

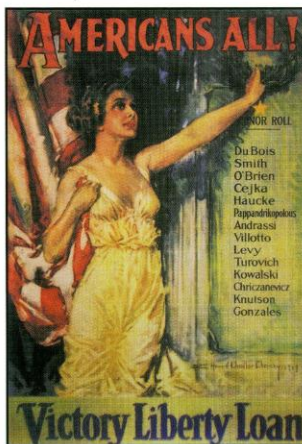


Great fear of spies

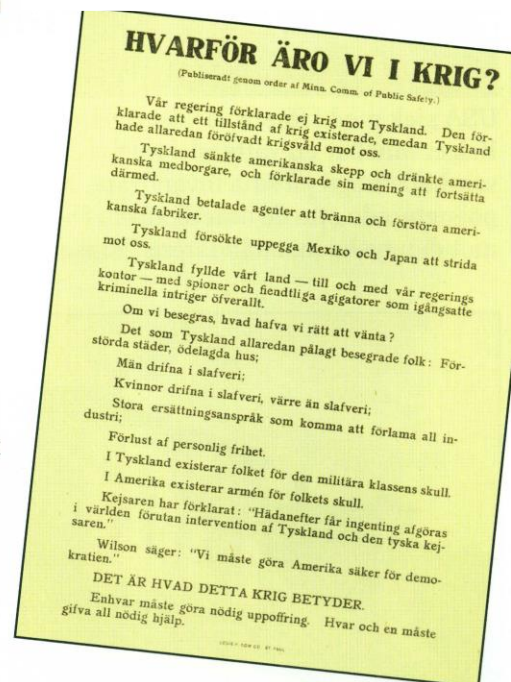
Minnesota had many German and Scandinavian immigrants. The men on the picture belong to the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, a federal commission to secure the immigrant population's loyalty to the new country. They worked massive propaganda campaigns. Placards and information was spread via functionaries and patriotic papers around the state. All foreign born were registered during 1918. Immigrants, especially Swedes and Germans, were forced to give up their weapons. The fear of sabotage and German spies was great.

Swedes became Americans

The First World War meant a change in the view of America's immigrants, and the great majority of the Swedes adapted to the Anglo-American culture. You were Swedish at home but outside of home you were foremost an American. The Swedes adaptation to the American society didn't come over night. Many Swedes had been Americanized long before 1917, but with the war came the first step in a process where Swedish immigrant culture changed and took on a more American character, or simply vanished. Several Swedish congregations gradually changed the language from Swedish to American during the 1920's, and many Swedish-American papers went out of business as they lost their customers.



Slogans like "Americans All!" and "100% American" became common during the time of the First World War. The cultural unity was important. The American nation's European heritage was emphasized, but also the unity between immigrant groups and loyalty to the new country.



Why are we at war?

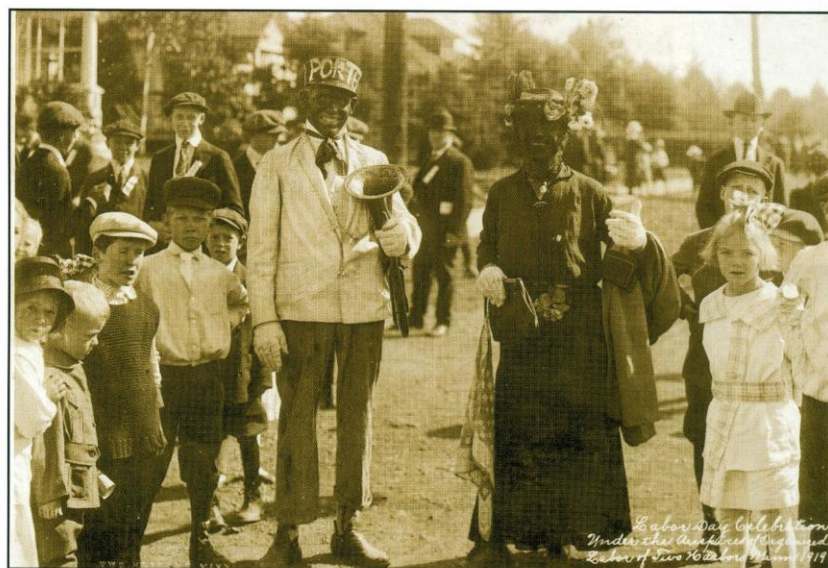
Our government did not declare war against Germany. It declared that we were brought in to war since Germany had perpetrated acts of war against us. Sinking our ships, paying agents for sabotage acts and trying to involve Mexico and Japan in a war against America. Germany has filled our country with spies and enemy agitators. Wilson says: We must safeguard democracy in America.



This was the final destination, the American melting pot dominated by an Anglo-American culture. The European ethnic identities fused into a shared American identity. At least that was the American leadership's vision during and after the war.

When the American cultural unity was emphasized the ethnic identities broke down. Instead many immigrant groups started to declare that they first and foremost were white Americans. In that way the black population was excluded from the national American project.

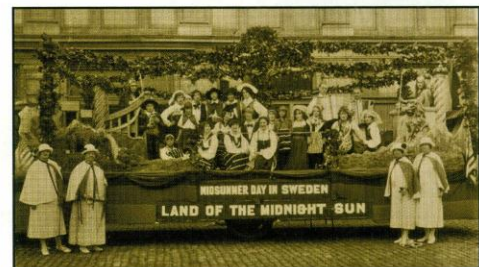
The picture below, from Two Harbors in Minnesota, shows white immigrant workers, probably Swedes, "playing" with racial identities to confirm their own white identity; and show their participation in the national American project. For black people the white common identity project became devastating, it was not until the 1970's that they could, through civil rights movements, seriously claim full rights as citizens of the USA.



Swedishness in USA 1940 - 2009, the memory of Sweden

Swedish descendants kept their Swedish traditions

What does Swedishness mean to the Swedish-Americans that live in USA today? Is it about following the cultural development in Sweden, or have the Swedish immigrant's children and grand children become fully Americanized during the generations that have gone by between 1900 and 2009? The question is difficult to answer but one thing is clear: there is clear evidence of a Swedish culture in the USA. But the Swedish farmer's and worker's culture that the immigrants brought with them over the Atlantic has changed. Much of the food, festivities and phenomena that are tied with Swedishness in America would for today's Swedes look strange or old fashioned. Sweden too has changed.



Midsummer fests are held in many locations in Swedish America. The celebrations have with time come to take on distinct American features. Often a Miss Midsummer is crowned at the festivities.





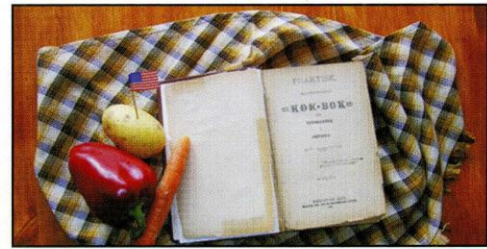
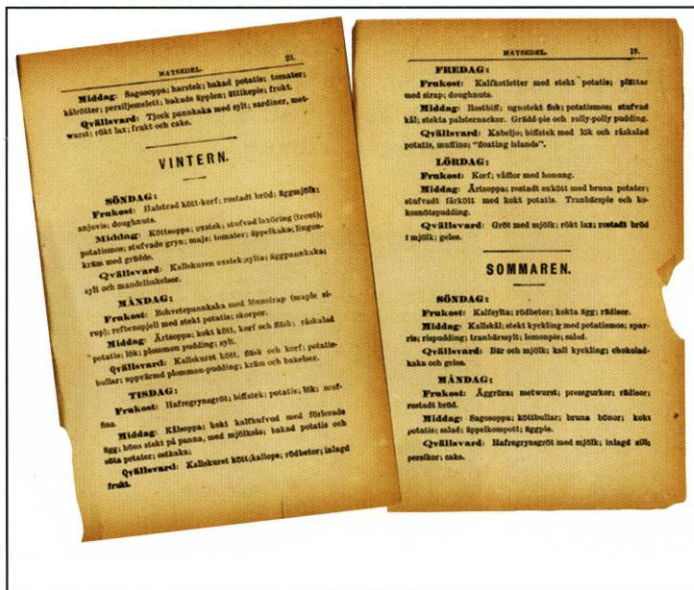
The traditional Swedish Christmas card gnomes, of Jenny Nyström's, emigrated to America, where they inspired cartoonists to create today's American Santa Claus.



The Swedish-American traditional way of celebrating Christmas differs from the way most Americans celebrate it. At Christmas many Swedish descendants queue up in places like Lindsborg, Kansas, to buy lutefisk in specialty stores. The lutefisk is sold both frozen and as lutefisk TV-dinner. A tradition (myth?) is for Swedes to engage in lutefisk tossing at Christmas time.



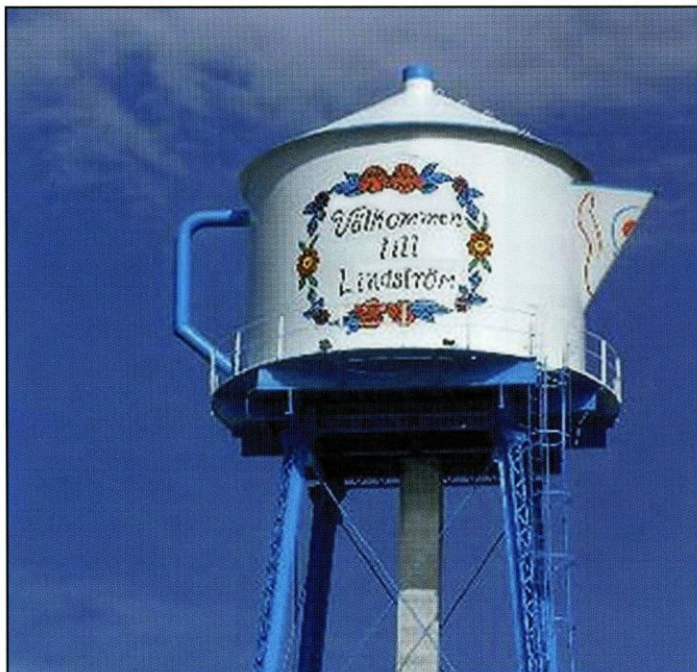
The Swedish-American food culture is a concrete reminder of the Swedish immigration. Many of the dishes associated with Swedishness would however seem strange and old fashioned for today's Swedes who are accustomed to hamburgers, pizza and the Asian kitchen. What do you say about potato sausage, "slobbor" or lutefisk? But the Swedish-American food heritage also includes more familiar dishes like Swedish meatballs, pancakes and limpa (syrup rye bread).



Swedish religious congregations were industrious publishers of Swedish cook books. Many of these recipes have been preserved and published anew in American cook books, proudly presenting Swedish Limpa and tried, true Swedish meatballs.

Swedishness as a tourist attraction

Swedishness has a niche in today's tourist industry, and old Swedish settlements readily use this ethnic heritage to market themselves. Although Swedishness was seen as threatening and problematic during the First World War, an obstacle to genuine American nationalism, it is today seen as a harmless tourist attraction. The water tower in Lindstrom (below) alludes to the connection between Swedishness and coffee.



Swedishness as a local identity

In many areas the Swedishness is still alive locally, and has been reformulated as an American identity. In Lindsborg, Kansas, the Swedish identity has become a hallmark for the local community.

Success stories

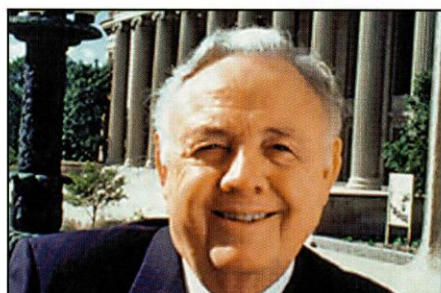
Did the Swedes make it in America? A question with many answers

A question that is often asked, when the Swedish emigration is brought up, is whether the Swedes made it in America or not. Considering that more than 1.2 million Swedes left Sweden for America the question is nearly impossible to answer. We offer you a couple of different answers.

A few Swedish emigrants became successful and rich in the new country. **Swan Turnblad** made a fortune on a farming machine, and later invested in newspapers.



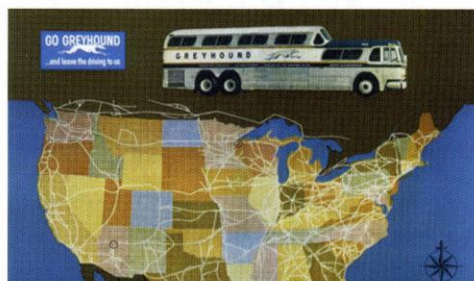
Curtis Carlsson made his fortune on rebate coupons and hotels.



These entrepreneurs, and their success stories, played an important symbolic role among the Swedish-Americans and their image of USA as the land of opportunities.

Not all Swedes made it

Countless were the Swedish immigrants that landed on the wrong foot in the American society, which at many times was perceived as harsh and ruthless. Tens of thousands of men and women simply disappeared in America, never to be heard of again by their relatives. They probably had a difficult life in the new country. Of these people we know very little, but there are tales in the literature about Swedish men and women living their whole lives in America housed in hostels or in anonymous lodgings, working low paid jobs. For many of them life in the new country probably was a living nightmare



Eric Carl Wickman, below, was the founder of the American bus company Greyhound Lines. Martis Jerk changed his name to Eric Wickman after having immigrated to Hibbing, Minnesota, in 1905. Here Eric started out as a driller in a mine. After a couple of years he became a joint-owner of a seven seat Hupmobile and started driving his colleagues to work between Hibbing and the mine for a fee. In 1914 he opened up his first bus line between Hibbing and Alice, which became the embryo of the Greyhound Lines.



If in succeeding you include the meaning of establish themselves, getting a steady job and raise a family then most of the Swedes did succeed. In today's American society we find descendants of Swedish immigrants in nearly all layers of society.

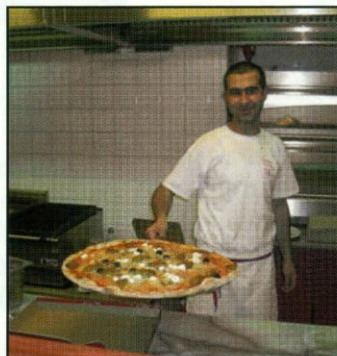
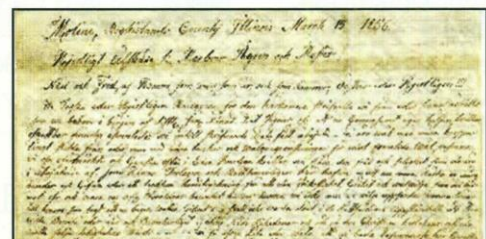
The new country, then and now

It is often said that history is important. By understanding people and societies from the past we can interpret and understand our own time better. Despite the Swedish emigration to USA being remote in time we find similarities (and of course differences) between "the new country" then and today. Then America was the new country for the Swedish immigrants. Today Sweden is the new country for immigrants hoping for a new start and a better life.

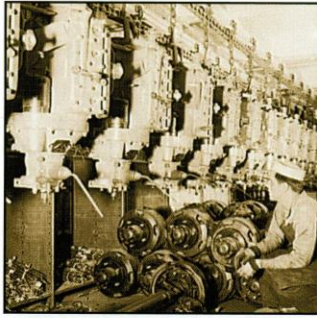


Communication with the old country was important during the 19th century and so it is today.

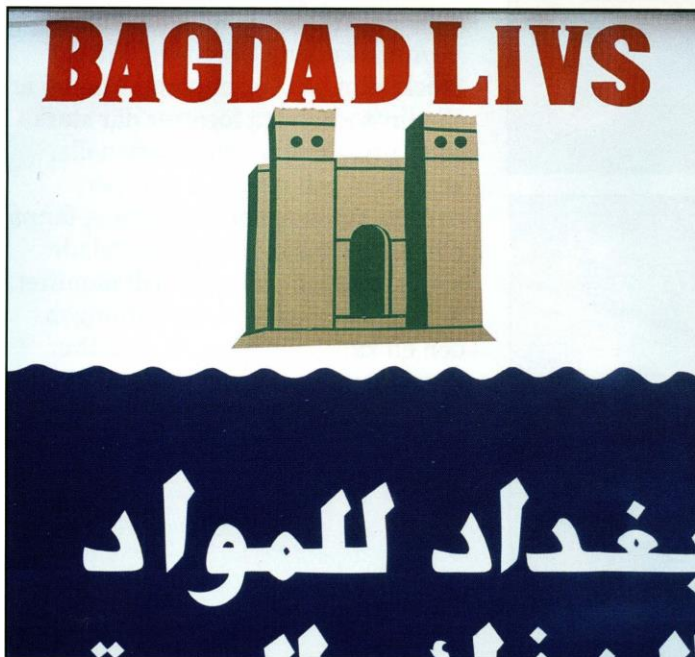
Information from the new country and the old went back and forth over the Atlantic via boats and mail deliveries. Today's emigrants have e-mail, internet and telephones connecting them with family and friends in the old country. The Swedish-language newspaper from home is replaced by the parabolic antenna to receive Al Jazeera or TV Chile, but the function is the same.



Immigrated small business entrepreneurs with family businesses were present then as they are today. Today's pizzerias in Sweden are not unlike saloons and restaurants started by Swedes in America. Immigration businesses require small monetary investments but a large portion of work hours both then and now. Family and relatives worked and work long hours to secure their businesses survival.



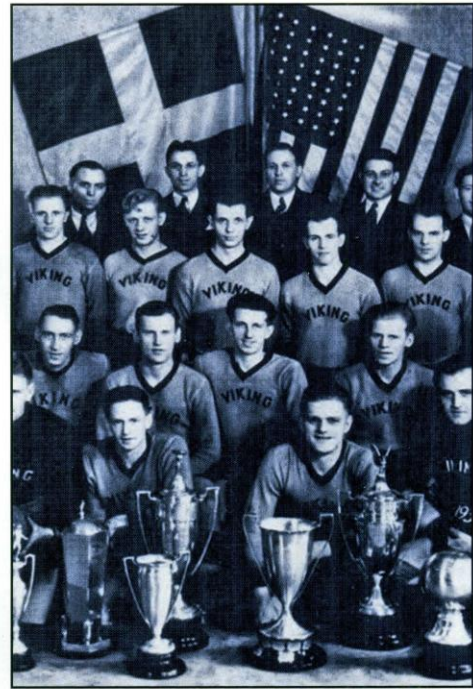
The American industry was screaming for labor force during the beginning of the 20th century and many European immigrants filled the vacant positions. The Swedish industry was screaming for labor force during the near decades following 1945 and Italians, Yugoslavs and Finns came to Sweden and immediately got work.



Swedish immigrants in USA wanted to buy specialties and goods similar to what they were accustomed to in the old country. In the same way there are stores in Sweden, owned by immigrants, supplying goods that can't be bought in the ordinary stores, although ordinary stores are broadening their supply.



Immigration associations are today, as they were then, meeting points where fellow countrymen meet, speak the same language and participate in collective cultural activities. Swedes in USA developed a rich life of various associations; and so have immigrants in Sweden done since 1945.



Immigrant quarters

Immigrant quarters were a fact in the American city as they are in today's Swedish cities. Chicago's Swede Town and the slum in Swede Hollow, St. Paul, had large concentrations of newly arrived immigrants at the end of the 19th century. In the same way there are Swedish cities with large concentrations of immigrants. Hammarkullen in Göteborg, Fittja in Stockholm and Rosengård in Malmö are all immigrant dense suburbs where strong bonds have developed between national, cultural and religious groups. The same type of cohesion existed between Swedes in America who shared the language, religion and national identity. Is it the social suborder and a feeling of vulnerability that make immigrants cluster together in the same way in today's Sweden, as immigrants did a hundred years ago in USA?