

Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center

Birger Swenson collection, 1928-1992

MSS P:10

22.75 linear feet (64 boxes)

Creators: Swenson, Birger, 1895-1987
Swenson, Lyal 1903-2002

Language: English (bulk), Swedish

Access: The collection is open for research. A limited amount of photocopies may be requested via mail.

Subject headings: Augustana Book Concern (Rock Island, Ill.)
Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center
Travel

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Finding aid updated by Lisa Huntsha, 2013

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Custodial History

Donated by Birger Swenson in 1982.

Biographical Sketch

Birger Swenson was born on July 31, 1895 in Averstad, Östra Fågelvik, Värmland to Sven and Johanna Svensson. Swenson immigrated to the United States in 1912 at the age of 17. After having worked for the Swedish-American newspaper, *Gamla och Nya Hemlandet* in Chicago, he moved to Rock Island, Illinois where he attended Augustana College. He received his B.A. from Augustana in 1924 and attended the Augustana Seminary in 1925 and 1926. Birger Swenson died in 1990 at the age of 94.

Birger Swenson joined the staff at Augustana Book Concern, Rock Island in 1926 as a field representative. He was promoted to field manager in 1927, a position held until 1942 when he was

promoted to Sales Manager. Swenson was named general manager of the Augustana Book Concern in 1945 and stayed in that position until he retired in 1962.

Swenson was active within the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church and served as a Trustee on the Augustana Lutheran Foundation from 1930-1962; as Treasurer for the Luther League Council of the Augustana Synod from 1933-1937; as treasurer for the American Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods 1939-1943; and as National President of the Publication Section of the International Council of Religious Education during 1950-1951.

At Augustana College, Swenson was the president for the Augustana Alumni Association 1938-1939; served as editor for the Augustana Almanac 1930-1947; was co-editor of the Augustana Annal 1948-1962; and served as a Trustee of the Augustana Annuity Trust.

After his retirement in 1962, Swenson devoted his time to numerous local organizations, such as the Augustana Historical Society, Rock Island; the Rock Island County Historical Society; and the Kiwanis. He was also active within the church and in the Swedish-American community. The Swensons also spent much time travelling around the world.

Birger Swenson was decorated a Knight of the Order of Vasa by the Swedish Government in 1951. Birger and Lyal Swenson were instrumental in the founding of the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College in Rock Island in 1981 through a generous gift of \$500,000.

Birger Swenson married Lyal Westerlund in 1943.

For further information about Birger Swenson's life see *My Story: Immigrant, Executive, Traveler* by Birger Swenson. Published by the Augustana Historical Society, Rock Island, Illinois, 1979.

Content

The collection includes material from Swenson's career at the Augustana Book Concern in Rock Island, Illinois, autobiographical material and an extensive slide collection from the Swensons' travels around the world.

Swenson's professional papers include Annual Reports from the Augustana Book Concern in Rock Island, Illinois 1928-1962, minutes from the Augustana Book Concern board meetings 1943-1962. There is also an extensive letter collection received by Swenson at the Augustana Book Concern. It is organized in alphabetical order by last name and cover the years 1945-1962. Other material from ABC include, clippings relating to the press and its publications.

The bulk of the personal papers contain material gathered after Swenson's retirement in 1962. The slide collection consists of several thousand slides from trips the Swenson's went on around the world. Included are also minutes and other material from Swenson's involvement area organizations such as the Kiwanis Club in Rock Island, the Jenny Lind Chapel Committee, and the Augustana Historical Society. Personal correspondence and extensive notes and other material from the autobiography *My Story* is also

present in this collection.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into the following series:

Series I: Professional Career

Augustana Book Concern; Professional Correspondence

Series II: Personal Papers

Biographical material—Birger Swenson; Autobiographical Information; Correspondence; Membership in various organizations

Series III: Travels

Slides; Photos; Films

Series IV: Artifacts

Memorabilia

Inventory list

Series I: Professional Career

Box 1

Augustana Book Concern Annual Reports (folders 1-7)

1. 1928-1943
2. 1944-1947
3. 1948-1951
4. 1952-1955
5. 1956-1958
6. 1959-1960
7. 1961-1962

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

8. 1943-1951
9. 1952-1958
10. Photographs of Augustana Book Concern Board Meeting February 28, 1961, (board members identified) and photograph of Conrad Bergendoff and Birger Swenson November 16, 1974 at the unveiling of an Augustana Book Concern plaque in Sorenson Hall.

Box 2

1. Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 1959-1962
2. Clippings & Data Augustana Book Concern, vol. 1
3. Clippings & Data , Augustana Book Concern, vol. 2
4. Dedication of new Augustana Book Concern building, 1959
5. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1944-1960
6. Letters & Historical Material
7. Lutheran Companion/Inklings
8. Board of publication; Dr. Abrahamson info, and misc. material
9. Employee list; miscellaneous information
10. Publication & Resource Reports, 1889-1912; 1926-1962

Box 3

Professional Correspondence Augustana Book Concern

Section 1, arranged in alphabetical order by last name.

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. E-G
5. H-J
6. K-L
7. M-N
8. O-R
9. S-T

Section 2

10. A-C
11. D-J
12. K-O
13. P-Z

International

14. A-B
15. C-G
16. H-L

Box 4

International cont.

1. M-Q
2. R-S
3. T-Z

Section 4

4. ABC Board vs. A.D. Mattson
5. Board of Publication LCA
6. Gustavson, Sigurd
7. National Lutheran Manager's Association
8. Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association
9. Stålfors, Sture
10. Walker Hamilton Torrey

Box 4a

1. Augustana Annuity Trust
- 2 - 6. Minutes from meetings 1953-1978, contained in 4 folders

Box 4b

[Access Restricted]

Box 5

Autobiographical material organized in 6 ring binders

1. Civic Life, vol. 1
2. Augustana Lutheran Church, vol. 2

Box 6

Autobiographical material organized in 6 ring binders

1. Years at Augustana Book Concern 1926-1963, vol. 1
2. Years at Augustana Book Concern 1926-1963, vol. 2

Box 7**Autobiographical material organized in 6 ring binders**

1. Years at Augustana Book Concern 1926-1963, vol. 3
 2. Years at Augustana Book Concern 1926-1963, vol. 4
-

Series II: Personal Papers**Box 8****Membership in Organizations**

1. 54th Ammunition Train
2. Augustana Alumni Association
3. Alumni Day May 16, 1984
4. American Scandinavian Association
5. American Scandinavian Association-“Current”
6. American Scandinavian Association-Historical
7. American Scandinavian Association-Minutes
8. American Swedish Historical Foundation
9. American Swedish Institute
10. Augustana College Agenda for Leadership
11. Augustana Founders
12. Augustana College

Box 9**Membership in Organizations**

1. Augustana Historical Society
2. Augustana Historical Society-Minutes
3. Augustana Historical Society-History
4. Augustana Historical Society-History
5. Augustana Historical Society-“Current”
6. Augustana Historical Society-Publications
7. Augustana Partnership Fund 1981
8. Augustana College Scholarships
9. Augustana Swedish Institute
10. Bethany College
11. Bishop Hill Heritage Association
12. Davenport Public Museum
13. Emigrantinstitutet Växjö
14. Emigrantregistret-Sweden
15. Sigurd Gustavson, director Emigrantregistret, Karlstad

16. Emigrantregistret, Karlstad
17. Emigrantregistret letters
18. The Emigrantregister, Karlstad

Box 10

Membership in Organizations

1. Every Member Canvass & Stewardship Education
2. Form Letters
3. Friendship Manor Scrapbook
4. Graphic Arts Industries, Inc.
5. Härute-Out Here
6. Illinois Conference Churchmen
7. Illinois State Historical Society
8. Illinois Synod-Examining Committee
9. 1st & 2nd International Conference of Lutheran Publishers
10. The Intrepid Club-Membership
11. Intrepids-Lindblad
12. Jenny Lind Chapel Treasurer Report & Inventory
13. Jenny Lind Chapel Committee & Mailing List
14. Jenny Lind Chapel Clippings & Historical Articles
15. Jenny Lind Chapel Open Correspondence & "Current" Programs
16. Jenny Lind Chapel Postcards & Notebooks Memorial book, etc.

Box 11

Membership in Organizations

1. Kiwanis Club—Rock Island
2. Kiwanis History
3. Golden Kiwanis—Rock Island
4. Lutheran Church in America
5. Lutheran Church in America- Oral History Project
6. Memorial Park Cemetery-Current Reference
7. Memorial Park Cemetery-Special Reference
8. Memorial Park Cemetery-Minutes & Reports; Special Memo
9. Memorial Park Cemetery-Mausoleum
10. Memorial Park Cemetery
11. National Lutheran Managers Association-Minutes
12. New Sweden 1988—Western Illinois Conference; Glen E. Brolander, chair
13. Nytt och Nöje
14. Old Main Society Augustana
15. Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association
16. Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association-Minutes Executive

Box 12

Committees

1. Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association-Board Minutes
2. Publishers' Associated Section
3. Quad Cities Color Slide Club
4. Riksföreningen Sverigekontakt
5. Rock Island County Historical Society
6. Rock Island County Historical Society
7. Swedish American Historical Society
8. Swedish Council
9. Swedish Information Service
10. Union League Club of Chicago
11. Marquis-Who's Who
12. YMCA
13. YWCA

Box 13

Personal correspondence, misc.

1. Autobiographical
2. Church History Interview
3. General, misc.
4. General, misc.
5. General, misc.
6. General, misc.
7. General, misc.
8. Sympathy, Birthday, Retirement

Box 14

***My Story*, material and research**

1. Inspirations to write *My Story*, notes, clippings and misc.
2. *My Story*, introductions and reviews
3. *My Story*, Letters from Readers
4. *My Story*, Reviews
5. *My Story*, Cost and Sales
6. *My Story*, first draft
7. Biographical material – Birger Swenson
8. Photographs:
 - Birger and Lyal on camels in Egypt 1964
 - Östra Fågelvik parish church, Värmland
 - Dr. Conrad Bergendoff and Birger Swenson at an Augustana College Convocation June 2, 1958, at which Birger received an honorary degree from Augustana

- Birger Swenson at his desk at Augustana Book Concern March, 1963
- Birger Swenson, King Carl XVI Gustaf, and Dr. Conrad Bergendoff at Augustana College April 20, 1976

Box 15

1. Wedding Scrapbook "Life begins for Lyal and Birger, August. 14, 1947
2. Oral Histories: Birger Swenson, 1979
3. Oral Histories: Birger Swenson, 1984, 1985
4. Wermlands Tidning 1838

Box 16

Personal scrapbooks

Box 17

Family bibles

Box 18

Photographs

1. Army days, 1918-1919
2. Augustana Book Concern building
3. Augustana Book Concern personnel
4. Augustana College
5. Augustana College days
6. Augustana Lutheran Church
7. Birger and Lyal individually
8. Birger and Lyal together
9. Civic
10. Jenny Lind Chapel – image on printing plate
11. Travel photographs – Lindblad Explorer cruise
12. Merger convention – Detroit 1962
13. National Lutheran Managers Association and Graphic Arts Industry
14. Protestant Church – Owned Publishers Association
15. Relatives - Sweden
16. World Cruise 1964 and travel
17. Family and friends
18. Birger's 90th birthday

Box 19

1. Family genealogy (Sven Svensson)
2. Birger family information

3. Immigration and naturalization papers, army discharge papers
4. Biographical and genealogical material for Birger Swenson
5. Personal file – Book of Remembrance, Augustana Years
6. Birger's 90th birthday
7. Funeral
8. Scrapbook of newspaper clippings

Box 20

Address books, daybooks, diaries

1. Recognition letters
2. Royal Swedish Orders
3. Membership cards to Swedish-American cultural organizations, etc.
4. Certificates of Vaccination
5. Birger Swenson's passports
6. Lyal Swenson's passports
7. Awards and accomplishments
8. Misc.

Box 21

1. Personal artwork from childhood in Sweden
2. King Carl XVI Gustaf's visit 1976
3. On Birger's writing
4. Sympathy and in memorandum
5. Oberammergan, travel reference materials
6. Special reference
7. Margaret Thatcher
8. Scandinavian travel information
9. Daily reference – newspaper clippings
10. Reference materials
11. Reference materials
12. Misc. May 1987
13. Misc. cards
14. Misc.

Box 22

1. Swedish-American History – Augustana Synod
2. Activities
3. Värmland clippings
4. Swedish-America clippings
5. Sweden clippings
6. Swedish-American history clippings

7. Senior Citizen retirement references
 8. Senior citizen program
 9. Prayers, devotions, etc.
 10. Stories to Tell
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Series III – Travel

Albums, written accounts and slides

Box 1

Europe & the US 1924-1949
Europe, Canada, A World Cruise, and the World's Fair in New York 1959-1964

Box 2

Mexico, U.S., South America & Europe 1965-1967
Mediterranean 1968

Box 3

North Cape 1969
South Seas 1970

Box 4

Antarctica 1971
Antarctica 1972

Box 5

Israel 1972
Africa 1968 & 1972

Box 6

Europe 1973
Greenland 1974; Amazon 1975

Box 7

Holden Village; New England-Canada 1976
Alaska/Bering Sea 1977

Box 8

Europe 1978; 1980
China 1981

Box 9

North Cape 1982
USA-Canada 1983
Various Travel Notes and Article Clippings

Box 10

USA 1984
Fall Foliage Tour-Eastern USA & Canada 1979

Slides

(contained in 22 smaller boxes)

Box 1

African safari (1968-1972) Slides 1-400

Box 2

African safari (1968-1972) Slides 401-458
Amazon Cruise (1975) Slides 1-340

Box 3

Amazon Cruise (1975) Slides 341-353
Antarctica I (1971-1972) Slides 1-380

Box 4

Antarctica I (1971-1972) Slides 381-548
Antarctica II (1971-1972) Slides 1-234

Box 5

Around the World in 88 Days (1964) Slides 1-400

Box 6

Around the World in 88 Days (1964) Slides 401-407
Bering Sea Cruise/Alaska (1977) Slides 1-351

Box 7

China (1981) Slides 1-351
England (1962) Slides 1-40

Box 8

England (1962) Slides 41-81
Europe (1973) Slides 1-362

Box 9

Friendship Manor-Our Home Quad Cities (1981) Slides 1-184
Greenland (1974) Slides 1-220

Box 10

Greenland (1974) Slides 221-336
Israel-A Holy Land Pilgrimage (1972) Slides 1-275

Box 11

Mediterranean (1968) Slides 1-393

Box 12

A Mexican Holiday (1965) Slides 1-273
North Cape Cruise (1969) Slides 1-120

Box 13

North Cape Cruise (1969) Slides 121-320
North Cape Cruise (1982) Slides 1-200

Box 14

North Cape Cruise (1982) Slides 201-285
Oberammergan Passion Play (1969) Slides 1-159
Scandinavia (various years combined) Slides 1-140

Box 15

Scandinavia (various years combined) Slides 141-540

Box 16

Scandinavia (various years combined) Slides 141-560

South America (1966) Slides 1-349

Box 17

South Seas Cruise (1970) Slides 1-346

Box 18

US & Canadian Travels (various yrs)

Augustana Book Concern, Rock Island, IL (1961) Slides 1-72

Augustana Centennial, Rock Island, IL (1960) Slides 1-72

Eastern (New England) US & Canada (1976; 1979) Slides 1-194

Box 19

US & Canadian Travels (various yrs)

Florida/New Orleans (1984) Slides 1-246

Gaspe Peninsula /Quebec (1983)

Glacier Bay National Park Slides 1-140

Box 20

US & Canadian Travels (various yrs)

Glacier Bay National Park (1983)

Gaspe Peninsula/Quebec Slides 141-326

Holden Village (1976) Slides 1-159

Iowa: Mt Pleasant (1973), Pella (1978), West Branch (1971) Slides 1-57

Box 21

US & Canadian Travels (various yrs)

Michigan: Holland (1979) Slides 1-41

Minneapolis, Minnesota: Lutheran World Federation (1957) Slides 1-70

Miscellaneous: Chicago Bus Trip (1985) Slides 1-4

Mississippi River Cruise (1975) Slides 1-40

Box 22

Personal

Sigma Gamma Phi Fraternity (1956-1959)

Birger's 90th Birthday

Slides 1-106

Box 23

1. Photographs
2. Kiwanis Club of Rock Island Golden "K" Club; Life Membership in the Chamber of Commerce of Rock Island 1972
3. Foreign currency
4. Household Inventory
5. Delaware Tercentenary Coin
6. Cemetery deed and map, Memorial Park, Rock Island

Other: New Testament, daily journal, address book, booklets of pages from "Immigrant Executive Traveler: My Story. By Birger Swenson, 1979"

Films

Box 1 (DVD, converted from 16mm film reels)

Augustana Book Concern Reel 1

Augustana Book Concern Reel 2

Publishers Section – National Lutheran Editors & Managers Association, 1935-1942 Reel 1

Augustana College and Indian Powwow Reel 1

Box 2 (16 mm film reels)

Lutheran Companion Jan. 1940

Alaska – America's Northern Wonderland Reel 1

Alaska – America's Northern Wonderland Reel 2

Alaska – America's Northern Wonderland Reel 3

Alaska – America's Northern Wonderland Reel 4

America's Western Wonderland – Teton and Yellowstone, 1942 Reel 1

America's Western Wonderland – Yellowstone and Black Hill, 1942 Reel 2

Series IV: Artifacts

Box 1

Memorabilia, objects 1-48

Box 2

Memorabilia, objects 49-54

Box 3

Memorabilia, objects 55-66

Box 4

Memorabilia, objects 67-74

Publication Note

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