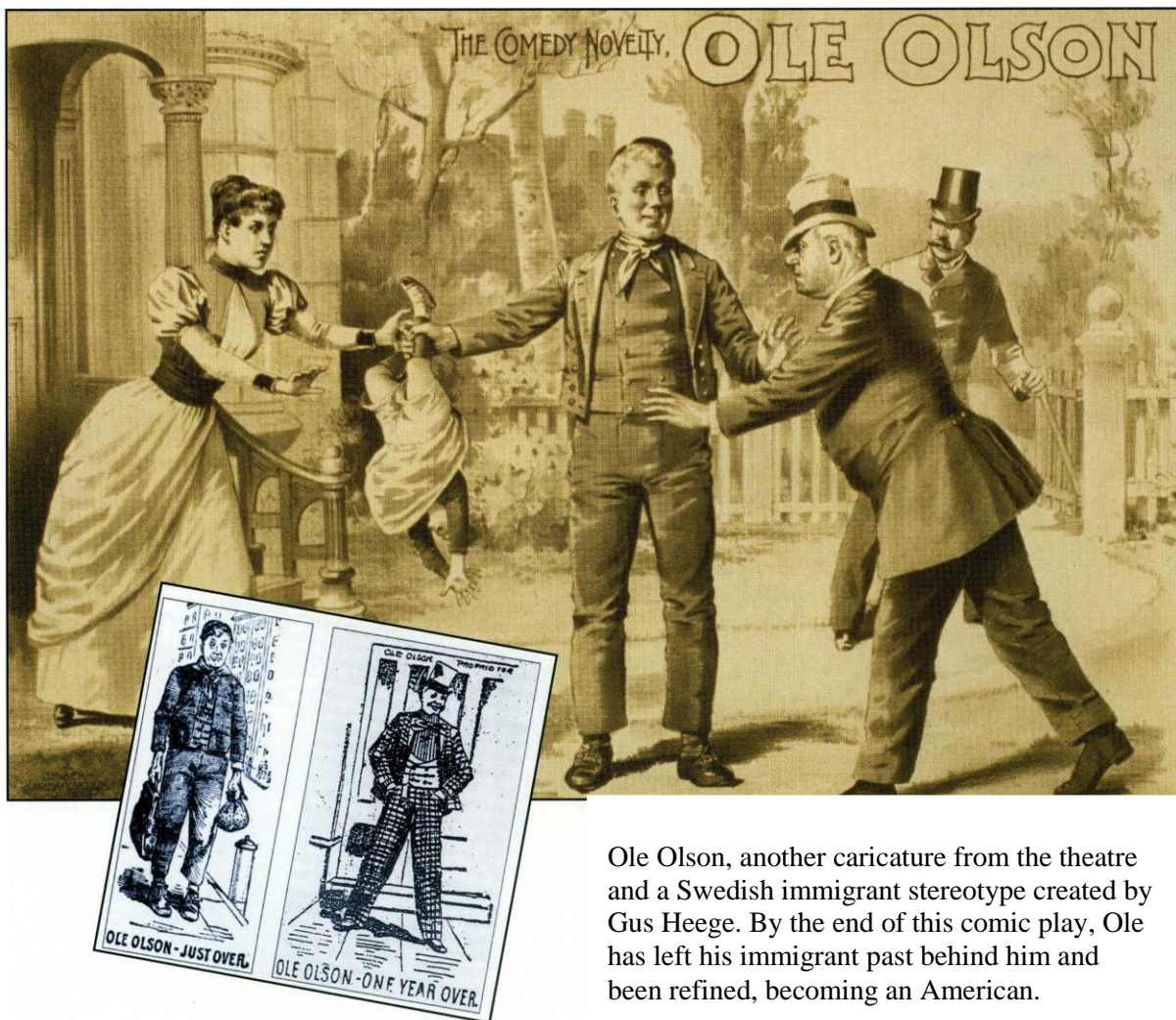
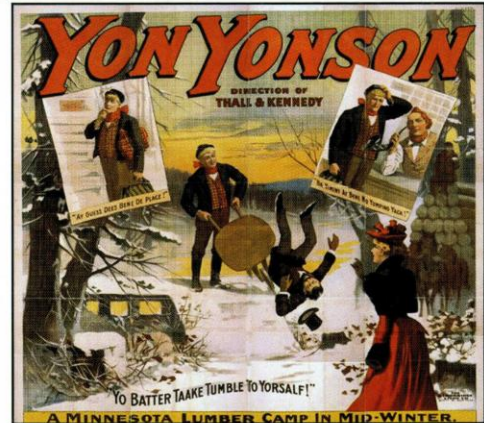


# Swedes were also subjects to stereotyping in the American society

Yonn Yonson was a made up Scandinavian/Swedish immigrant, the main character in a musical written by the American "Gus Heege" around 1890.

The character was a caricature of a "stupid but strong immigrant with a rural past". The play is partly set in a lumberjack camp in northern Minnesota.

At the end of the musical Yonn Yonson throws off his Scandinavian heritage and he becomes a part of the American society. The marks of a caricature have by then disappeared.



Ole Olson, another caricature from the theatre and a Swedish immigrant stereotype created by Gus Heege. By the end of this comic play, Ole has left his immigrant past behind him and been refined, becoming an American.



# Americanization



USA entered the WW1 on April 6th, 1917. The war meant a great turn-around in the American society's view of its immigrants. The war propaganda often underlined the American freedom and rights opposing the German counterpart's "Kaiserism" and dictatorship.

The large number of German immigrants in America was viewed with suspicion, and many born Americans doubted the German immigrant's loyalty to America. The Swedes were considered similar to the Germans regarding language and culture, and they too were seen as a potentially disloyal group. One of the most outspoken opponents to USA entering the war was Charles Lindberg Sr., the father of the famous aviator. Lindberg was a Swedish born politician with strong support among the Swedish-Americans. Patriotic manifestations began rally during the war to infuse the citizens with loyalty, especially the many immigrants. Many born and immigrated Americans opposed the war as late as 1916, but once USA had entered the war the public opinion changed.

