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

Processed by: Christina Johansson and Bethany Bitner 2004/2005
          Finding aid updated by Lisa Huntsha, 2013

Repository: Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center
          Augustana College
          639 38th Street
          Rock Island, IL 61201
          309-794-7204
          sag@augustana.edu

Custodial History
Donated by Birger Swenson in 1982.

Biographical Sketch

Birger Swenson was born on July 31, 1895 in Averstad, Östra Fägelvik, 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.


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
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. 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

**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. Nytta 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

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
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. Oberammergau, travel reference materials
6. Special reference
7. Margaret Thatcher
8. Scandinavian travel information
9. Daily reference – newspaper clippings
10. Reference materials
11. Reference materials
13. Misc. cards

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**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Slides</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Around the World in 88 Days (1964)</td>
<td>401-407</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bering Sea Cruise/Alaska (1977)</td>
<td>1-351</td>
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<td><strong>Box 7</strong></td>
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<td>China (1981)</td>
<td>1-351</td>
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<td>England (1962)</td>
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<td>England (1962)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe (1973)</td>
<td>1-362</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendship Manor-Our Home Quad Cities (1981)</td>
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<td>Greenland (1974)</td>
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<td>Greenland (1974)</td>
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<td>Israel-A Holy Land Pilgrimage (1972)</td>
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<td>Mediterranean (1968)</td>
<td>1-393</td>
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<td>A Mexican Holiday (1965)</td>
<td>1-273</td>
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<td>North Cape Cruise (1969)</td>
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<td><strong>Box 13</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>North Cape Cruise (1969)</td>
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<td>North Cape Cruise (1982)</td>
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<td><strong>Box 14</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>North Cape Cruise (1982)</td>
<td>201-285</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oberammergan Passion Play (1969)</td>
<td>1-159</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scandinavia (various years combined)</td>
<td>1-140</td>
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<td><strong>Box 15</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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

**Box 19**

US & Canadian Travels (various yrs)
Florida/New Orleans (1984) Slides 1-246
Gaspe Peninsula/Quebec (1983) Slides 1-140

**Box 20**

US & Canadian Travels (various yrs)
Glacier Bay National Park (1983) Slides 141-326
Gaspe Peninsula/Quebec Slides 1-159
Holden Village (1976) Slides 1-57
Iowa: Mt Pleasant (1973), Pella (1978), West Branch (1971)

**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


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
When citing this collection, use the following credit line: Birger Swenson collection, 1928-1992 (MSS P:10), Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois