

Swedish Augustana Home for the Aged in Brooklyn records 1908-1979

Size: 2 linear feet, 3 boxes

Acquisition: Donated to SSIRC in 2002.

Access: The Collection is open for research. A limited amount of photocopies may be requested via mail. Photographs can be reproduced and purchased upon request.

Processed by: Christina Johansson. November, 2003

Control Num.: SSIRC I/O:48

Historical Sketch

The material was donated to the Swenson Center by Linnea B. Foster of Madison, New Jersey. Ms. Foster is the daughter of John H. Benson, the second manager of the Swedish Augustana Home in Brooklyn, New York.

The Swedish Augustana Home for the Aged was founded in 1908 by members of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, New York. The mission of the institution was to offer a Christian Home for protestant men and women over 65 years of age who accepted the bible as their faith. The Home was created as a Charitable Institution and was largely supported by voluntary contributions. It had no set fees, rather the residents paid according to their means.

The dedication of the Augustana Home took place on November 22, 1908 in the presence of more than 500 people. The three story structure on 17th Avenue and 60th Street in Brooklyn had been purchased for \$11,000. The Home was initially under the management of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Brooklyn. In 1909, however, The New York Conference appointed a Board of Directors to be responsible for the future direction and administration of the Home. Vilhelm Berger was appointed the first manager of the Home in 1912, followed by John H. Benson on April 15, 1914.

Despite shortage of funding, the Home managed to grow and expand during its first decades of existence due to the persistent work and fundraising efforts by John H. Benson and the Board of Directors. A new wing was added in 1912 and the Home was further expanded onto in 1926. A new fireproof building was dedicated in 1927 with space for 75 persons. In 1951, the Home expanded again with an addition for physically handicapped. The Board of Directors passed on the control and management of the Home to the Lutheran Social Service in 1952.

Under the direction of the Board of Directors, the Home published its own newsletter, *Vintersol. Tidning för Svenska Augustanahemmet för Ålderstigna i Brooklyn*. The newsletter was published monthly from 1919 to 1955. The first editor was Vilhelm Berger. The manager of the Home, John H. Benson assumed the editorial responsibility in 1923. *Vintersol* published news from the Home and the New York Conference area, devotional texts, acknowledgements, and ran ads for local businesses. The newsletter became an important source of outreach and revenue for the Home. The Home also had a very active Auxiliary that hosted a variety of fundraising events, dedication ceremonies, and anniversary celebrations which all benefited the treasury.

John H. Benson and his wife Hildur A. Benson retired on July 1, 1954 after 41 years and 26 years of service respectively. Mrs. Benson had served as the matron since 1928.

Vintersol is located in the Center's library Immig. BV4435.V56.

Content note

The bulk of the material are from the period when John H. Benson was the manager and includes photographs of the residents and the facilities, financial records, printed pamphlets, and financial records of donations and expenses. Please see the folder inventory below for more specific information.

Folder inventory

Box 1

Folders 1-12

1. Constitution and by-laws
2. Anniversary pamphlets etc.
3. 50th Anniversary speech "How Well I Remember," by John H. Benson
4. Programs, plans, events 1953-1954
5. Essay: The Augustana Home for the Aged, by Linnea Benson
6. Letters from John Victor Arvidson to John H. and Hildur A. Benson, 1951.
7. Play: A problem of Age: It's Solution, n.d.
8. Health issues and food safety.
9. Daily menu plans n.d.
10. Misc. cards and cut-outs from publications depicting people living in the Home and the facilities.
11. New York Conference publications, misc. church pamphlets etc.
12. Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, New York - 100th Anniversary Booklet , Bethlehem Star 1974-1979, Vänliga Hälsningar Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Bethlehemsförsamlingen Ynglingaförening misc.

Box 2

Folders 1-6

1. Donations - list of individuals making monetary donations
2. Correspondence: Augustana Home business and activities 1908-1954
3. misc. floor plans, salaries
4. Account book: Building maintenance
5. Subscriptions for the Swedish Augustana Home for the Aged.
6. Receipts, cancelled checks, and sugar ration checks.

Box 3

Photos (digitized versions available in [online database](#))

1. Chapel at the Augustana Swedish Home for the Aged, Brooklyn, New York
b&w 8 x 10, n.d., photographer: unknown
2. Photo of five men in the library playing a game. From far right: Mr. Robertson, ?, ?, Charlie Nelson, Mr. Gustavson and?
b&w 8 x 10, n.d., photographer: Brunbecks's Studio 4710- 5th Avenue Brooklyn, New York
3. Group photo from the Augustana Home top row: Charles Nelson, Mr. Olson, Mrs. Svante Johnson, Stromberg, John Larson, ?, Magnuson, Carl Berg
middle row: Johnson, Johnson, W. Therese Berling, Janne Hanson, Anna Berg, Clara Olander, Sophie Lind, Josephine Elfast, ? Hanna Ohlson, Nelson, Olson, Olson, Waernberg, ?, Erickson.
bottom row: Johnson, Emma Anderson, Clara Steve, ?. ? Emma Johnson, Hildur A. Benson, John H. Benson, Sopia Nyman
Wickstrom, Johnson, Peterson, Carlstrom, Peterson, Thompson.
b&w 8 x 10, approx. 1933, photographer: unknown
4. Group photo taken in the "sitting room," John H. Benson standing in the back.
b&w 8 x 10, approx. 1933, photographer: unknown
5. Exterior shot of the Augustana Home, Brooklyn, New York (photo is torn in the middle)
b&w 8 x 10, photographer: unknown
6. Exterior shot from the front steps to the Augustana Home for the Aged John H. Benson and Mrs. Westman.
b&w 5 x 7, n.d., photographer: unknown
7. Augustana Home dining room (most likely taken before the new kitchen was built).
b&w 8 x 10, n.d., photographer: Stiner (or possibly Hiner), 222 Court Street, Brooklyn
8. Cornerstone laying at the Augustana Home for the Aged. Shot from a distance.
b&w 4x 6, n.d., photographer: unknown
9. Cornerstone laying at the Augustana Home for the Aged. Close-up shot.
b&w 4x 6, n.d., photographer: unknown
10. Group photo of Augustana Home inhabitants. The only identified individuals: Miss Elsa person, Mrs. Therese Berling, and Mrs. Sophia Nyman
b&w 6 x 10, n.d., photographer: unknown
11. Portrait of resident Ida Hastens on her 100th birthday.

- b&w 4 x 5, n.d., photographer: unknown
12. Front Hall decorated with a Christmas tree, Augustana Home
b&w 4 x 6, photographer: unknown
13. Reading at the Augustana Home during Christmas time.
b&w 4 x 6, photographer: unknown
14. Portrait of John H., Hildur and Linnea Benson at the Augustana Home
b&w 8 x 10, photographer: unknown
15. 2 portraits of John H. Benson
b&w 8 x 10, 1954, photographer: unknown
16. Portrait of Bonita Larson, Rudolph Larsen, Hildur Benson, John H. Benson, and Linnea Benson at the Augustana Home Office.
b&w 8 x 10, 1954, photographer: unknown
17. Portrait of new manager, Rudolph Larson.
b&w 8 x 10, 1954, photographer: unknown
18. Augustana Home Chapel during a sermon.
b&w 4 x 6, photographer: unknown
19. Augustana Home bedroom.
b&w 8 x 10, photographer: unknown
20. 3 shots from dining room at the Augustana Home (collage)
b&w, photographer: unknown
21. 3 group photos Augustana Home (collage)
b&w, photographer: unknown
22. Group photos of residents at the Augustana Home (collage)
b&w, photographer: unknown
23. Portrait of Mrs. Westman knitting in a bedroom.
b&w 5x7, n.d., photographer: unknown
24. 1 portrait of an unidentified woman sitting in the kitchen baking bread.
b&w 5x7, n.d., photographer: unknown
25. 1 portrait of an unidentified woman sitting by the sewing machine sewing.
b&w 5x7, n.d., photographer: unknown
26. 1 group photo of John H. Benson and staff and residents outside the Augustana Home.
top row from left: Mr. Robertson, Kajsa ?, Kenneth Falberg, Anna Brostrom
bottom row left to right: Mrs. Robertson, ?, Hildur A. Benson, John H. Benson
b&w 5x7, n.d., photographer: unknown
27. Augustana Home dining room
b&w 5x7, n.d., photographer: unknown
28. Photo from a concert at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, New York, featuring the Children's' Home Band and John H. Benson speaking.
b&w 5x7, n.d., photographer: unknown
29. Photo collage for a Christmas greeting.
b&w 11 x 12, photographer: unknown
30. Ladies Aid Society - Meeting and coffee (one person is possibly cut-out of the photo)
b& w 4 x 4, n.d., photographer: unknown
31. Picture of the Augustana Home pantry.
b&w 3x5, n.d., photographer: unknown
32. 2 mounted photos on Augustana Home stationary "Office work" (John H. Benson) and

"Planning" John H. Benson and ?).

b&w 3x2, n.d., photographer: unknown

33. Summer school photo from the Swedish Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, New York

b&w 12x10, 1907, photographer: unknown

34. Sunday School Classes standing outside the Swedish Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, New York.

b&w 12x10, n.d., photographer: unknown

35. 9 postcards depicting the residents and the interior and exterior of the facility

36. 6 postcards from the Bethpage Mission, Axtell, Nebraska, exterior shots of the various buildings.

37. 7 postcards from the Immanuel Deaconess Institute, Omaha, Nebraska, interior and exterior shots.

38. 1 postcard from the Lutheran Church and parsonage, Holdrege, Nebraska

39. 1 postcard from the Augustana Lutheran Church, Cumberland, Wisconsin