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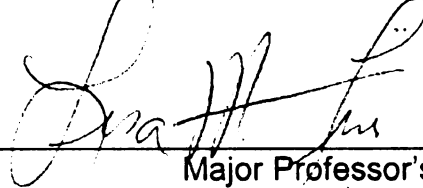
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"SCANDINAVIAN PREFERRED": NORDIC ETHNIC IDENTITY, GENDER, AND
WORK WITHIN CHICAGO, 1879-1933

By

Erika Kathleen Jackson

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

“SCANDINAVIAN PREFERRED”: NORDIC ETHNIC IDENTITY, GENDER, AND WORK WITHIN CHICAGO, 1879-1933

By

Erika Kathleen Jackson

Over the past century, Scandinavian-American authors created a proud historical tradition of recording the experiences of their ancestors within the city spaces of Chicago, yet their narratives often committed two errors: a reliance on excessive filiopietism and the failure to recognize the significance of American perspective in relation to a contrived set of stereotypes and images. The topic of my dissertation begins to connect the vital dichotomy of American and Scandinavian perspectives on ethnic identity, the experience of work, and social hierarchies within the earlier enclaves of “Swede Town,” Lakeview, and later Andersonville in Chicago. I argue that, beginning in the 1880s, American commentators began to create a gendered discourse on a “preferred” immigrant class using “Nordic” racial features as a template for their visions. In locating the various viewpoints of Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants and their Chicago neighbors, the methodological focus of my study incorporates the use of both English-language regional and national periodicals, as well as Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish-language periodicals; various manuscript series; material culture; Progressive era reports and exposes on vice; and quantitative contextual findings. The findings of my research add nuance to our understanding of the study of ethnic identity and cross-cultural contact within urban history and employ gender analysis to investigate the social character and

experiences of Scandinavians as men and women at work, home and in leisure. By incorporating the American perspective into a larger Scandinavian-centric history, this project will contribute to future historical research on similar topics that interrogate the interactions of immigrants and their neighbors in American cities.

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Introduction

In 1880, Chicago was a city on the brink of an explosion of industry, and concurrently, receiving a massive influx of people looking to fill the thousands of new positions created by its burgeoning industries.¹ Chicago's already wide network of newspapers illustrated this need for workers, publishing page after page of advertisements for help wanted as a call to Chicago's new arrivals looking for work. Many immigrants would come to tailor the little knowledge they had of the English language to a series of catchphrases that regularly appeared within the help wanted sections in an effort to avoid embarrassment in not understanding the language of the advertisements. Likewise, Chicagoans who published calls for help learned to be quite succinct in their descriptions of who they were looking for to fill positions, often specifying which immigrant groups they were looking to employ – as well as which groups need not apply. Time and time again, calls for help requested specific immigrant groups for certain types of positions. Men from Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark were called upon for manual labor until the “new” immigrant groups from Southern and Eastern Europe appeared in massive waves during the 1890s,

¹ The study of the city of Chicago in American history is a field that is wide-ranging and incredibly rich in depth. Due to the location of the city as a metropolis surrounded by an agriculturally-rich hinterland, Chicago witnessed a meteoric growth of industry, consumer goods, and people between 1870 and 1890. For examples of the now-classic histories on Chicago, see Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago*, in 3 vol. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937); Elmer A. Riley, “The Development of Chicago and Vicinity as a Manufacturing Center Prior to 1880” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1911); Allan Pred, *The Spatial Dynamics of United States Industrial Growth, 1800-1914: Interpretive and Theoretical Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966); David Ward, *Cities and Immigrants: A Geography of Change in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); George E. Plumb, *Chicago: Its Natural Advantages as an Industrial and Commercial Center and Market* (Chicago: Civic and Industrial Committee of the Chicago Association of Commerce, 1910).

while calls for Irish sporadically shifted between requests for and rejections of their help based on the context of the time period.

For immigrant women, job advertisements followed a similar pattern, requesting the help of Western and Northern European women in “female work” such as factory and piece work and education. Yet, in calls for the most common form of female labor during this era – domestic service – advertisers overwhelmingly requested the help of a very specific type of worker. Advertisements specified the need for potential employees to have qualities which included competence, accuracy, attentiveness, and sobriety, in addition to good references, but time and time again, advertisements repeatedly published similar calls: “Swedish...or Norwegian girl for general housework,” “a young Danish girl to assist in light housework,” and most regularly, “Scandinavian preferred.”² One article noted a similar call to employment agencies by potential employers looking to fill their homes with the best type of workers; in “Ruled by Fashion,” when the author asked one employment agency what their most frequent request, the manager replied that “send me a good strong Swedish or Norwegian girl; no Irish, English, or Americans,” was a constant demand.³ The “situation wanted” sections of Chicago’s newspapers likewise noted the realization of young workers to the needs of potential employers, often describing themselves first by their national origin, and second, by the work they would – and would not – accept. Early on, potential employees would note their strength and willingness to learn. However, at the same time, young Scandinavians quickly became conscious of their preferential status within Chicago society, making presumptuous

² The above quotations are examples taken from a review of help wanted advertisements in the pages of various Chicago newspapers between 1880 and 1881 which included the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Chicago Daily News*. See “Wanted: Female Help, Domestic,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1880, pg. 14; “Wanted: Female Help, Domestic,” *Chicago Daily News*, April 7, 1881, pg. 18-9.

³ “Ruled by Fashion,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 21, 1898, pg. 16.

requests for small, “first-rate” families and “light housework.”⁴ Over time, Scandinavians would continue to flock to Chicago for opportunities they either could not find elsewhere, or would have to work much harder to find. Between the time of the earliest settlement of Scandinavians in Chicago in the 1850s and the culmination of a truly Scandinavian-American identity in the 1930s, Scandinavians in Chicago were part of an active process which elevated Nordic identity and physical image to one of preference amongst Chicagoans – a legacy that would come to shape our understandings of racial and ethnic identity for decades to follow.

The topic of this dissertation focuses on the vital connections between ethnic identity, gender and urban space within the history of the United States in an effort to locate the origins of social preference in connection with Nordic ethnic identity as exhibited by Chicago’s Scandinavians. My dissertation uses these connections to explore both public and private representations of Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish women and men who navigated Chicago and transformed undesirable city spaces into ethnic enclaves grounded in the traditions of Scandinavian culture. I argue that, beginning in the 1880s, American public commentators created a gendered discourse on a “preferred” immigrant class using idealized Nordic racial features as a template for their visions. Following these commentaries within newspapers, many native Chicagoans began to form very specific social conceptions of the “typical” Scandinavian – images focused on both the physical and behavioral ideals of Nordic identity that equated Scandinavian women with fair beauty and men with virile masculine traits. In turn, Chicago’s Scandinavians made use of such perceptions to meet their needs in the workplace and within public spaces, as many achieved great success and eventually moved up the social ladder, despite

⁴ “Situation Wanted,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1880, pg. 14.

maintaining strong ties to Scandinavian culture. At the height of nationwide panic over white slavery and vice, many Scandinavians “fell” into unfortunate circumstances similar to other immigrant groups. Yet, despite such massive public concern over the well being of Chicago’s newest citizens, Scandinavians were able to escape relatively unscathed from similar portrayals compared to other immigrant groups, despite the widely published reports of their connections to vice within Chicago’s newspapers. And while Scandinavians received some negative public attention in the early years of World War I for their brotherly ties to Germany, the group as a whole had the capacity to turn the tide and bring attention to their support of their new home instead of their old neighbors. Throughout this process, Scandinavians found a way to maintain their ties to the culture and traditions of home in spite of nativists’ calls for assimilation by embracing an American way of life in public spaces while they continued to live an undoubtedly Scandinavian way of life at home and in private. Throughout the 1920s and even into the 1930s, the strength of Scandinavian connections within the city helped the group to persevere, even in the toughest of times.

While previous historians assumed the easy assimilation and adjustment of Scandinavians across America between the 19th and 20th centuries, and noted the ways in which people of Nordic heritage had the intriguing ability to navigate an imagined social ladder far better than other immigrant groups, attention to the historical significance of social preference has remained below the surface within the historiography of Scandinavian Americans and migration. This vital omission is one that is a legacy of the study of immigration to America begun by Oscar Handlin almost sixty years ago in his integral work, *The Uprooted*. While his book brought attention to the notion of

immigration being the essence of the history of the United States, his negative portrayal of an all-encompassing experience for America's immigrants which involved alienation and separateness created a lasting depiction.⁵ Much later, revisionists like John Bodnar would build upon Handlin's vision to show that a majority of immigrants who came to America in the late 19th century were not backwards, provincial peasants, but instead left worlds "which were already encountering capitalism and experimenting with ways to deal with its realities."⁶ One vital legacy of early historians like both Handlin and John Higham was the renewed attention to the staggering effects of American nativism on immigrants in the 1880s through World War I. In his book, Higham made a lasting distinction between the concepts of racism and nativism; while the two were closely entwined, racism dealt more specifically with distinctions between civilization and barbarism, while nativism "always divided insiders, who belonged to the nation, from outsiders who were in it but not of it." Therefore, because of this vital distinction, nativism could espouse assimilation, while racism could not, according to Higham.⁷ These early perspectives would grow into the vast historiography on the experiences of European ethnics in America and would continually push the standard narrative to

⁵ According to Handlin, the origin of such alienation came from the vast difference between immigrants' home countries and the cultures they encountered upon arrival in the United States; to Handlin, America's immigrants were plunged into societies they did not understand, where stripped of their traditions, and fumbled through such feelings of separation before being hit with what he deemed the full "shock of alienation" by the Americanization drive of the 1920s. See Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown and Company, 1951), 231-54.

⁶ John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 56.

⁷ Higham's book reads as a piece of history itself, as it is grounded in the context of the time period that it was written in. In his article, "Instead of a Sequel, or How I Lost My Subject," Higham recalled his first book as a product of the McCarthy era, as the hysteria of the time period effectively colored his perspective on the national hysterias of the past. Higham would later go on to lament that while he saw himself today as the same historian he was when writing *Strangers in the Land*, his neglect of the connections between ethnocentrism and nativism was his biggest regret. See John Higham, "Instead of a Sequel, or How I Lost My Subject," *Reviews in American History*, v. 28, n. 2 (2000): 327, 330; Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 333.

include consideration of themes such as racial and ethnic identity, the study of whiteness, and the treatment of women and gender, but would also create a scholarly habit of focusing on the most destitute immigrant groups in order to uncover a discourse of triumph in the face of adversity for many.

By and large, one of the major goals of this dissertation is to combine some of the major themes addressed in standard narratives on the immigrant experience with the historiography of Scandinavians in America to focus more closely on the experiences of a group that was able not only to survive, but to prosper, in the face of adversity within a growing American metropolis. In creating this dissertation, I found a problematic ideological division between major or all-encompassing studies that tackle historical questions regarding migration, the immigrant experience, and ethnic and racial identities, taking into account all of the major European groups, and those which use a singular focus on the people of one European country separate from all others, especially hegemonic Americans. The historiography of Scandinavian Americans is far-reaching and can best be defined by a tradition of filiopietism, as historians of these groups often times maintain ties of heritage and therefore excessively venerate their ancestors or traditions of the homeland. From as early as the 1920s into the 1930s, American historians of Scandinavian ancestry, such as George M. Stephenson, Theodore Blegen, and Gustav Johnson made significant contributions to the narrative of Scandinavian Americans and the experiences of immigration, yet their exhaustive descriptions of their subjects are largely biographical and focused on genealogical research techniques without further interpretive analysis.⁸ Furthermore, during this earlier time period, historians had

⁸ For some examples of these older works, see George M. Stephenson, *A History of American Immigration, 1820-1924* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1926); Theodore Blegen, *Norwegian Immigration to America, in*

a tendency to only focus on one specific ethnic group, rather than to incorporate groups into a larger analysis of national heritage and connections across ethnic cultures.

Occasionally, authors would comment on the tumultuous relationship between Swedes and Norwegians, a deep-seated rivalry cultivated in their adjoined homeland states and transported to America; yet, the opportunity for further analysis of inter-cultural tension between Nordic groups would be left for another generation to examine.

It was not until the 1960s and 1970s, with the influence of the new social history that the study of immigration in history incorporated new methodological techniques and helped to situate the narrative of specific ethnic groups into a larger framework. One of the most notable responses that brought about an entirely new approach to the study of European immigrants in America was to Handlin's *The Uprooted*, for a number of differing, yet interrelated reasons. In connection with the general claim, that Handlin's narrative painted the experience of immigration as widely disruptive and painful for the European immigrant, historians like Rudolph Vecoli also noted the incredible generality of Handlin's subjects, as "the immigrant" was almost always treated as a gender-neutral actor with the specific role of women addressed in very few pages.⁹ Another problem that historians of this time period noted of Handlin's work was his failure to fully address the process of immigration from both sides of the Atlantic, reducing his analysis to an interpretation of experience that ignored half of the story. Scholars such as Ulf Beijbom

two volumes (Northfield, Minn.: The Norwegian American Historical Society, 1931); *The Swedish Element in America: A Comprehensive History of Swedish American Achievements from 1638 to present, in three volumes*, eds. Erik G. Westman and Gustav Johnson (Chicago: Swedish American Biographical Society, 1931).

⁹ While the most famous critique of Handlin's book is John Bodnar's *The Transplanted*, many historians such as Sydney Stahl Weinberg and Rudolph Vecoli have noted the importance of Handlin's book to the growth of the study of immigration in history because of the problematic nature of his narrative. See Sydney Stahl Weinberg, "Forum: The Treatment of Women in Immigration History: A Call for Change," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 11:4 (Summer 1992): 26; and Rudolph Vecoli, "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of *The Uprooted*," *Journal of American History*, 51 (December 1964): 404-417.

and Dag Blanck noted this omission and made it a point to contribute to the history of emigration from the homeland perspective, providing a perspective necessary to completing the story begun by earlier historians. During the late-1970s and 1980s, an outpouring of scholarship meant to expand the earlier framework established on Scandinavian Americans maintained this bi-coastal relationship between scholars. In Sweden, the so-called “Uppsala group” produced the largest number of studies that were representative of a new systematic interest in the homeland for the history of emigration, while in America, scholars associated with the Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly, such as its editor, H. Arnold Barton, helped to make Swedes among the best documented of all immigrant groups in America.¹⁰ For historians of Norwegian-Americans, the historiography differed slightly from that of Swedish-Americans as one author, Odd Lovoll, dominated the field publishing six books between 1975 and 2010 that continue to be the standard narrative on Norwegian-Americans as an ethnic group.¹¹ Danish-American historians are comparatively few and far between in relation to the study of Swedes and Norwegians in America; there is yet to be a narrative published on the experiences of Danish-Americans in Chicago and the majority of works on Danes are

¹⁰ *Swedish-American Life in Chicago: Cultural and Urban Aspects of an Immigrant People, 1850-1930*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1992), 3.

¹¹ Odd Lovoll is considered to be the foremost historian on the Norwegian-American experience, and while some recent works like April Schultz’s *Ethnicity on Parade* have begun to expand the relatively small historiography on Norwegian-Americans, the subject continues to be dominated by Lovoll’s work. See Odd Lovoll, *A Folk Epic: The Bygdelag in America* (Boston, 1975); Odd Lovoll and Kenneth O. Bjork, *The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1925-1975* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1975); Lovoll, *Norwegians on the Prairie: Ethnicity and the Development of the Country Town* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago before 1930* (Champaign, IL: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, distributed by the University of Illinois Press, 1988); Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Lovoll, *Norwegian Newspapers in America: Connecting Norway and the New Land* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010). A few recent works inspired by Lovoll include April Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American through Celebration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994) and *Interpreting the Promise of America: Essays in Honor of Odd Sverre Lovoll*, ed. Todd W. Nichol (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 2002).

located in larger edited volumes which address issues of Scandinavian heritage, rather than a singular focus on the Danish experience.¹²

From the 1980s onward, these and other scholars of Scandinavian American history started to shift away from statistical analysis to investigate the qualitative aspects of immigration history, focusing on larger questions regarding assimilation and acculturation, cultural persistence over generations, organizational and religious life, literary and artistic endeavors, and political involvement.¹³ In exploring these themes, historians began to open up the field to study the role of women within the Scandinavian community in America, focusing on rural and urban spaces almost exclusively in the Midwest. Influenced by scholars of immigration history, such as Maxine Seller and Kathleen Neils Conzen, historians of Scandinavian Americans put into use the frameworks that investigated the experiences of immigrant men and women separately from one another. Additionally, the narratives of scholars such as Hasia Diner, Susan Glenn, and Donna Gabaccia built upon this framework, focusing on the experiences of women within a single ethnic group in order to trace their unique journeys from their home countries to America.¹⁴ In recent years, the focus on rural migration within

¹² While a wealth of useful materials on Chicago's diverse immigrants contribute to the historiography of the social history of Chicago, there is a significant lack of monographs which focus on the experiences of either Norwegian or Danish immigrants. Historians of the Swedish immigrant experience continue to dominate the standard narrative on Scandinavian immigrants in Chicago, which most likely contributes to the problematic association of "Swedish" with "Scandinavian."

¹³ Anderson and Blanck, 4.

¹⁴ These scholars contributed to the narrative focused on the "culture of everyday life," as Donna Gabaccia stressed the importance of studying within her book, *From the Other Side*. See also Maxine Seller, "Beyond the Stereotype: A New Look at the Immigrant Woman, 1880-1924," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 3:1 (Spring 1975): 59-70; Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Susan Glenn, *Daughters of the Shiel: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) Weinberg, "Forum: The Treatment of Women in Immigration History: A Call for Change"; Donna Gabaccia, "Immigrant Women: Nowhere at Home?" *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 10:4 (Summer 1991): 61-85; Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S. 1820-1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

America has shed new light on the study of female migration in history; Joanne Meyerowitz and Joy Lintelman have both noted the significance of the single, independent wage-earning woman to the study of female migration patterns to American cities. In their narratives, the single wage-earning woman posed a special problem for Progressive reformers who created cultural images to support the need for protective measures in the best interest of their subjects of interest. As Joanne Meyerowitz argued, the cultural images of Progressives shifted over time within Chicago as once helpless souls became ruthless opportunists in their eyes; for Joy Lintelman's subjects, Swedes were always looked upon by the general public as inherently good, even as their young, single daughters traveled across the Midwest in search of employment opportunities within Victorian homes.¹⁵ These studies written in the 1980s and 1990s created a framework for the study of immigrant women that has been carried into the 2000s by scholars of Scandinavian America, however, this framework is in desperate need of revision. The story that has become somewhat of a template for the study of various ethnic groups in America - one that begins at home, traces the process of immigration, and reconstructs neighborhoods in America - needs to be reconstructed to include a more significant interrogation of the ideological meanings of these occurrences and interactions. And while some scholars have noted the ability of Scandinavians to

¹⁵ The works that most influenced the direction of my dissertation were studies authored by Joanne Meyerowitz, Joy Lintelman, Margareta Matovic, and the authors of *Peasant Maids – City Women*, who all in one way or another, focused on the experiences of immigrant women whose lives were shaped by their choices to migrate to Chicago for work or to follow family and friends. See Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Joy Lintelman, ““America is the woman’s promised land”: Swedish Immigrant Women and American Domestic Service,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Spring 1989): 9-23; Lintelman, “More Freedom, Better Pay: Single Swedish Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920,” PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1991; Lintelman, “Our Serving Sisters”: Swedish-American Domestic Servants and Their Ethnic Community,” *Social Science History*, v. 15, n. 3 (Fall 1991): 381-95; *Peasant Maids – City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America*, ed. Christiane Harzig et. al. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997); Lintelman, *I Go to America: Swedish American Women and the Life of Mina Anderson* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009).

acculturate into American society without hesitation while still holding on to the traditions of the homeland, I see that there was a more intricate cultural interplay between native-born Americans and Scandinavian immigrants that has not yet been fully interrogated. In revisiting these and other studies, I explore notions of Nordic racial and ethnic identity, the creation of cross-cultural stereotypes, gendered imagery and ideologies, representations of sexuality and crime, the experience of work, and the shifting dynamics of a dual identity that kept one foot in the traditions of home and the other in America. Looking at these themes, my work begins to explore the dynamics of social preference in application to Chicago's Scandinavians by taking apart the basis of a created set of public opinions and representations.

In an effort to expand upon this framework, as well as a shallow historiography on Scandinavians in American urban history, my work focuses largely on Scandinavian women and men who lived in Chicago between 1879 and the early 1930s. For the past century, historians viewed Chicago as the "capital" of Scandinavian America, as the city witnessed the largest representation of both Swedish- and Norwegian-born citizens in America during the latter stages of immigration and was second for a period of time to both Stockholm and Oslo in population of Swedes and Norwegians.¹⁶ During the peak stages of immigration between 1879 and the 1900s, over half a million Swedes arrived in America and by the turn of the century, Swedes represented 10 percent of Chicago's immigrant population, making them the third largest ethnic group in the city after the Germans and the Irish.¹⁷ At the same time, Norwegians comprised a much smaller

¹⁶ *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, 1.

¹⁷ One of the most useful discussions of the various "stages" of Swedish and Scandinavian immigration to America was noted by Sten Carlsson's article, "Why did they Leave?" In the article, Carlsson divided Swedish immigration into a series of five stages: stage one (1845 to 1854) or the "pioneer period" which

representation within Chicago, with only 22,011 inhabitants born in Norway, while Danes recorded even smaller numbers with 10,166.¹⁸ While Nordic immigrants came to Chicago from all of the Scandinavian nations, which would eventually grow to include Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Finland, my study will center on the social interactions and cultural ties of Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish immigrants. The total number of immigrants from these countries displayed the largest numbers of Scandinavian immigrants in Chicago. Furthermore, the censuses of 1900 and 1910 included Finnish-born immigrants in the population count of Russians, rather than as an independent nation or part of the larger Scandinavian kingdom. Lastly, between the ambiguous relationship of Iceland with the rest of the Scandinavian countries and the minimal population of Icelanders recorded as living in Chicago prior to 1930, I chose not to reference them within my study. In locating the origins of social preference of Scandinavians, I decided to periodize my study to focus on the time period between 1879 and 1933 for a number of ideological reasons. First, the immigration cycle which began around 1879 from Scandinavia to Chicago was one that was highly concentrated with

consisted mostly of farmers and artisans, as well as religious dissenters; stage two (1867 to 1873), the “famine years,” when desperate Swedes plagued by the same famine that devastated Northern Europe during these years; stage three (1879 to 1893), the peak years, when a large demographic of young, single Swedish men and women emigrated to the US from both rural and urban areas motivated by economic conditions; stage four (1900 to 1914) or “pre-WWI emigration,” when labor conflicts in Sweden led thousands of workers to emigrate, especially those blacklisted for radical labor activity; and stage five (1917 to 1930s) represented the last phase, when many emigrated to the US in the post-war era up until the Immigration Acts of 1924 and 1927 placed quotas on European immigration. Despite the fact that Sweden had one of the larger quotas in comparison to other countries, with 3,300 immigrants allowed each year, after the point of 1924, when rising prosperity in the homeland was a stark contrast to the looming Depression years of the United States. In fact, many Swedes had earned enough money up to this point within the United States that many were actually able to remigrate back to Sweden. For these statistics and discussions, see Sten Carlsson, “Why did they Leave,” in *Perspectives on Swedish Immigration* ed. Nils Hasselmo (Chicago: The Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1978): 25-6; H. Arnold Barton, *The Old Country and the New: Essays on Swedes and America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007).

¹⁸ E. W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, *Census Data for the City of Chicago, 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), Table 7: Distribution of foreign-born population by principle countries of birth, in order of rank in 1900, 20.

mostly young, single men and women who intended to come to the city first and foremost for work. Second, the years 1893 and 1933 were paramount in identity building for Nordics, as numerous social and cultural clubs chose to use the celebratory events of the World's Columbian Exposition and the Century of Progress to create both physical and ideological personas they wished Chicagoans to associate them with.

Within Chicago, interactions amongst Scandinavian immigrants was both common and natural, particularly for Swedes and Norwegians, who shared a similar cultural heritage and whose countries were physically connected, as well as connected by the Swedish-Norwegian union until its breakup in 1905. Odd Lovoll noted in several of his works the common Scandinavian cultural heritage shared by these two groups, as well as the rivalry between them within American cities, especially after the breakup of the Swedish-Norwegian union brought about a newfound sense of nationalism for Norwegians in America. Lovoll and Harald Runblom have found that on social levels, contacts between Scandinavians were much stronger than on an institutional level. Scandinavians in Chicago typically navigated within neighboring city spaces, preferring to live near each other in predominantly Scandinavian neighborhoods, such as "Swede Town," Lakeview, and later Andersonville. My research explores the social geography of these city spaces, as well as the ways that Scandinavian men and women navigated within their neighborhoods and throughout the city in an effort to get a sense of the meanings they attached to various locales within the city; Scandinavians established businesses on the basis of a shared cultural heritage and sense of comradery with their neighbors. These neighborhoods were the heart of the Scandinavian American urban experience and even today, are rich with cultural heritage and remnants of an older

generation exhibited in remaining traditions such as Midsommar celebrations, clubs, restaurants and grocery stores, as well as places of leisure. In reading the letters, memoirs and reflections of Chicago's Scandinavians, it is apparent that these people felt a personal bond to the city they chose to live in and had the capability to adjust easily to their new surroundings without intimidation.

In locating both American and Scandinavian perspectives within Chicago, my methodology incorporates the use of both English-language regional and national periodicals, as well as Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish-language periodicals; various manuscript series; material culture; Progressive era reports and exposes on vice; and quantitative data. In dividing this study, the following five chapters make use of both chronological and thematic organization when appropriate, and are divided into five periods of change for Scandinavians in Chicago. The focus of chapter one uses a transnational perspective on migration and emigration patterns of Scandinavians between the 1840s and 1870s during Chicago's booster years to form the basis Nordic identity through cultural, social, and religious similarities amongst Scandinavians. In doing so, the first chapter fills in historiographical gaps from the time between migration and upward social mobility within Chicago – an era which historians by and large ignored in considering the historical importance of community building within ethnic neighborhoods. Chapter two employs a gendered analysis of Nordic identity to investigate the creation of mostly positive stereotypes in association with Scandinavian immigrants in Chicago. Both images and commentary created by the American media and supported by Scandinavians focused on both the physical and behavioral ideals of Nordic identity, over time, creating the now commonplace stereotypical image of the

blonde-haired, blue-eyed Scandinavian as beautiful, supported by shifting American standards of beauty at the turn of the 20th century.

After building the physical and behavioral associations with Scandinavians, chapter three moves into a discussion of the experience of work, focusing more closely on the role of domestic service in the overall experience of immigrant life. Both American and Scandinavian authors came to repeatedly associate Nordic immigrants with catchwords like “honest,” “diligent,” and “hard-working,” and to a notable extent, Scandinavian women became well-aware of their value as workers, thereby creating a massive stream of immigration into the United States for work as domestic servants between the 1880s and into the 1910s. Both their work and their reputations within Chicago created great pride for the Scandinavian community, who supported the images both women and men fostered by way of their work identities during this time period and beyond. The topic of chapter four, however, investigates the darker side of Nordic identity – one that has largely been ignored within the historiography. Due to the massive influx of young, single migrants into the city during the early 1900s, the Progressive focus on vice in Chicago was intensified. With all the fervor surrounding the dangers of vice and white slavery in connection with Chicago’s immigrant groups, Progressives focused programs and social welfare on various groups deemed to be in great need. Yet, based on anti-vice literature, Progressive-minded individuals were not overly concerned with social problems emerging from the Scandinavian community; nevertheless, social problems were a reality, which the community brought into clear focus as it held its citizens fully responsible for their individual actions. While Scandinavians did express concern over further involvement of their citizens in clandestine activities through the

influence of settlement homes and other social organizations, the community held both men and women accountable for the activities they engaged in outside of such agencies.

In the concluding analysis of the Scandinavian experience in Chicago, chapter five focuses on the efforts of Scandinavian-Americans to continue to readjust their public image in the wake of a major campaign to become “100% American” during and after World War I. Prior to the war, many Scandinavians continued to ground their lives in the traditions of home, however, upon backlash against the community for their European ties, many began to drastically change their ways. Scandinavian-Americans consciously used an image, which emphasized an acceptance of American culture and ideals, during the post-war era to create a new dichotomy of social identity.¹⁹ In the postwar era, Scandinavian-Americans in Chicago exhibited a rare ability to maintain a positive public image and enjoy the benefits of social success, while privately maintaining a dedication to the traditions and ideals of home. After work and on the weekends, Chicago’s established Scandinavian-Americans flocked to social clubs grounded in the language, religion, and culture of home, most notably in the form of the Nordic Country Club established during the 1920s to celebrate the group’s success in America. This analysis of social preference and success concludes with the celebration of Scandinavian Day, encompassed in the city-wide Century of Progress fair, when Scandinavian-Americans, like all other citizens, found themselves in the midst of dire times. Yet, rather than using the event to remark on the extent of suffering within the community, Scandinavian-

¹⁹ Within my research, I found that World War I and the beginnings of the “100% American” campaign marked the crucial moment when Scandinavians began to view themselves more as “hyphenated Americans” rather than as Scandinavians. Therefore, I shift my language to instead make use of the term “Scandinavian-American” to describe those of Scandinavian heritage living in Chicago in the postwar period. See chapter five for further discussion.

Americans chose to celebrate their success through the cultural traditions maintained over the decades since settlement.

My work redirects the study of Scandinavian Americans away from the excessive filiopietism of past narratives to instead recognize the larger significance of American culture in defining racial and ethnic categories of European immigrants. By incorporating the American perspective into a larger Scandinavian-centric historiography, this project will make an important contribution to emerging research on similar topics that interrogate the interactions of immigrants and their neighbors in American cities.

Chapter One

From Scandinavia to “Swede Town”: Origins at Home and Migration to the Urban Midwest

In 1933, before a filled-to-capacity Scandinavian audience at Soldier Field, attorney and community leader Carl Hjalmar Lundquist delivered a powerful speech that marked the celebration of Scandinavian Day at the Century of Progress Fair in Chicago. In his speech, Lundquist extolled the virtues of Chicago’s Scandinavian-American community of the 1930s – merits which he felt connected directly to the community’s origins in the homelands of Sweden, Norway and Denmark:

“The early inhabitants of Scandinavia were in the main one people, speaking the same language, and having the same religion, and the same historical traditions...we are one people, of one and the same racial stock, and I believe, we Americans of Scandinavian stock and descent realize this much better than the peoples of the Scandinavian countries themselves, for the simple reason that we are removed four thousand miles from the homes of our ancestors, and our perspective is consequently better. We have also come in closer contact with many other peoples than our kinsmen in the North, who very seldom have the opportunity to meet anybody not of their own race. We, therefore, know ourselves better.”¹

The concept of racial superiority amongst those of “Scandinavian stock” that Lundquist addressed in his speech was not, by any means, a new ideology shared by Scandinavians or Americans of Chicago. Instead, Lundquist was repeating a similar discourse created as early as fifty years before his speech, when Scandinavian immigrants arrived in Chicago by the thousands from Denmark, Sweden, and Norway and began to

¹ “Scandinavian Day at the Century of Progress,” speech delivered by Carl Hjalmar Lundquist at the Century of Progress, 1933 at Scandinavian Day, Carl Hjalmar Lundquist Papers, 1899-1966, Manuscript Series #30, Box #3. F. M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University, Chicago, IL.

establish their own city spaces.² Between the 1840s and 1870s, when immigrants from northern and western Europe began to pour into the still-archaic city, the founders of the assorted ethnic enclaves would face severe hardships in developing their claimed city spaces, rife with crime and disease, into ones that more closely resembled home. It would take the severe devastation of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 to make that dream a reality, giving Scandinavians the unintended opportunity to move to the north side of the city and take ownership of a space they could call their own. The opportunity for a better way of life was made possible by an underlying racial preference for those of “Scandinavian stock” held by many Chicagoans and would help the Scandinavians of Chicago to achieve a comparably high level of success as an immigrant group within the city. This ideology, from its very origins, would come to link specific ideas and stereotypes of race, ethnicity, gender, and physicality to perceived images and behaviors deemed typical of “Scandinavian stock.”

The ties of Scandinavians to the city of Chicago are invaluable to its history as they were amongst the first groups of immigrants to answer the immense call for manpower and settlement in Chicago’s booster years. The historical study of early Scandinavians within the United States is a tradition that began as early as 1893 with the publication of the first scholarly study by Swedish historian O.N. Nelson in his *History of*

² As will be discussed later in this chapter in greater detail, the term “Scandinavian” was actually derived as a term used by Americans to refer to the people and cultural heritage of the countries of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark according to political ties. As discussed in the introduction, while the term later came to also encompass those from Finland and Iceland, this study will concentrate solely on immigrants from the first three countries. For further discussion on the historical distinctions made between these nation groups, see Harald Runblom, “Chicago Compared: Swedes and Other Ethnic Groups in American Cities,” in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago: Cultural and Urban Aspects of an Immigrant People, 1850-1930*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992): 78.

*the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States.*³ In the century following the publication of Nelson's critical work, a significant number of studies dedicated to the formation of Scandinavian communities across the Midwest told and retold the story of the valiant beginnings of these pioneers, and focused largely on their commitment to church and community building.⁴ Despite the outpouring of literature on the experiences of Scandinavians in America, the historiography on Chicago's early community and on the interactions of Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes in urban spaces remained relatively thin until the publication of Ulf Beijbom's foundational work, *Swedes in Chicago* in 1971.⁵ Over the past thirty years since the publication of Beijbom's book, the study of Chicago's earliest Scandinavians has grown however, there is an ambivalence that remains in contextualizing the origins of Nordic immigrants in their adopted homes, and placing that framework within the larger context of multiple migrations. Beijbom and other scholars who examined the first two immigrant enclaves Scandinavians shared with other nation groups in Chicago concentrated almost entirely

³ Nelson's study, first published in 1893-1897 and revised in 1904, is one that is invaluable as both a primary and secondary source; Nelson, in addition to retelling the story of Chicago's pioneer Scandinavians, incorporated useful demographic representations of the Scandinavian community of Chicago, and included much of his own commentary on community dialogue, Nordic identity, and the experiences of the World's Columbian Exposition. See O.N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, 1893-97; rev. ed., 1904).

⁴ Some of the earlier works on Scandinavians in the United States are largely biographical and/or bibliographical, employing an older framework focused on retelling the experiences of the Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish cultural elite of the East Coast and the Midwest, with the most well-known including *The Swedish Element in America; A Comprehensive History of Swedish-American Achievements from 1638 to the Present Day*, 3 vols., ed. By Erik G. Westman et. al (Chicago: Swedish-American Biographical Society, 1931); Enok Mortensen, *Danish-American Life and Letters* (Des Moines, 1945; reprint, 1979); O. Fritiof Ander, *The Cultural Heritage of the Swedish Immigrant: Selected References* (Rock Island, Ill., 1956; reprint, 1979); Carlton C. Qualey, *Norwegian Settlement in the United States* (Northfield, MN, 1938; reprint, 1970).

⁵ Ulf Beijbom is credited by many historians of Scandinavian immigration as the "father" of the history of Swedish Chicago. A demographic study focused on the social institutions and interactions of Swedes with other Chicago immigrants from 1846 to 1880, Beijbom's painstaking detail helped to recreate the story that had been repeated since Nelson's earliest work. See Ulf Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago: A Demographic and Social Study of the 1846-1880 Immigration* (Uppsala, Sweden and Chicago: The Historiska Institutionen at the University of Uppsala, Sweden and Chicago Historical Society, 1971).

on the perspective of Scandinavians. In taking this approach, these scholars failed to take notice of the short amount of time that lapsed between trans-Atlantic immigration into slum conditions and inner-city migration to the adopted Scandinavian community of Lake View – a neighborhood far removed from the dismal conditions of the city. Within the span of just thirty years, Scandinavians acclimated to foreign social structures, and maintained their own languages and set of religious and cultural practices. During this process, the community watched as “their” neighborhood was encroached upon by other groups, such as the Irish, Germans and Italians. Even though they shared space with other groups, Scandinavians maintained a dominant cultural presence through ethnocentric business ventures and, in turn, had the capability of taking ownership of their own city spaces. And in comparison to other immigrant groups who held strong convictions in maintaining their cultural and ethnic traditions, Chicagoans saw some groups’ practices as threatening to American standards or traditions, while they saw Scandinavian cultural practices as quaint, and sometimes humorous. Chicagoans appreciated the ways that Scandinavians were able to “blend into” society based on their fair physical features – a topic which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two, which connected American impressions and stereotypes of Scandinavians to the ways that Scandinavians went about identifying themselves in Chicago.

Scandinavians’ easy transition can also be attributed to shared political and social ties within Sweden, Norway, and Denmark from the earliest years of the 19th century to the beginning of mass immigration. Similarities in language and social practice helped Scandinavians forge a bond that formed the basis of a Nordic identity within the city spaces of Chicago – even upon arrival. This is not to say that the founders of the earliest

communities of Scandinavians did not suffer – it was because of their perseverance that the possibility for migration out of the slums was even available. It is vital to note that a very different “push factor” motivated the two waves of Scandinavian immigrants to come to America between 1840 and 1879 than their later counterparts. Beginning in the 1840s, a large group of mostly single Norwegian men, motivated by capitalism upon the building of the Illinois and Michigan Canal traveled to Chicago for work, while the 1850s and 1860s would bring largely Swedes and Danes eager to establish their own churches and escape the famine of 1867 and 1868 in their home countries. Due to these factors, the earlier groups of immigrants envisioned Chicago as a temporary stopping point on their journey to rural areas of the Midwest, while later generations of immigrants would conceive of Chicago as their primary destination in their quest to improve upon their situations.⁶ The differences in these ideologies were vast, and created the basis for settlement within Chicago’s first Scandinavian establishments.

More and more, Scandinavians would come together under the guise of helping each other acclimate to the conditions of a foreign society and culture, and in turn, negotiate a Scandinavian-American identity that did not require the loss of culture, social practice, or even language in private use or public community activities. The comparative ease in their transition into a new culture also contributed to the origins of a Nordic identity that these immigrants shared across country of origin and city space. Over time, Americans who shared these spaces with their Scandinavian neighbors would, in many ways, come to enjoy their presence, and would thereby view them in a positive light, making the transitions of future immigrants much easier to bear.

⁶ The origins of the first generations of immigrants to arrive in Chicago are discussed in greater detail in Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago*, 39-56.

Origins in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway – Demographics, Political, and Social Connections

Since the beginnings of the nineteenth century, American and European intellectuals and writers conceived of the countries that comprised Scandinavia as misty, sprawling, far-away lands touched by the frigid cold of arctic air – distinctively rural areas that signified a continuation of simpler ways. In many ways, their conceptions of Scandinavia were true. In 1801, over 90 percent of Norway’s inhabitants lived in rural communities, and even by 1865, when the population witnessed a significant growth, more than 80 percent hailed from agrarian communities.⁷ Similarly in Sweden and Denmark, the majority of the population lived in rural areas dependent on the returns of their agriculture to markets throughout Europe. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the population of Sweden was essentially rural; however in the latter portion of the nineteenth century the number of inhabitants migrating to larger towns increased. The following figures illustrated this phenomenon⁸:

⁷ Odd S. Lovoll, Odd S. Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago before 1930* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 4.

⁸ The *Swedish Catalogue*, commissioned for the World’s Columbian Exposition, made use of population registers similar to the U.S. Census in compounding their findings; while the Catalogue does not specify what was considered an “urban” space between 1840 and 1890, the comparison is nonetheless stark in showing the predominantly rural nature of Sweden’s population. See *World’s Columbian Exposition 1893, Swedish Catalogue, Exhibits and Statistics*, Commissioned by the Royal Swedish Commission for the World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893.

Table 1.1 Rural and Urban Populations of Sweden, 1840-1890

Year	Population of Sweden	Rural Population	Urban Population
1840	3,138,887	2,835,204	303,683
1850	3,482,541	3,131,015	351,526
1860	3,859,728	3,425,209	434,519
1870	4,168,525	3,628,876	539,649
1880	4,565,668	3,875,237	690,431
1890	4,802,751	3,890,086	912,665

(Source: *World's Columbian Exposition 1893, Swedish Catalogue, Exhibits and Statistics*, Commissioned by the Royal Swedish Commission for the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, 9-10)

Accordingly, the people who lived within those communities in small farming houses led seemingly simple lives with gender roles that mirrored Americans' domestic and industrial lives during the same era. Margareta Matovic's study of the Swedish province of Dalsland paints such an image of rural Swedes in the second half of the nineteenth century as people dependant on agriculture for sale, as well as for family consumption. This dependency on Swedish natural goods became increasingly challenging as families faced overpopulation across the countryside and growing industrialization within Sweden's cities. According to Matovic, rural Swedes lived in an environment greatly affected by the forces of nature, century-old traditions, and socioeconomic change that made the maintenance of time-honored family life increasingly difficult.⁹ When many would later arrive in their adopted homes in Chicago, the initial habit for the earliest immigrants, regardless of their surroundings, was to return to such simpler ways of life.

Within these farming communities, the greatest concerns of Scandinavian families centered on their crops and not as much on the political affairs of the kingdom. As

⁹ Margareta Matovic, "Maids in Motion: Swedish Women in Dalsland," in *Peasant Maids – City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America*, eds. Christiane Harzig et. al (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997): 99.

Matovic and others explained, when export prices were high, both large and small landowners of farms maintained good incomes, which could afford rural folk simple lives separated from the political affairs of larger towns.¹⁰ Yet, the changes that would come about during this time would forever transform national and transnational political and cultural practices for the next century and beyond. On May 17, 1814, a constitution was signed in Stockholm that would link the countries of Sweden and Norway together as one united kingdom. The constitution, which was modeled on the same principles as that of the American Constitution, signified a rebirth of the Kingdom of Norway following a long period of national decline and the dissolution of Norway's nearly 400-year union with Denmark. In November of that same year, the newly established national assembly, the Storting, surrendered Norway's claimed independence to the demands of the political realm and accepted a union with Sweden under the Swedish king. The union was, in part, established as a dual-monarchy system that stood in place to serve the best interests of the Scandinavian people – as historian Odd Lovoll explained the marriage of the two countries was a logical choice during this time period as “there were, of course, the obvious Nordic ethnic bonds and similar language and cultural traditions.”¹¹ Such shared ethnic bonds would be instrumental in America, when immigrants of the two countries would come together to form a united community of Scandinavians.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the united kingdom of Sweden was politically united with Norway and ruled by the same king. The Scandinavian kingdom was

¹⁰ Ibid, 100.

¹¹ Odd Lovoll's book, *A Century of Urban Life*, focused on the experiences of Norwegians in Chicago before 1930, remains the only study of its kind on Chicago's Norwegians, despite his call upon the book's 1988 publication for the increased study of Norwegians in American urban history. See Odd Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago before 1930* (Champaign, IL: Norwegian American Historical Association, 1988): 4.

immense in size and measured an area of more than 300,000 square miles; despite its size, the kingdom had a comparatively small population of approximately seven million people, with the country of Sweden alone claiming over four million of those inhabitants. In addition to its larger population, Swedish culture and language was dominant, as it was estimated that the Swedish language was the mother tongue of at least six million people throughout the shared Scandinavian kingdom. Swedes were and are traditionally known for their proud cultural practices and considerable ties to their home country, as well as their distinctively “Scandinavian” character. As the Royal Swedish Commission for the World’s Columbian Exposition would point out in their booklet for the fair in 1893, more than 99% of the population of Sweden consisted of “native” Swedes – otherwise, those being of purely Nordic background and heritage.¹² As they explained, “The Swedish people are supposed to have lived in the land they still inhabit for at least 4,000 years, during this entire period not having assimilated other nationalities, or at least to no extent worth mentioning, so that the Swedish nation – as well as the Norwegian and Danish – is of an origin far purer than any other at present existing outside of Scandinavia.”¹³ Yet, not all would share in the celebrated culture and national identity of Sweden. Many Norwegians lamented over a failed attempt to reclaim Norwegian nationalism in the political break with Denmark and many feared Swedish cultural encroachment was near. For some Norwegians and Danes, living in the cultural shadow of Sweden was far too difficult to bear. The cultural hegemony of Sweden would only grow stronger due to the

¹² The *Swedish Catalogue* commissioned by the Royal Swedish Commission was part national propaganda as much as it was informational; while Nelson’s figures from the same era corroborate the statistical information contained within the booklet, it is important to emphasize that this source speaks well as a window into the public perception of Swedish identity. A larger discourse on the composition and racial categories comprised in Nordic identity according to representations displayed at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 will be detailed in the following chapter.

¹³ *Ibid*, 9.

increasing influence of a massive migration of Swedes into Norway and Denmark, and subsequently to America.

Despite competitive difficulties between Scandinavians, those who hailed from the three Nordic countries shared incredibly strong cultural similarities and ties, especially those between Norwegians and Danes who shared a legacy of a centuries-long political union. Odd Lovoll found that all three nation groups encouraged a common Nordic identification in Scandinavia; as early as the 1840s, an intellectual movement was gaining strength throughout the Scandinavian countries that paralleled similar unification movements in Germany and Italy. Scandinavism (also referred to as Pan-Scandinavianism) and Nordism as national ideologies sought to unite the Scandinavian countries and people of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden through a shared political, cultural, and literary heritage. One of the most recognizable reflections of Scandinavianism at home was the focus of followers on a shared Nordic visualization of the Viking Age. In particular, Scandinavian men used such romanticized representations of the brutal seafarers to forge a masculine bond of national identity – bonds, which would be transferred to America in the form of hundreds of Scandinavian “Viking” fraternal clubs and organizations. Another example of the shared bond between Scandinavian men appears in stanzas of the Norwegian national anthem, “Ja, vi elsker dette landet” (“Yes, We Love This Country”). The lyrics, written in 1868 by Bjornstjerne Bjornsen, read as a history of Norway’s valiant beginnings at the hands of its first king, Harald Fairhair in 872 A.D., and in the sixth stanza, declared in the face of hardship, Norway, Sweden and Denmark are “three brothers [who] stand united, and shall stand

like that.”¹⁴ Ultimately, a leading group of Norwegians, who fostered a strong sense of nationalism, expressed their longing to exist as one country and people, separate from another Scandinavian country in political and cultural ties, thereby subsequently defeating the movement.¹⁵ Though these currents of inter-Scandinavian solidarity suffered defeat, they did help to maintain a tradition of cooperation and influenced attitudes about pan-Scandinavian endeavors at the popular level in Scandinavia, as well as amongst Nordic immigrants in America. As Scandinavians flooded into the cities of America prior to the turn of the century, fraternal groups would refer back to these earlier political and cultural ties from the homeland, using familiar symbols and representations of the Viking Age to create a sense of shared identity.

The Beginnings of Immigration from the Home Countries (1845–1879)

. The historiography of Scandinavian immigration to America has created a tradition of telling and retelling the “rural existence” to “urban destination” dichotomy, often falling short of recognizing the importance of issues such as short-distance migration and remigration.¹⁶ While it is true that a large portion of Scandinavian

¹⁴ The above lyrics appear in the sixth stanza of the Norwegian National Anthem, “Ja, Vi Elsker Dette Landet,” which was first adopted in 1864 as a melody written by Bjornson’s cousin, Rikard Nordraak and later connected with Bjornson’s lyrics in 1868.

¹⁵ Odd Lovoll, “A Scandinavian Melting Pot in Chicago,” in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, 61; T.K. Derry, *A History of Modern Norway, 1814-1972* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1-16.

¹⁶ Some of the major works of Ulf Beijbom, H. Arnold Barton, and Odd Lovoll perpetuated these images. However, the 1997 collection of essays, *Peasant Maids – City Women*, made a useful departure from this model by focusing predominantly on the rural/urban dichotomy as its premise, and relies on a “systems approach” to the study of immigration, thereby viewing it as a “complex process through which the contexts of the immigrants’ destinations and their places of origin are closely linked.” See Christiane Harzig, “Introduction: Women Move from the European Countryside to Urban America,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 4; Cf. James Jackson and Leslie Page Moch, “Migration and the Social History of Modern Europe,” *Historical Methods* 22 (1989): 27-36. Some examples of the older perspectives focused on the “push” of rural economies and “pull” of urban industries, see Ulf Beijbom, *The Swedes of Chicago* (1971);

immigrants originated from a rural existence, it is possible to lose a significant segment of the population and their experiences in this all-too-familiar tale of migration. Prior to 1860, many Europeans still considered emigration to America to be an unreasonable goal reserved only for the most desperate, or for those who were financially capable of making the long voyage. For most agrarian Europeans, seasonal migrations over short distances were much more common; as women left home for opportunities on farms and in urban areas as domestics and factory workers, men migrated for manual labor in construction work to establish modern infrastructures.¹⁷ Following this pattern, many Scandinavians who desired greater opportunities closer to home opted for short-term migration. Young men and women from the Dalsland province of Sweden traveled to neighboring Norway for opportunities as day laborers to local farmers in times of market stagnation. To these farm laborers, Norway came to symbolize a solution to their economic struggles, and in turn, the rural communities of places like Dalsland proved to be more flexible and mobile than was previously expected of a simple society.¹⁸ Despite the convenient opportunities for short-term migratory work, between 1845 and 1859 the Scandinavian countries lost a small portion of their inhabitants, about 32,765 artisans, farmers, and religious dissenters, to America for greater economic opportunities and greater social and religious

Odd Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life* (1988); H. Arnold Barton, *A Folk Divided: Homeland Swedes and Swedish Americans, 1840-1940* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1994).

¹⁷ Dirk Hoerder's focus on the development of the Atlantic Core and its migration system between 1815 and 1915 contributes to a larger contextual discussion on the general patterns of migration within Europe and across the Atlantic to America. See Dirk Hoerder, "Migration in the Atlantic Economies: Regional European Origins and Worldwide Expansion," in *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives*, eds. Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996): 36.

¹⁸ In Matovic's study of Swedish women from the province of Dalsland, she alludes to the possibility that our historical conceptions of "simple farm folk" in 19th century Scandinavia need to be revisited, highlighting the simplicity of movement for Swedish women (and men) between Norway and Sweden. It is important to note that common language and social practices were additional factors in these comparatively effortless migratory patterns in relation to other Europeans with shared borders yet vastly different languages. See Matovic, "Maids in Motion," in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 136.

freedoms.¹⁹ In comparison to neighboring countries in Northern and Western Europe, the **numbers** of Scandinavians making the voyage to America were small – over the course of **just one** year in 1840, Ireland sent 39,430 of its population to America in search of better **employment** opportunities, while England and Germany also sent staggering numbers of **its inhabitants.**²⁰ In 1867 and again in 1877, when Northern and Western Europe was hit **by a wave** of crop failures and subsequent famine, the Scandinavian countries were **collectively** in the midst of social panic. For the mostly rural populations of Norway, **Sweden,** and Denmark, the loss of crops was completely devastating to many, as families **watched** their farms collapse and their families witness the harsh realities of starvation. **During** these years, emigration from the homeland became not only a possibility, but a **necessity** for many. Out of the various waves of Scandinavian immigration that would **span** the period of movement between the 19th and 20th centuries, the “famine wave” **between** 1867 and 1877 was quite possibly the most desperate in measure to go West in **search** of viable farmland or economic opportunity.

Between 1879 and 1893 during what were referred to as the peak years, the **character** of those who migrated shifted to include more people from industrial, urban **backgrounds,** as well as increasing numbers of young, single immigrants. Enticed by the **lure** of work including manufacturing and domestic service, these younger immigrants

¹⁹ According to the *Statistical Review of Immigration 1820-1910*, between 1845 and 1859 approximately 29,638 immigrants from Sweden and Norway and a much smaller number of Danish immigrants (3,127) left the homeland for America; the peak years for this first wave of immigration were in 1852 for Sweden and Norway and 1857 for Denmark. See *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Statistical Review of Immigration 1820-1910; Distribution of Immigrants 1850-1900* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911): table 9, pp. 22-27; Sten Carlsson, “Why did they Leave?” in Nils Hasselmo, ed., *Perspectives on Swedish Immigration* (Duluth, 1978): 25-6.

²⁰ Between 1834 and 1866-67, the numbers of those migrating from England, Germany, and Ireland were, for the most part, significantly higher than the whole of those immigrants from Scandinavia; it was not until 1866 and 1867 that the numbers of immigrants swelled for all Northern and Western European countries, when the famine hit Northern Europe and forced many to leave on their own accord or join relatives who left before them in the earlier waves. See *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, table 9, 20.

made up what would become by far the largest group of Scandinavians to arrive in the **United States**.²¹ In the earlier years of migration to Chicago, Norwegians represented the **largest** numbers of migrants, yet in a matter of a few years, Swedish immigrants grew **exponentially**, creating the largest group amongst the Scandinavian countries within **America**. In the year prior to the massive influx of Scandinavian immigrants to the **United States**, immigration statistics revealed far fewer newcomers; in 1878, only 5,490 **Swedes**, 2,105 Danes, and 4,759 Norwegians would migrate to the United States. **However**, as illustrated in the following table, immigration from Sweden and Denmark **would** double during the course of 1879, and immigration from all three countries would **substantially** grow to reach an all-time high between the years of 1879 and 1893²²:

²¹ A larger discussion of the opportunities for employment and experience of work for Scandinavian men and women will be addressed in greater detail within chapter three, which focuses on the experience of work in Chicago.

²² I compiled the following table using statistics from *Reports of the Immigration Commission*; in selecting the figures reported for the three countries, I chose to omit the total number of immigrants from each country for any given year and instead divided the numbers by sex to show the ratio of males to females who chose to migrate for employment. These numbers were then also calculated to determine the percentages of male to female immigrants for any given year. *Sex not reported in the immigration statistics between 1893 and 1895. See *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Statistical Review of Immigration 1820-1910*, table 9, pt. 2, 33-8.

Table 1.2: Immigration from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden to America, 1879-1893

Year	Denmark		Norway		Sweden	
	Males (%)	Females (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
1879	4,695 (64)	2,650 (36)	2,244 (65)	1,230 (35)	7,313 (66)	3,686 (34)
1880	4,466 (68)	2,110 (32)	13,165 (66)	6,730 (34)	26,862 (69)	12,324 (31)
1881	5,874 (64)	3,243 (36)	14,511 (64)	8,194 (36)	31,317 (63)	18,443 (37)
1882	7,517 (65)	4,101 (35)	17,929 (62)	11,172 (38)	41,335 (64)	23,272 (36)
1883	6,228 (60)	4,091 (40)	13,799 (59)	9,599 (41)	22,916 (60)	15,361 (40)
1884	5,509 (60)	3,693 (40)	9,986 (59)	6,988 (41)	15,459 (58)	11,093 (42)
1885	3,541 (60)	2,559 (40)	7,054 (57)	5,302 (43)	12,491 (56)	9,757 (44)
1886	3,875 (62)	2,350 (38)	7,890 (62)	4,869 (38)	17,019 (61)	10,732 (39)
1887	5,448 (64)	3,076 (36)	10,523 (65)	5,746 (35)	27,359 (64)	15,477 (36)
1888	5,649 (63)	3,313 (37)	11,888 (65)	6,376 (35)	34,762 (64)	19,936 (36)
1889	5,301 (61)	3,398 (39)	7,372 (56)	5,818 (44)	19,919 (56)	15,496 (44)
1890	5,713 (61)	3,653 (39)	6,601 (58)	4,769 (42)	16,532 (56)	13,100 (44)
1891	6,455 (61)	4,204 (39)	7,644 (61)	4,924 (39)	21,746 (59)	15,134 (41)
1892	6,230 (62)	3,895 (38)	8,910 (62)	5,415 (38)	24,684 (59)	17,161 (41)
1893*	7,720		15,515		35,710	

(Source: *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Statistical Review of Immigration 1820-1910*, table 9, pt. 2, 33-8.)

According to these statistics, all three Scandinavian countries sent vast numbers of their citizens to America between 1879 and 1893. However, the number of male immigrants always outnumbered that of females. As discussed in greater detail in chapter

three, the numbers of women who made the voyage to America for the purpose of work are nevertheless important to the overall study of Scandinavians and the experience of work, as Scandinavian women came to define the occupation of domestic service within Chicago by the turn of the century. During this era of peak immigration, in comparison to other European immigrants, Scandinavians were the fourth largest immigrant group behind German, English, and Irish immigrants, until migration patterns shifted around the turn of the century with the heavy influx of the “new” immigrant groups from Southern and Eastern Europe. From 1894 until the beginning of WWI in 1914, immigration for the Nordic countries dropped off considerably; between 1893 and 1894, Scandinavian immigration fell by almost half and remained much lower until 1914.²³ Immigration to America between 1893 and 1894 witnessed a sharp drop from all European countries due to a severe economic depression during that same year. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Scandinavian immigration witnessed a significant jump after 1879 and did not fall below 10,000 annual immigrants until World War I disrupted the international flow of immigrations into America.

During what Scandinavian historians refer to as the fourth stage of immigration, from the turn of the century until the beginning of World War I in 1914, nearly 290,000 people left Sweden alone, and authorities began to grow concerned about the adverse effects of the population depletion on the country’s labor supply.²⁴ During this period, increasing labor conflicts in the homeland led many workers and intellectuals to

²³ Between 1893 and 1894, immigration from Denmark fell from 7,720 to 5,003; from Norway 15,515 down to 9,111; and from Sweden 35,710 to only 18,286. See *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, table 9, pt. 2, 38.

²⁴ Sten Carlsson was the first to identify these various stages, and his study is frequently referenced in quantitative discussions of especially migration from Sweden, however his division of stages is applicable to the whole of Scandinavian immigration. See Sten Carlsson, “Why did they Leave?” in Nils Hasselmo, ed., *Perspectives on Swedish Immigration* (Duluth, 1978), 18, 25-6.

emigrate, especially those blacklisted for their labor activity. The final stage of immigration to the United States began again in the 1920s when over 100,000 people left and ended with the worldwide economic depression in the 1930s effectively ending the attractions of the labor market in the United States.²⁵ After this point, many Scandinavians began a process of re-migration back to their home countries, yet the majority of those who made this choice originated from a more recent group who has migrated to the United States during the 1920s.

For the length of the immigration period, commentators throughout Scandinavia grew concerned about the potential loss of culture and heritage amongst Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians on the world stage due to a relatively small population spread over an immense area. O.N. Nelson, an early historian of Scandinavian immigration to America discussed of his own perceptions on Scandinavian migration patterns from its origins in 1845 up to the turn of the century. Writing in 1901, he stated that the “barren and unproductive” countries of Scandinavia, coupled with slovenly governments, were the first to blame for the massive loss of its inhabitants, but the travelers from those countries were equally troubled. While many educated and industrious Scandinavians arrived in America during the earlier parts of the 19th century, “Scandinavian travelers, tourists, and those who had ruined their financial and social conditions in the old country” emigrated to America during the latter parts of the 19th century, only to meet “the sufferings and horrors” which awaited them, and as Nelson described, “the barbarity of the American

²⁵ In one of the most useful quantitative studies of the factors that caused Swedes to migrate during this time period, Sten Carlsson’s “Why did they Leave” identified overpopulation and a comparatively late industrialization of the Swedish economy as the major influences for mass immigration in the post-1880 period. See Carlsson, “Why did they Leave?”

nation.”²⁶ On the whole, religious persecution and military service did not compel many “Northmen” to leave their native lands, Nelson believed, and on the whole, Nelson described the religious laws of Scandinavian countries as “very liberal.”²⁷ First and foremost, Nelson concluded that Scandinavians emigrated in order to achieve “material betterment” and to pursue a “love for freedom and adventure.”²⁸

In more of a romanticized discussion of the reasons for emigration, Florence Edith Janson attributed the more adventurous, gendered notions to the later and younger group of emigrants who traveled to America seeking employment: “There was the son or daughter who was not understood by the parents. The daughter, who did not wish to marry the young man that the parents had chosen for her, sought escape through emigration...then there was the young man seeking adventure by a trip into an unknown land, or the young woman seeking romance by following a lover who emigrated a few years before.”²⁹ An immigrant herself, Janson remarked that the sex ratio of young Scandinavians started to balance out after 1870 as an effect of great opportunities for female employment: “the young and comely peasant girl had discovered that domestic service in America was both more profitable and pleasanter. She came in numbers to equal her brothers.”³⁰ Using table 1.2, it appears that Janson’s position was somewhat valid, especially during the 1880s; however the ratio of male to female Scandinavian immigrants was always slightly tipped in favor of males. Reading between the lines of first-hand accounts, it becomes increasingly clear that a shift occurred during the 1870s

²⁶ O.N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States* (Minneapolis: O.N. Nelson & Company, 1901): 42.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 43.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 45.

²⁹ Janson, 20.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 14.

and 1880s in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway as the youth of those countries came of age and realized the potential of greater opportunities in America's industrial city spaces.

Once prospective Scandinavian emigrants made the conscious decision to leave home, many factors played a part in their decisions as to where they would settle.

America, as a capitalist and democratic country, held the greatest pull for Scandinavians who envisioned easy employment and greatly improved wages upon arrival, in addition to the satisfactory living conditions their friends and relatives in America boasted about in letters home. Nevertheless, the desire to emigrate between the 1840s and 1890s was immense; the following table reflects the numbers of vast numbers of Swedes alone who left home for either the United States or other countries between 1851 and 1890

according to the *Swedish Catalogue*:

Table 1.3: Emigration from Sweden to the United States and Other Countries, 1851-1890

Period	United States	Other Countries	Total
1851-60	14,865	2,035	16,900
1861-70	88,731	33,716	122,447
1871-80	101,169	49,100	150,269
1881-90	324,285	52,116	376,401
Total Loss in Population	529,050	136,967	666,017

(Source: *World's Columbian Exposition 1893, Swedish Catalogue, Exhibits and Statistics*, 19-20)

These statistics reveal why the governments of the Northern states looked upon emigration as a substantial loss to their countries, despite the efforts of their former citizens to inject currency back into the economy through funds sent home to their

families who remained. Of the 137,000 citizens who went to countries other than the United States between 1851 and 1890, as many as 124,000 were recorded as simply moving to neighboring countries of Sweden – Norway, Denmark, Finland, Russia, and Germany. Census researchers found that of each 100 individuals who migrated to Norway, 47 later returned, while 55 of every hundred of those who left for Denmark and 75 of every hundred who settled in Germany also returned to Sweden. In the end, only 6% of Swedes who left for America in the early waves eventually returned home for good.³¹

When we compare the number of Swedish immigrants during these early waves to the total number of Scandinavian immigrants who left their homes for America alone, the substantial economic and cultural losses that Norway, Denmark, and Sweden witnessed between 1878 and the 1890s during the peak years of immigration becomes clear. Between 1881 and 1890, according to the United States Census, a total of 88,132 Danes, 11,370 Norwegians, and 29,632 Swedes emigrated to the United States, totaling 50,368 Scandinavians during the span of nine years alone (otherwise, 13% of the total immigrant population of America as a whole).³² Between 1891 and 1899, that number fell by about half as an additional 49,744 Danes, 85,689 Norwegians, and 212,028 Swedes emigrated, totaling 347,461 Scandinavians for those years (yet still comprised 10% of the total immigrant population of America).³³ As increasing numbers of Scandinavians left their countries of origin for other lands, those who remained either scrutinized their

³¹ Ibid.

³² Scandinavian immigration reached its peak in 1882 nearly 65,000 Swedes, 30,000 Norwegians, and 12,000 Danes arrived in America; after that point, emigration from all of the Northern countries showed a steady decline. See *Report of the Immigration Commission*, table 9, pt. 2, 33-8; Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians*, 254-55.

³³ Ibid.

thirty-seven children and experienced harsh behavior from the crew: "The treatment we had on board said vessel was anything but human. The [Swedish] captain and crew showed themselves as rough and mean towards us (especially Danish) as they could and the provisions did not by any means come up to the bargain."³⁴ Jorgenson and other emigrants like him would soon realize that the trip would seem to go on forever, in reality taking approximately two-and-a-half months from the ports of Christiana, Copenhagen, and Malmö to their final destinations throughout America.

As more and more Scandinavians made the difficult decisions to leave their home countries and try their luck in a foreign land, dissenting neighbors made their opinions clear as to their dissatisfaction with those who chose to leave. In one editorial published in the Stockholm paper *Dagens Nyheter* in 1882, the editor expressed such negative observations as he watched mostly working class youth flood into the ports of Gothenburg in preparation for their trips on the big ocean steamers which left the city every Friday for New York. He wrote that about 2,000 to 3,000 people arrived each week to the port town, dressed very nicely and acted in a becoming manner: "They have much to take care of in Gothenburg: rent a room, buy their tickets and also some dishes, mattress, trunk and other necessary things for their journey...at least three steamers leave in the same manner every Friday, carrying emigrants to American, week after week, month after month. Sweden has, through this emigration, lost 1/11 of her population during the last twenty years."³⁵ Despite the editor's disapproving tone in regards to those who chose to leave, he also expressed an understanding as to why some had no choice

³⁴ Part of an excerpt from a longer journal entitled, "Reminiscences and Journal of Hans Jorgenson: The Journey to America," 79-82, Manuscript Series 7330, LDS Church Historical Department Archives.

³⁵ "The Emigration from Sweden and the Cause of it," *Svenska Tribunen*, June 7, 1882, 5. (Reprint of article in *Dagens Nyheter*, translations mine)

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but to leave. As he conceded, “The Swedish working man emigrates because he cannot see how it is possible to live on a yearly income ranging between 400 and 700 Swedish kroner. There is no possibility of earning any extra income, when he must work twelve hours daily for this small amount...then comes the good news from friends in America, that they can make a good living on ten hours work and that a common worker is not prevented from obtaining the education necessary to participate in society life of the community.”³⁶ As the editor highlighted, there were many hundreds of reasons for Scandinavians to emigrate during this time period. This movement, coupled with the immense number of “free tickets” for their journey to America supplied to Scandinavians by their families and friends already there made the choice almost too good to resist.

In addition to the practice of sending “free tickets,” immigrants already in America had an incredible influence on their families and friends who remained in Scandinavia. One popular practice was the use of the press as a method of influence and as an early form of advertisement for the various shipping lines in Swedish and Norwegian ports such as Gothenburg and Christiania (Oslo). In an 1886 issue of *Svenska Tribunen*, a group of fifty Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish emigrants signed a statement of their experiences sailing from Gothenburg to New York on Christmas of 1885. The statement they signed had a distinctive air of propaganda as they discussed cleanliness of their ships, the delicious and traditional Scandinavian meals they were served “three times a day,” and the general convenience of their voyage:

³⁶ Ibid. For Scandinavians, like most European immigrants during the late-19th century, traditional chain migration was typical and practiced largely through the 1870s and 1880s. While the term “chain migration” is met with numerous interpretations (or may not always be used), most scholars of Scandinavian migration agree that family members, villagers, friends, and cultural centers in the sending and receiving areas were a major influence on how migrants chose their destinations, how they got there, where they settled, and what employment they took upon arrival. For further discussion of these concepts, see Odd Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life*, 5-26; Ulf Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago* 39-53.

“We, the undersigned Swedish, Norwegian and Danish emigrants, who now have made a happy journey from Gothenburg direct to New York on the big and splendid steamer “Katie of Svenska Linjen,” will herewith, before we make our landing, express our deep thankfulness to officers and stewards for all the courtesy they have shown us and their good treatment during our journey. Everything has been kept so nice and clean and the meals served three times a day, have been sufficient and good. We were served coffee, newly baked wheat bread and butter for breakfast. Dinner consisted of white cabbage soup, freshly boiled meat and potatoes, pudding or pea soup with pork and fruit soup, and we were served tea fresh break and butter with herring and potatoes...the convenience for third class passengers was far better than what other steamers present. Some of us have made the trip over the Atlantic on stylish steamships, but the steamer “Katie” was much more pleasant in every way than any other ship we have found in traveling to and from the United States.”³⁷

The conclusion of the signed statement also attests to the fact that, even in the late 1880s, many Scandinavian immigrants were already taking part in a practice that would become both popular and common in the years to come – the process of circular migration to and from Scandinavia.³⁸ Even during the first period of mass migration for Scandinavians, many were already financially capable of international travel to and from their homes in America and Scandinavia. The most palpable publicity about America came in the numerous letters from friends and relatives who had already made the voyage – a practice which began with the very first emigrants and continued all through the waves of mass emigration. Letters often contained prepaid tickets and money for the trip, and always exaggerated opportunities while neglecting to mention accompanying hardships. As one Swedish emigrant noted of the Swedish-American “who returned to brag about his well-being in his adopted country,” those who would typically visit Sweden would outwardly

³⁷ *Svenska Tribunen*, “Emigration Journey in 1885,” January 2, 1886, 6 (*translations mine*).

³⁸ The practice of circular migration is one that will be discussed in chapter five, which concludes with a larger investigation into the coping mechanisms of Scandinavians who re-migrated to escape the effects of the Great Depression in America, only to later return when the economic climate improved.

demonstrate their acquired wealth while failing to mention the difficulties they encountered in achieving success.³⁹

The power of publicity was not only adopted by Scandinavian friends and **families** in America but also by emigrant travel agencies and land companies that worked **from** an American perspective. As the United States expanded its territory westward, **land speculators** looked for the “right kind” of immigrant to tend to the land and transform it **into** rich farming communities. This discussion of the “best class” of immigrants arose **out of** early speculations by both American economists and expansionists alike who, as **O.N. Nelson** observed, considered the excellent record of the Scandinavians in regard to **crimes** and pauperism, the readiness with which they took to farming and to becoming **Americanized**, and the commendable educational and religious training they received in **the North.**⁴⁰ According to these observations, from very early on, expansionists **determined** Scandinavians were the “best” immigrants to settle and populate the Western **states.** As early as the 1860s, states such as Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Maine, the **Dakotas**, Kansas, and Nebraska were active competitors for Scandinavian emigration **while** some southern states like Texas, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia also **attempted** to attract northern emigrants. Land speculators from these various states would

³⁹ In a useful reflection on Scandinavian emigration from the 19th century to the 1930s, Florence Edith Janson looked back on the earlier and most recent periods of immigration to Chicago, incorporating both **history** and personal reflection on various important cultural events within the community, as well as her **own re-migration.** See Florence Edith Janson, *The Background of Swedish Immigration 1840-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931): 16.

⁴⁰ **Popular** reflections on migration, like Ole Rolvaag’s *Giants in the Earth* or Willa Cather’s *O Pioneers* often insinuated that Scandinavian tolerance for cold weather was one of the sole reasons migrants were **drawn** to the upper Midwest and upper-mountain-west. Yet, evidence such as Nelson’s ideological **discourse**, as well as many other observations on the various immigrant “classes” in the earlier waves of **immigration** to America point to the significance of race in these distinctions. These essential discussions **provide** the foundation of chapter two, which highlights Nordic ethnic identity as one that is intertwined **with this** ideal and built up by Americans and Scandinavians alike. See O.N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians*, 249; Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1913); Ole Rolvaag, *Giants in the Earth: A Saga of the Prairie* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927).

advertise in the rural press of Sweden, commonly using the tactic of easy transportation **and** travel for the potential emigrant. Tickets were available for purchase through **emigrant** companies to any place in the United States from the numerous agents scattered **over** the rural districts and in the large cities of Sweden.⁴¹ The most important **component** of this strategy was the companies' policy of reaching the potential emigrant **in** his home – otherwise, many rural Scandinavians might not have even known of the **vast** possibilities for emigration or the potential for advancement in America.

Along with the purchase of a fairly inexpensive ticket, the emigrants were met at **various** American ports by agents of the companies and the states, often escorted by the **guide** who spoke their native language, to their destination. At the height of competition **in** the 1880s, Scandinavian guides were even furnished for the transoceanic voyage, with **every** precaution taken to protect the traveler from runners and others who lived by **defrauding**. Such practices were typical of other immigrant groups as well who came to **America** specifically for the purpose of work during the 1880s through the turn of the **century**. As Nelson observed of the influx of letters, newspapers, and special information **published** by steamship and railway companies came home to the Northern regions, **emigration** “became a fashion,” assuming enormous proportions.⁴² By 1891 and 1892, **according** to Nelson, 50% of the Scandinavian emigrants arrived by prepaid passage **tickets** secured by their relatives, while \$6,500,000 in actual cash was sent from America **to** “the North” by “well-to-do immigrants” to their relatives.⁴³ The opportunities which **drove** migration, coupled with the symbolic importance of prepaid passage tickets forced

⁴¹ Nelson, 15.

⁴² Ibid, 44.

⁴³ In arriving upon this figure, Nelson consulted A.E. Johnson and Company, an emigration firm that kept **statistics** of various figures regarding Scandinavian emigration. See Nelson, 56.

those Scandinavians who ordinarily would not consider leaving their homes to seriously **contemplate** this option. Yet, the decision of where to migrate would prove to be one of **the** easiest decisions for a majority of potential migrants – the burgeoning city of Chicago **stood** as a symbol of opportunity and cultural persistence for those who looked to become **Chicagoans** themselves.

Chicago as more than a “Stopping Point” – The Choice of Chicago for Scandinavians

During the late 19th century, Chicago was coming into its own as an industrial **metropolis** on the rise and was exploding in both population and acreage. Between 1880 **and** 1890 alone, the city of Chicago witnessed a 118.6% increase in population, boosted **almost** entirely by the peak migration waves of several immigrant groups including **Swedes**, and to a lesser extent, Norwegians and Danes.⁴⁴ In one of the most astonishing **figures** on Scandinavian immigration to America, the editors of *Swedish-American Life in Chicago* found that, as a result of massive immigration, Chicago was one of the largest **Swedish** cities in the world at the turn of the century, second only to Stockholm. By **1900**, some 144,000 persons born in Sweden or in the United States to Swedish parents **lived** within the city, while between the entire time period of mass immigration (1850-**1930**) over 1.3 million Swedes immigrated to America during this time.⁴⁵ Even earlier, in **the** 1880s, the Swedish-born population in Chicago increased by roughly 233% to more **than** 43,000 and by 1890, when Swedish mass immigration to the city had spanned the

⁴⁴ Ernest Burgess, *Census Data for the City of Chicago, 1920*, Population growth for the city of Chicago, 1890-1930, 5.

⁴⁵ Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, “Introduction,” in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, pg. 1; Anita R. Olson, “Swedish Chicago: The Extension and Transformation of an Urban Immigrant Community, 1880-1920,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1990: 2.

time period of thirty years, the Swedes of Chicago represented 10% of the city's **i**migrant population, making Swedes the third largest ethnic group behind the Germans **a**nd the Irish.⁴⁶ As Anita Olson explained, by the 1880s and 1890s, the presence of **S**wedish immigrants had become quite common in the city of Chicago as they had now **b**een coming in waves for nearly forty years. Yet, while earlier groups of immigrants had **o**nly encountered Chicago as part of a stop on their way to the rich farmlands of the **M**idwest, an increasing number were stopping to realize the opportunities that Chicago **h**ad to offer and made the city their home.⁴⁷

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Midwest was historically a primary **d**estination for immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, especially the vast **f**arming opportunities that drew earlier groups from Scandinavia into a similar way of **l**ife. In examining the number of Scandinavians born in the homeland, coupled with the **t**otal population of each state and territory in the United States in 1880, Illinois and **M**innesota had the largest population of Swedes; Minnesota the largest number of **N**orwegians, and Wisconsin the largest Danish population. Most notably, the combined **f**oreign-born Scandinavian population of all three states reflected the largest numbers of **S**candinavians in the United States.⁴⁸ Into the 1890s, the numbers of Scandinavians in the **t**hree Midwestern states continued to grow as migrants were drawn to the places where **t**heir friends and families settled, helping to further boost the immigrant population of **M**idwest cities like Chicago and Minneapolis. The draw of immigrants to their loved ones

⁴⁶ Anderson and Blanck, "Introduction," Anita Olson, "The Community Created: Chicago Swedes 1880-1920," in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, 49.

⁴⁷ See Olson, "Swedish Chicago" and Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago*.

⁴⁸ According to the U.S. Census of 1880, 6,029 Danes, 16,970 Norwegians, and 42,415 Swedes resided in the state of Illinois and 6,071 Danes, 62,521 Norwegians, and 39,176 Swedes lived in Minnesota in 1880 (with the combined population of Scandinavians numbering 65,414 in Illinois and 107,768 in Minnesota).

was vital to their choice of settlement and often took them to city spaces they would not normally be accustomed to. Many of these immigrants conceived of the initial spaces **they** settled as temporary “squatting” enclaves, and avoided significant emotional or **social** attachment to the places they lived.

Historian Ulf Beijbom’s comprehensive work, *Swedes in Chicago*, even after **thirty** years, remains the definitive textbook on the first two waves of immigration to **Chicago**, and continues to provide the basis of the early experiences of Swedes in **Chicago**. From its very beginnings as a city, Chicago, Beijbom explained, was the **essence** of “the promised land” for Swedish emigrants eager to find a new place to call **home** in America. As early as 1838, Chicago became the home of its first Swedish **emigrant**, Olof Gottfrid Lange – a man who sought adventure in the West after short stays **in Boston** and New York. Lange’s experiences set the stage for the first mass wave of **immigrants** from Scandinavia; after a brief bout of defeat with the failure of his first **business**, Lange tried his hand at farming and assisted at a general store before settling **into** a job instructing Norwegians in English at Fort Dearborn.⁴⁹ Even in the earliest **stages** of immigration, many Scandinavian emigrants represented the “upper classes” of **emigrants** in America, in economic backing, but also in their ability to acclimate easily **into** society.

A few years later in the 1840s, a new section of Swedish society made their **pilgrimage** to Chicago upon the call of self-proclaimed prophet Erik Janson who **envisioned** a Swedish Lutheran colony in Bishop Hill, Illinois. These “Jansonites” **originated** almost entirely from an extreme form of religious awakenings across Norrland **(the northern-most portion of Sweden)**, and were predominantly rural people who sought

⁴⁹ Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago*, 9, 39.

an outlet for their staunch religious beliefs. Both Lange and the Jansonites were **representative** of the vast differences between groups in the earlier waves of immigration **from** Sweden. For the most part, between the 1840s and the 1870s, immigrants new to **Chicago** were either men from the poorest sections of Swedish society, or men and a few **women** from the middle- to upper-classes, and therefore able to easily blend into society. **During** this time period, Chicago witnessed a surge of boosterism, where the very rich to **the** very poor learned to co-exist under the prospect of city growth and learned to **acclimate** to class differences through separate living spaces.

In Sweden during this time period there was a remarkable surplus of women, **whereas** the groups who migrated to America were characterized by a heavy **preponderance** of men. Ulf Beijbom documented this shortage of women between 1850 **and** 1860 when the ratio was 84 women to every 100 men – a balance found to be typical **of** Chicago during its “pioneer” years as a young city.⁵⁰ The presence of a dominantly **male** immigrant class, coupled with the primitive surroundings of early Chicago helped to **position** the first Scandinavian neighborhoods as raucous and shoddy – far from the **simple**, orderly existence that Scandinavian culture afforded even in the most destitute of **times**. Such early neighborhoods represented a nostalgic reflection upon the spaces of **home**, but also a simplification on the part of emigrants who envisioned future upward **mobility** that would take them away from such temporary surroundings.

⁵⁰ **Ibid**, 119.

The Experience of Chicago – Mapping and Envisioning City Spaces

For many Scandinavians from agrarian backgrounds, the difficult experiences of **farm** labor, coupled with the desire to attain and own their own plot of land pushed many **to** reconsider their place within society upon arrival in the United States. In *Swedes of Chicago*, Beijbom broke down the settlement pattern of Swedes in Chicago into three **distinct** periods; the squatter period, the formation of three main enclaves, and the era of **the** suburb. However, his third settlement distinction should be reconsidered in light of **what** we now conceive of in relation to the expansion of Chicago’s city boundaries **between** 1880 and the turn of the century. During this time, the city was rapidly **expanding** in size, and the areas that were once considered “suburbs” were quickly **encompassed** within the city limits.

For the first period Beijbom identified, the establishment of the “squatter” **neighborhood** deemed “Swede town” was instrumental in getting many of these **immigrants** who traveled apart from friends and family acclimated while also introducing **them** to people of their own cultural background.⁵¹ This Swedish settlement was part of a **larger** region populated by tenements and makeshift shelters that dotted the pre-industrial **North Side** of the city, directly north of the mouth of the Chicago River – an area that was **mainly** viewed as an eyesore by native Chicagoans who shared their city with these early **immigrants** from the North. During what was considered the “squatter period,” roughly **between** the late 1840s to the 1860s, the neighborhood was defined by its slum conditions **and** lives marred by poverty and subsequent epidemics of cholera which resulted from a **combination** of shoddy living conditions, swampy surroundings in proximity to the

⁵¹ Beijbom, 49.

Chicago River, and overpopulation. One popular account of Chicago, published by **S**wedish author Fredrika Bremer, painted the city in September of 1850 as “one of the **m**ost miserable and ugly cities” that she had yet to see in America. Bremer soon found, **h**owever, that she was somehow able to overlook the vile conditions of the swampy city **b**ecause of the kind welcome she received from the city’s Scandinavians: “Nevertheless, **I** have, here in Chicago, become acquainted with some of the most agreeable and **d**elightful people that I have ever met with anywhere; good people, handsome and **i**ntellectual; people to live with, people to talk with, people to like and to grow fond of.”⁵² **B**remer’s description of a run-down neighborhood conversely populated with a helpful **c**ommunity created a fitting dichotomy in describing the earliest conditions of the **S**candinavian neighborhoods.

At the northern mouth of the Chicago River, several ethnic groups lived in close **p**roximity to each other within diverse temporary communities. According to the 1850 **c**ensus, the “North side” was occupied by a little over 8,000 people with one-fourth born **i**n Germany, one-fourth from Ireland, a much smaller group (around 400) from Norway, **w**ith the majority from Sweden.⁵³ In a Chicago School sociological study, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, author Harvey Warren Zorbaugh described the Near North Side of **t**he 1850s as an area of the city rife with contradictions, one of both “high light and **s**hadow of vivid contrasts – contrasts not only between the old and the new, between the **n**ative and the foreign, but between wealth and poverty, vice and respectability, the

⁵² Fredrika Bremer’s accounts of Chicago are part of her larger published travel diary, *The Homes of the New World*, published in 1853 in Stockholm and later in London and New York. Within the published volume, Bremer recounts her travels through the United States, as well as throughout Europe; the volume became very popular during the 1850s amongst those eager to read about the expanding cities of the United States. See Fredrika Bremer, *The Homes of the New World* (Stockholm; 1853): 605-6.

⁵³ *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*. Washington, D.C., 1853.

conventional and the bohemian, luxury and toil.”⁵⁴ Despite such difficult conditions, immigrants of all nationalities stayed within this area not only out of necessity, but also because of its close proximity to various sawmills, tanneries, flour mills, breweries, and the McCormick Reaper Works. Most importantly, however, this area was marked by its preservation of cultural and ethnic heritage – each group denoted its “boundaries” by language, small businesses, and community, all within an uncomfortable proximity to one another. For instance, Swedish settlers were drawn to the area between Erie and Kinzie Streets, with Market Street (now North Orleans) and St. Ansgarius Church at the center of the district (see fig. 1). The Irish occupied an area adjacent to the Swedish settlement on the river (and by many accounts, moved into dwellings without permission from Swedes) referred to as Kilgubbin, while a disreputable area known as “the Sands” where Norwegians settled connected the Swedish-Irish settlement in the 7th and 8th wards. The Sands had gained a notorious reputation throughout the 1850s as a morally and geographically marginal neighborhood on the outskirts of the city limits. The neighborhood contained within the Sands was one in which a “civilized” Chicagoan would not been seen, but was perceived by the immigrant classes as predominantly a working class area rich with cultural expressions and institutions.⁵⁵ Yet, much to the dismay of native Chicagoans, these “institutions” were mostly saloons and gambling houses, rampant with prostitutes and thieves.

⁵⁴ Zorbaugh was astonished by the extent to which people of vastly different ethnic backgrounds were able to co-exist within such close proximity to one another – a viewpoint which is now instrumental in our understanding of Chicago as a rapidly expanding industrial center in the Midwest during the 1850s through the 1880s. See Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1929): 4-6.

⁵⁵ For further discussion, see Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief*, 65-7; Lois Wille, *Forever Open, Clear, and Free: The Struggle for Chicago's Lakefront* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972, 1991).

By all accounts, these three groups were situated at the very bottom of Chicago society. As Zorbaugh noted, the very first Swedes and Norwegians were “exceedingly poor” and in 1855 alone cost the city \$6,000 in damages and jailing fees, while over one hundred of them were buried as paupers at public expense.⁵⁶ Another observer of the day described the primitive conditions of the small frame houses and log cabin shanties on the North Side had no choice but to call home: “The neighborhood was literally filled with these shanties, put up without respect for compass or street lines by poor immigrants who could afford no better shelter. In these rude huts, hundreds of Swedes lived and died during the terrible years of cholera scourge in the early fifties.”⁵⁷ The unforeseen positive circumstance of the cholera epidemic in Chicago was vital to the future of the Scandinavian community in Chicago. The resulting loss brought about by the epidemic forced Swedes, Norwegians, and other immigrant groups to demand better city conditions, in effect creating a movement for urban improvement and subsequent imagined ownership of their city spaces.

As a new town prior to the 1850s, no major epidemic illness had come to grip Chicago. It was not until May of 1849, when cholera was brought to the city by way of the river and canal route from New Orleans that the new Chicagoans came to the harsh realization of the urban epidemic. Scandinavian squatters on the Near North Side were the most affected by the cholera outbreak – not only were their homes situated on the banks of the river, but also their drinking water was supplied by tainted wells. Cholera, one of the most rapidly advancing of fatal epidemic diseases, was a direct effect of a city

⁵⁶ Zorbaugh, 30. A note on geography - by current maps, the area once occupied by Swedes, Norwegians, Germans, Danes, and the Irish is today an area right off the loop, with the Merchandise Mart at the center of the area. For a map of the area during the 1880s, see figure 1.

⁵⁷ *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, vol. 1, eds. E.W. Olson, A. Schön, and M.J. Engberg (Chicago, 1908): 310.

water and sewage system not equipped for the new population. Norwegians were the first to be hit by the cholera epidemic and Swedes would follow shortly thereafter. At the time, one doctor addressed his surprise at the “class” of immigrants affected by the epidemic; when he published his findings in 1850, he identified 44 deaths among the 332 Norwegians on the North Side, going on to describe the Norwegians residing there as “people in moderate circumstances, who lived as comfortably as the average Americans.”⁵⁸ Just as Evans pointed out, the epidemic was one that would affect all classes of Chicagoans, but would touch those in closest proximity to the river the greatest; by 1851, one out of every 36 people in Chicago died of cholera, but amongst Norwegians, the number peaked at one out of seven.⁵⁹ The disease raged every year following 1849 in the summer and fall, when river conditions were at their worst and the subsequent streams of immigrants only tempered the spread of the epidemic. Many Norwegians, for fear of losing their families or their own lives to the epidemic, made the dangerous attempt to escape the conditions of the city, only to be placed in close proximity on the trip to others who had contracted cholera. Therefore, while many feared the outbreak and attempted to leave the city, others were afraid to move on from Chicago for fear that they would not survive their trips. The early struggles that Norwegians, Swedes, and their neighbors endured during the cholera outbreak of 1849-1854 instilled within the community a longing for better conditions, as well as a desire to improve upon the conditions they were faced with in Chicago.

Despite their meager beginnings, Norwegians and Swedes alike were quickly able to pull themselves out of their dire situations and improve their situations at an

⁵⁸ A. T. Andreas, *History of Chicago. From the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, in 3 vol. (Chicago, 1884-86): 1:595.

⁵⁹ Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life*, 41.

astonishing rate as early as the mid-1850s. According to the following table, which illustrates a comparative analysis of the positions Swedes attained over the thirty years which spanned early immigration, Swedes and other Scandinavians were largely employed in working class positions which offered chances for upward mobility over time:

Table 1.4: Occupational Groups amongst Swedes in absolute figures, divided by sex, 1850-1880

Occupational Group	1850	1860		1870		1880	
	Men*	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Industry and Handicrafts	37	190	4	1934	276	4,484	774
Trade and Communications	12	83	0	400	62	1,298	61
Public Service/ Professional	1	11	1	56	5	136	21
Domestic Work	0	7	79	12	818	94	1,310
Total Number	50	291	84	2,402	1,155	6,012	2,174
Grand Total	—	375		3,557		8,186	

(Source: Table derived and adjusted from Beijbom, table 39, 166.)

According to these figures, Swedes by and large took employment within Chicago, regardless of sex, between the years 1850 and 1880, which would become a main indicator of improving status within the city. Another indication of improvements in both social and economic status was a series of police raids in the “squatter” areas of Swede town, Kilkubben, and the Sands in the early 1850s; as one observer noted, squatters in the area were driven out by “a police force of 81 men along with a work force, and several

hundred huts west of Franklin Street were town down in one day.”⁶⁰ While this area was torn down mainly due to its unsightly appearance and crime, some historians have speculated that Mayor John Wentworth blamed such “squatter” areas for the cholera epidemic, which was still largely associated with poverty and unclean conditions in areas close to the Chicago River.⁶¹ In his official decree, Mayor Wentworth however publicly stated that the area was to be demolished to make way for the construction of a larger industrial center. In reference to this event, Beijbom indicated that while it was not a unique occurrence for such squatter areas to be raided and torn down during this time, the eviction order for Swedes in particular was most likely carried out in a somewhat “nicer” manner than that of the Irish Kilkubben or “the Sands.” Those who could afford to moved out first, whereas the poorest (such as the Irish) remained there so long that they had to be evicted by police force.⁶² As the event is remembered in history, some Swedish commentators quietly reveled in the fact that their Norwegian neighbors had to be forcibly removed from their squatter neighborhoods, pointing to a notable competition building amongst the two immigrant groups.⁶³ Nevertheless, upon the demolition of the Near North squatter district, those who had owned property that was bought out by the city had the opportunity to invest in lower-priced lots just north of the original

⁶⁰ Anders Larsson, “Några minnen af en Svensk, som vistats 28 år i Amerika [Some memories of a Swede, who spent 28 years in America]” Series of articles in *Nya Verlden*, Dec.22, 1873-June 8, 1874. (*Translations mine*).

⁶¹ In Wille’s book, *Forever Open, Clear, and Free*, she describes the horrific conditions of the Chicago River and the areas known as the Sands, when the river was referred to as a “mass of putrid matter.” See Wille, 40.

⁶² Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, 30-1; Beijbom also makes reference to this event to point to an upswing in the industrialization of the Near North area, which offered additional opportunities for employment to immigrant men and increased transportation to their now former living spaces. See Beijbom, 63.

⁶³ It is telling to note the natural competition that remains even today amongst Norwegians and Swedes as illustrated within the historiography of both groups; when Swedish historian Ulf Beijbom recollected the event, he related the Norwegians of “the Sands” to the poor and ill-regarded Irish, whereas Norwegian historian Odd Lovoll remembered the event in hindsight much differently as one that signaled a positive upswing for the immigrant group. See Beijbom, 63; Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life*, 69.

neighborhood. This forced, yet beneficial, movement coupled with a boom in industrial opportunities, brought the “pioneer” Scandinavians into a great deal of opportunity in the years to come.

Out of this movement came a “new” Swede town, which was essentially the same group, transplanted three city blocks north to an area that bounded by Division, Clark, and Chicago Avenue (see fig. 2). Beijbom and others would note that by 1860, as Swedes were becoming more and more economically secure, they migrated to three newly developing ethnic enclaves such as Swede Town, and in smaller numbers to Chicago’s South and West Sides. As one Swede would later reminisce, this was at the time when “the lake came right up to the water tower at Chicago Avenue and Michigan...Chicago was an entirely different city...There were no 20 to 40 story skyscrapers; there were no Outer Drives, boulevards, radios or televisions. There were very few places for enjoyment of leisure and cultural pursuits.”⁶⁴ As Swedes and Norwegians continued to make these various city spaces their own, they remained insular in their activities, rarely venturing outside of their neighborhood in both physical and cultural terms.

As Carl Hjalmar Lundquist recounted, early Swedes were particularly stubborn in their efforts to “become” American: “Green immigrants” with the knowledge of only our own language, the Swedish, to an important part of the American people with its cosmopolitan cultural life and traditions, and the knowledge of the English language...In those early days we were often called “the damned Swedes” by those who were equally

⁶⁴ In a speech delivered to the Independent Order of Svithiod commemorating the 75th anniversary of the order (given Dec. 3, 1955) Carl Hjalmar Lundquist recounted some of the “dominant impressions” he had of the city in the 1880s and 1890s. Carl Hjalmar Lundquist Papers, 1899-1966, Manuscript Series #30, Box #3. F. M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University Archives, Chicago, IL.

ignorant, if not more so.”⁶⁵ Scandinavians, much like other nationalities in Chicago, created their own social worlds out of already established city boundaries. For instance, the Swedes lovingly called Chicago Avenue “Stora Bondegatan” or “Smålandsgatan” after Swedish places to reflect their imagined ownership of the area, while Norwegians similarly referred to North Avenue as “Karl Johan” and Danes referred to the same street as “Nörrebro.”⁶⁶ Despite a heavy cultural presence in their designated areas, Scandinavians still constituted a secondary position within “Swede town,” as the center of the German enclave shifted to the North Avenue area to share space with Swedes and Norwegians. In 1868 Germans occupied 20% of ward 15 as opposed to only 5% Swedes and 4% Norwegians of the 21,000 occupants.⁶⁷ Unexpectedly, two major events would change both the shape of the immigrant population of the city as well as the position of Scandinavians within society: the “second stage” of emigration sparked by the famines of 1867 and 1868 and the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

The wave of immigration from Scandinavia in the late 1860s is often referred to as the most desperate and most balanced to date in regards to the ratio of men to women. During this time, entire families of immigrants and their children came to America out of dire need rather than a desire to build upon their agrarian ways of life. Between 1860 and 1871, the population of “Swede town” quadrupled and shortly before the fire, for a brief amount of time Swedes appeared as one of the most important national groups on the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Odd Lovoll found that while Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes created their own enclaves, evidenced most visibly in residential patterns despite the dominance of one or the other group in specific areas, there was regularly a common Scandinavian bond during the 1860s. See Lovoll, “A Scandinavian Melting Pot in Chicago,” in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, 63.

⁶⁷ See *Report of the Board of Health 1867, 1868, and 1869 and a Sanitary History of Chicago 1833-1870*, Chicago (1871).

North Side.⁶⁸ It was also during this time that a number of Scandinavian fraternal groups were established to give assistance to new immigrants from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Many of the societies took a similar approach to the establishment of fraternal lodges such as Nora, Svea, and Dania, using symbols to cultivate Viking origins and a return to the splendor of the heroic Nordic middle ages. During the 1860s, these societies focused largely on an appeal to a common Scandinavian heritage – a notice in *Skandinaven* from October of 1869 invited the community to meet for the purpose of “discussing with one another how best to encourage joint action and harmony among the Nordic sister peoples in this place.”⁶⁹ Such actions to unify Scandinavians under one cause would prove to be essential in the aftermath of quite possibly one of the greatest tragedies to hit the immigrant districts, or the city.

In hindsight, the generally deplorable conditions of a city built mostly of wood coupled with an extraordinarily dry summer of 1871 proved to be a deadly combination for Chicago – one that would result in quite possibly the most defining moment in the city’s history. The fire, which is said to have sparked at the barn of an Irish couple, Patrick and Catherine O’Leary, broke out just west of the Chicago River in an area also shared by Scandinavians and Germans.⁷⁰ By several accounts, after the devastation of the

⁶⁸ *The Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. XIX: Report on the Social Statistics in the Cities.* Washington, D.C., 1887.

⁶⁹ A notice in *Skandinaven* in October 1869 reflected the need for Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes to unite in the midst of a second flood of immigrants into the city. Yet, as Odd Lovoll cautiously pointed out, Scandinavianism was, at times, too good to be true and resulted in more of what he deemed a “love-hate” relationship which was “doomed to fail.” Despite Lovoll’s position on the relationship between Norwegians and Swedes in particular, it was nevertheless a significant movement during 1860s on behalf of Scandinavian peoples to unite the three nation groups under one cause. See “A General Scandinavian Mass Meeting,” *Skandinaven*, October 6, 1869, 2; Lovoll, 91-2.

⁷⁰ As legend has it, the fire was ignited when Mrs. O’Leary’s cow kicked over a lantern she had failed to bring into her home after milking the cow. And while this story was most likely created by a journalist to point blame at the shoddy conditions of such immigrant communities where the O’Leary’s lived, it nevertheless became an important piece of Chicago lore, as well as a useful analysis of ethnic tensions and animosity aimed at the Irish in Chicago. For further discussion see Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the*

Great Chicago Fire that spanned over two days in early October 1871, Scandinavians were among hardest hit by the fire; according to one observer, of the 50,000 destitute by the fire, over 10,000 were Scandinavian.⁷¹ Furthermore, in an area of not more than forty acres, several bodies were later located amidst the smoldering debris, none of which were recognizable but were assumed to be either Scandinavians or Germans according to the location and missing loved ones that families reported.⁷² The significant damage within “Swede town” was mainly attributed to the location of the most intense portion of the fire, countered with the immense panic that ensued when those escaping the fire poured over the limited bridges which led away from the fire. In turn, the majority of those who had lived within the area lost their homes and much of their livelihood and cultural institutions as five Swedish newspapers and a number of Swedish and Norwegian churches were lost to the fire. Carl Smith described the Great Chicago Fire as “the defining instance of American urban disaster among many catastrophes of the time” – one that would ignite Chicagoans to direct blame at immigrants for the incident and would encourage others to move past the event.⁷³

In the wake of the fire, Chicagoans were faced with the harsh reality of a destroyed city, as well as a toppled sense of previous social hierarchies that had maintained civic order within the city. Therefore, as a whole, all residents of Chicago

Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1995): 19-20, 25; Karen Sawislak, *Smoldering City: Chicagoans and the Great Fire, 1871-1874* (University of Chicago Press, 1995): 44, 312 n.129; Maureen Flanagan, *Seeing with their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002): 13-30; Richard F. Bales, *The Great Chicago Fire and the Myth of Mrs. O’Leary’s Cow* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co. Publishers, 2005).

⁷¹ Ernst W. Olson and Martin J. Engberg, *History of the Swedes in Illinois, Part I* (Chicago: Engberg-Holmberg Publishing Company, 1908): 301-12; Newspaper article series on Swedish Week in Edgewater in *The Edgewater News*, Wednesday, September 4, 1935.

⁷² Edith Abbott, *The Tenements of Chicago, 1908-1935* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936): 23.

⁷³ Smith, 2.

struggled in certain ways to reestablish stable city structures post-fire and to reconstruct social relations. A resulting clamor for post-fire aid resonated just days after the fire, and as historians such as Karen Sawislak and Maureen Flanagan have asserted, the need for aid was strongest amongst the poorest classes whose shelters were destroyed and those who had nowhere to turn for outside help.⁷⁴ The majority of the fire relief groups of 1871 were comprised of middle- to upper-class men and women focused on assisting the needy to find suitable shelter and aid. Yet, as Carl Smith pointed out, in reality, societies like the Chicago Relief and Aid Society were more sympathetic and generous to the needs of Chicagoans who were not completely destitute prior to the fire, as well as those that could even be described as “better off,” including skilled artisans and professionals.⁷⁵ Under these stipulations for receiving aid, it would only seem appropriate that Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes who were known to hold skilled positions would have been the ones to receive the benefit of aid. Surprisingly, very few Scandinavians accepted or were recipients of aid in the years immediately following the fire (1871-1873), with only 3,624 Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes receiving aid out of an estimated 50,000 citywide.⁷⁶ While Scandinavians, especially Swedes, were historically known for their stubbornness, especially in regards to charity, the true reason for such a low number of aid recipients in all likelihood was a strong network of Scandinavian benevolent societies which catered

⁷⁴ Karen Sawislak, who Carl Smith referred to as the “leading social historian of the fire,” posited that all Chicagoans in some palpable way were touched by the effects of the Great Chicago Fire, and were therefore influenced in the aftermath by those effects. Maureen Flanagan added that those calls for aid were answered to a significant extent by women whose vision of post-fire Chicago “promoted a concept of urban life and good government rooted in social justice, social welfare, and responsiveness to the everyday needs of all the city’s residents.” According to Flanagan, it was the fire that would ultimately spark Progressive actions in a city that would become defined by the movement. See Sawislak, *Smoldering City*, 22-5; Flanagan, *Seeing with their Hearts*, 5.

⁷⁵ Smith, 75.

⁷⁶ The number listed was in reference to “Scandinavians,” which at the time, only referred to Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes. See *Report of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society of Disbursement of Contributions for the Sufferers by the Chicago Fire, 1874*, pg. 122; *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880*.

predominantly to their own. Even more telling of either Scandinavian stubbornness or success in the aftermath of the fire is their difference in approach to the proposed ban on new wooden construction than that taken by German immigrants. Germans, who lived side by side with Scandinavians on the North Side, were vocal in the aftermath of the fire about their opposition to fire-proof regulations, which required Chicagoans to rebuild their homes out of brick and concrete, which was far more expensive than wooden construction. And while Germans vocalized their concern over the ban as a threat to their dreams of home ownership, Scandinavians acted collectively to either rebuild their homes out of the required materials in the same neighborhood or simply to move outside the city limits to build homes out of what they could afford.⁷⁷ While these different reactions require further investigation, one point becomes clear: Scandinavians were beginning to garner the notice of their native Chicago neighbors as an immigrant group that was willing to comply with the regulations imposed upon them by the city, and therefore gained favorable recognition.

In the aftermath of the fire, it became increasingly clear to early Progressive reformers that the problems of a population explosion and overcrowding within Chicago's city limits were directly attributed to the lures of industry – an evil that was necessary, but one that would require certain immigrant groups to expand into other areas of the city for safety to be maintained. According to Richard Sennett, the response of a select group of middle-class Chicago citizens to the fire was to use the nuclear family and

⁷⁷ Karen Sawislak discusses in great detail the opposition of German immigrants to the city's ban on wooden residential structures, clearly pointing out the degree to which Germans vocalized their dismay over the ban. In stark comparison, both Odd Lovoll and Ulf Beijbom note the extent to which Swedes and Norwegians collaborated to help out the community. Their narratives offer no explanation however as to the difference in reactions between Scandinavians and Germans to the proposed ban. Instead, the authors describe the post-fire decision to stay in the neighborhood or venture up North as one decided upon by two major factors: proximity to the church and their capacities to rebuild. See Sawislak, *Smoldering City*; Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago*, 72-9; Odd Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life*, 105-138.

household as a refuge from the “unsettling forces of city life.” Sennett used a close analysis of the area known as Union Park to observe a family culture steeped in fear, which sacrificed sociability for privacy.⁷⁸ Instead of retreating into what was left of their communities in the aftermath of the fire like Sennett’s citizens, Swedes and Norwegians alike came together to contribute to the effort of rebuilding Chicago. For this action, Scandinavian men in particular would receive recognition from native Chicagoans for their symbolic importance in rebuilding the industrial metropolis of post-fire Chicago. As one newspaper recounted of their effort, the “men who had gone through the Chicago Fire in 1871 became the builders of the city, aided in great part by Swedish builders who in 1890 and 1891 erected the first skyscrapers in Chicago, the 13-story Monon Building and the 16-story Manhattan Building, both on South Dearborn Street.”⁷⁹ Despite the devastation of the fire, the catastrophe did not change the location of “Swede Town”; instead several “older” Scandinavians rebuilt their homes in higher-priced lots and started to build brick buildings to house their restaurants, clubs, and various businesses grounded in Scandinavian culture. Furthermore, several first-generation Scandinavians would later recall this neighborhood and time period in nostalgic terms as the last great Nordic settlement prior to the 1880s separation into three separate enclaves. “Those were the days when you could get Corned Beef and Cabbage free (as free lunch, with a 5 cent glass of beer),” Carl Hjalmar Lundquist reminisced, “and in those days there was a Swedish restaurant on Oak Street, where you could eat all you wanted for 15 cents, and

⁷⁸ Richard Sennett, *Families Against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago, 1872-1890* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 32-3.

⁷⁹ Newspaper article series on Swedish Week in Edgewater in *The Edgewater News*, Wednesday, September 4, 1935. The Monon Building was widely known by architects for its unusual decorative cornice and its lower three stories, which were clad in rusticated stone. The ornate building was demolished in 1947 to make way for the Congress Parkway.

every Thursday you could get as many plates of pea-soup and “plattar” or pancakes as your stomach could stand...we had no capitalists among our countrymen in those days.”⁸⁰ In his social analysis of the saloon in Chicago and Boston culture, Perry Duis found that such ethnocentric establishments like those Lundquist discussed in “Swede Town” were signs that the neighborhood had turned inward. As Duis explained, “the ties of language or customs were much stronger than the centripetal forces of ethnic intermixing and dispersal,” as members of the “old immigration” found the saloon and other public establishments to be a comfortable complement to their ethnicity.⁸¹ For these Scandinavians, life even after the devastation of the fire and famine in the homeland was made a little bit easier through the public cooperation of Nordic people in their adopted home city.

Within the insulated community of “Swede town,” the cyclical movement of new immigrants into the neighborhood and those who had come in previous waves represented a smooth transition to the point of the 1880s. Between 1871 and 1884, the population and size of the North Division (wards 16 through 18) increased significantly. In 1871, the population was 77,758 and made up an area of 2,533 acres, but by 1884, when the next statistics on the national composition of the population by wards were published, the population had increased to 128,490. While this movement was partially due to the German population, which had by this time greatly increased, there continued to be a fair proportion of Irish and Swedish immigrants. Both German and Scandinavian newcomers, who had begun to migrate to the city prior to the fire, would become a

⁸⁰ Speech delivered by Carl Hjalmar Lundquist to the Independent Order of Svithiod on December 3, 1955, Carl Hjalmar Lundquist Papers, 1899-1966, Manuscript Series #30, Box #4, Folder #26. F. M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University, Chicago, IL.

⁸¹ Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 146.

considerable factor in the life of the Near North Side.⁸² Aside from the occasional squabbles boosted by the natural competition between different groups, a dynamic built on family and cooperation was obvious within this community. In her memoirs, Pauline Nelson Hegborn reflected on her time in the neighborhood as one of the original first-generation Swedish-Americans raised in a Swedish-born family, giving a poignant illustration of a community dedicated to helping one another. Her parents emigrated to the United States separately; her father planned to attain work in Geneva, IL and her mother came over as a potential domestic servant in Danville, IL, but their paths crossed when they ultimately decided that there was far more opportunity for them in Chicago. Both parents had jovial and endearing personalities and their small brick home came to be known within the neighborhood between Ohio and Grand as a haven of entertainment for young families and single immigrants.⁸³ As Pauline recounted of her parents' Thursday and Sunday evening parties:

“The young ladies worked for the rich people as cooks or second work for little or nothing but young and happy not a care in the world. The young men came also to meet the happy young girls. On the large porch we had, the young folks would dance and sing and enjoy themselves. My father would play the violin and they dance the old folk dances. And alas it was time to go home and the men would escort the ladies to their different places. This went on every week.”⁸⁴

While Pauline's recollections of “young and happy” immigrants reflects a child's viewpoint in a new city, her descriptions of the interactions she saw within her own home serve as invaluable commentary on the context of the time. Additionally, Pauline

⁸² Zorbaugh, 25.

⁸³ The memoirs of Pauline Hegborn Nelson, entry dated January 13, 1882 (it appeared that she had transcribed some of her mother's earlier memoirs and later melded her mother's into her own entries), Manuscript Collection #39, Hegborn-Nelson Family Collection, 1870-1984, Box #2, North Park University Archives, Chicago, IL.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

was quick to explain that “Swede town” was a neighborhood not just comprised of Swedes, but also Irish, German, and Norwegian immigrants – all of whom coexisted within the same city space as a diverse blend of cultures. Yet, even through the eyes of child, it was clear that careful divisions were present, most likely through conversations her parents had in front of her, especially in regards to the Irish families who shared the neighborhood. As Pauline recalled, relations between Irish and Scandinavians were “congenial,” but she was quick to describe a “nice” Irish family by the name of O’Leary who lived in the middle of the block whose son was “not too good...the patrol wagon was sure to be there once a week.”⁸⁵ Similar to Lundquist’s later recollections, Nelson’s were also filled with nostalgia for the old neighborhood, as she described the assorted houses, grocery stores, delicatessens, milk depot, and a saloon, “where people rushed the can or pail for a pint of beer at 5 cents.”⁸⁶

Most significantly, Nelson reflected on a Swedish-American way of life in Chicago that was still very much rooted in homeland traditions, especially in her reminiscence of the very first Christmas she could remember: “Christmas was quite a celebration at our home as all the young folks gathered at our house and had their traditional Christmas with all the Swedish cooking. My mother used to buy a whole lamb, a whole pig, and a large ham, and a large turkey that was a Christmas gift from the butcher. Those days all the storekeepers gave a gift. We would have a big pot of rice and a lot of good homemade bread, also head cheese and beets.”⁸⁷ For an immigrant family of any origin in Chicago during the 1880s, the holiday feast that Nelson described would seem extravagant, even by today’s standards. Yet, Nelson was quick to point out that her

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

mother intended the feast for their extensive network of friends – their family away from home. The Hegborns also faced their fair share of struggles during this time, much like any other immigrant group, yet they held resources that would greatly assist in their tough time, most notably their own home. Nelson recalled that her family, as well as many people within the neighborhood took in boarders when times were tough, mostly single men who had come over in the later period of famine immigration.⁸⁸ This common tactic would become a symbol of success and ingenuity in the years to come as Scandinavians came to realize the ultimate goal of building a home and taking ownership of spaces they could call their own.

Prior to the turn of the century, new Scandinavian immigrants (with the exception of live-in domestics) initially gravitated towards “Swede town” as their first area of residence, eventually moving onward to the more desired enclave of Lakeview after earning money. Due to this cycle, the former center of Scandinavian life would eventually become known as the poorest section of Scandinavian Chicago, associated almost entirely with the newest immigrants. It was because of this gravitation that Ulf Beijbom concluded his study in the year 1880, when he argued that the Swedish community effectively assimilated into American society, and thereby eroded after the point of 1880 due to its movement away from the older “Swede town” into a tri-clustered system of ethnic enclaves on the West, South, and predominantly North Sides of Chicago. Since publication of his book, several document collections have since become

⁸⁸ Ibid. See also Margaret Garb’s narrative, *City of American Dreams*, which recounts similar tactics as a way for immigrant families to supplement their income to help pay the important cost of homeownership of future homes as well as the current ones they needed to pay off. Importantly, Garb uses this tactic to show the ways that Chicago’s neighborhoods over time became sharply divided from one another based on property values. See Margaret Garb, *City of American Dreams: A History of Home Ownership and Housing Reform in Chicago, 1871-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

available and revealed Scandinavian ethnic identification continued to flourish in Chicago from the 1880s well into the 1930s, even as Swedes and their Scandinavian counterparts moved away from their original enclaves.⁸⁹ In the 1880s and into the 1890s, Scandinavians began this cycle of migration into new “suburban” regions such as Lakeview, Englewood, and Hyde Park as they made more money and had greater opportunities presented to them. As Scandinavians abandoned their older enclaves for newer neighborhoods, the structure of what they considered a neighborhood became modernized to match the evolving city – soon areas that were once farmland became bustling residential and commercial centers. And when they moved, their community affiliations came with them – by the late 1880s, there were over one hundred fraternal lodges, benevolent societies, singing societies, theatres, and similar organizations spread throughout the three major enclaves, in addition to eight Swedish-language daily or weekly newspapers.⁹⁰ First and foremost, new settlers moved to these areas to build new homes and improve their living conditions from the grime of the downtown tenement regions, while effectively taking ownership of their city spaces.

One example of this movement came from Swedes who occupied Armour Square in the 1880s; for years they had complained about their health as they watched factories spring up in the area and pollute the air and water supply, along with the already disastrous stockyard district. Many of these Scandinavians had experienced the cholera

⁸⁹ Anita Olson challenged Beijbom’s argument in her dissertation, “Swedish Chicago,” taking aim at his theoretical framework that emphasized the territorial aspect of community that led him to project that assimilation and movement away from the original enclave went hand and hand, pointing to cultural erosion. Olson’s challenge, however, should be further investigated due to the fact that she ceases her own study with 1920, thereby omitting the complex argument over the immigration quotas of 1924, as well as the creation of a middle- to upper-class society of Scandinavians in Chicago from consideration, which this study does. See Anita Olson, “Swedish Chicago.”

⁹⁰ Zorbaugh, 30.

epidemic and the rise in typhoid fever deaths throughout the second half of the 19th century, which was linked to the pollution of the river. Aspects of Scandinavian culture, rooted in cleanliness and physical health, contributed to this desire for clean living in the early Chicago settlement. In 1887, civil engineers put a plan into place to reverse the flow of the Chicago River away from Lake Michigan, rather than directly into it, which was met by a warm reception by Scandinavians who pushed for such a plan for years. By the turn of the century when the river was reversed, many Scandinavians had already attained the means to move away from the stench of the River and downtown area.⁹¹ Nevertheless, their campaign would contribute to later connections between groups of native-born Chicagoans, who would come to praise Scandinavians for their healthy ways of life and attention to the physical structure of the city they shared.

By the 1880s, Scandinavians were once again on the move, with the majority (approximately three-quarters of the city's total population) aiming towards the Northern-most part of the city and building upon the smaller satellite enclaves on the West and South Sides. From this point forward, Lakeview Township, or the neighborhood which today is simply referred to as "Lakeview," would increasingly become linked to Scandinavian culture and people (see fig. 3). As one author would later note, Lakeview Township "had begun to share with the city as a whole a quite cosmopolitan character,"

⁹¹ The purposeful movement of Scandinavians away from the polluted areas banked by the Chicago River contributes to a much larger discourse on the Chicago River, health issues, and the problems of urban sprawl. Harold Platt's *Shock Cities* uses a comparative analysis of Chicago and Manchester to show the effects of unbridled urban development on similar terrain, climate, and water sources, putting the blame for pollution on the industries, not the people. Quite possibly the first historian to draw contemporary attention to the detail of public regard for the city and the environment in Chicago was Lois Wille, who in *Forever Open Clear and Free*, recounted the ultimate struggle to maintain Chicago's Lake Shore as a natural habitat for public enjoyment. See Harold Platt, *Shock Cities: The Environmental Transformation and Reform of Manchester and Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Lois Wille, *Forever Open Free and Clear*.

as businesses and social clubs of various kinds exploded within the area, catering not only to Scandinavian clientele, but transforming into a sophisticated leisure district within the city.⁹² In addition to various churches, Scandinavians founded a number of social and fraternal organizations during the 1880s, of which the most powerful was the Good Templar Society. Under the auspices of the society, lodges organized libraries and even a popular temperance café, the Café Idrott, in Lakeview. The Café opened on Belmont Avenue as a tool of outreach of the International Order of Good Templars – the Café, which did not offer alcohol, did offer companionship and, most importantly, a center for intellectual stimulation. The Café would eventually become the center for all intellectual and cultured Swedes within the city; word of the Café would reach the homeland through letters and soon, immigrants who came to Chicago would stay in nearby rooming houses and use the Café Idrott as their mailing address until they found permanent residences.⁹³ During the time of the peak waves of immigration, Swedes established eleven fraternal lodges in Lakeview and built more than 72 churches and over 130 secular clubs throughout the city. The variety of churches established – Augustana Lutheran, Mission Covenant, Free Church, and the Swedish branches of the Methodist and Baptist churches, among others, reflected the particular denominational interest of the Swedish people.⁹⁴ Secular societies tended to develop in neighborhoods after the establishment of the mainline Swedish churches at a point when the Swedish population was large enough to

⁹² In *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, Zorbaugh noted this era for Scandinavians as a significant turning point, mostly in regards to their position within the city, both physically and in American conception. By his account, by the 1880s, Scandinavians on the North Side of the city had found a way to cast off the “slum” conditions of the 1850s and 1860s through hard work, but also through their insistence upon claiming their own city spaces. See Zorbaugh, 25, 30.

⁹³ Kerstin B. Lane and Carl Isaacson, *Andersonville: A Swedish-America Landmark Neighborhood*, booklet published by the Swedish American Museum Center, 2003, pg. 15.

⁹⁴ Olson, 53.

sustain a variety of organizational interests. The result was the creation of diverse Swedish enclaves in widespread areas of Chicago.

Two forces worked to help the neighborhood to grow during the 1880s – the influx of the “third wave” of immigrants from the homeland, drawn almost exclusively by the possibilities Chicago’s burgeoning industries offered; and the draw of a specifically “Scandinavian” area of the city, where immigrants from the North were the dominant group instead of sharing their space with other groups as they had in the past. On the whole, Scandinavians continued to migrate within the city as a larger group; according to *The School Census of the City of Chicago*, in 1884 there were 407 Danes, 317 Norwegians, and 1,077 Swedes in Ward 16; 672 Danes, 953 Norwegians, and 10,742 Swedes in Ward 17; and 800 Danes, 242 Norwegians, and 1,237 Swedes in Ward 18.⁹⁵ Furthermore, once Scandinavians moved into the area, they built up their homes to match their needs and stayed put. As *The Chicago Land Use Survey* estimated, 43% of all homes in Lakeview that remained standing in 1940 when the survey was conducted were built between 1880 and 1894 – the same time period of mass movement into the Lakeview area by Scandinavians.⁹⁶ Lakeview would continue to grow significantly in population and development, resulting in further annexation in 1889 of “Andersonville,” a rural suburb of the city of Chicago, in preparation for the World’s Columbian Exposition. The annexed portion of Lakeview was part of a larger effort to “modernize” the city in the later part of the 1880s, combined with the expansion of transportation means on the North and South sides. The elevated train first opened in Chicago on the South Side in 1892 as a means of transport for people from all the areas of the city to the

⁹⁵ *School Census of the City of Chicago, 1884*; Zorbaugh, 25.

⁹⁶ *The Chicago Land Use Survey, 1940*.

World's Columbian Exposition, and would soon become vital for expanding the ways that working Chicagoans traveled to their places of employment, including Scandinavians who traveled to the very outskirts of town for their jobs in many cases.⁹⁷ For many, the opportunity presented by the elevated train to live in a much different place than one worked was immeasurable – especially for Scandinavians who hoped to build a separate community that catered to their cultural needs.

By the 1890s, the Scandinavian foreign-born population of Chicago had grown to almost 72,000 people (43,032 Swedes, 21,835 Norwegians, and 7,087 Danes) or 6% of Chicago's entire population, separated by distance, but connected through ethnic affiliations and ties to the homeland. For Chicago's Scandinavians, the city held a significance that was unlike the other growing cities of the Midwest, such as Minneapolis and St. Paul, where Scandinavians also gravitated to.⁹⁸ Chicago, for the earliest settlers, was considered to be a dirty and barren environment – not the kind of place where a family would want to lay down its roots instead of moving north or westward towards the fields and farms. Yet, over the years, as a growing number of Scandinavians made the pact to join together and build up their communities in the image of their homeland villages and towns, they had the capacity to build up Chicago in the ways they seemed most fit to their standards. Into the 1890s, the largest wave of Scandinavian immigrants

⁹⁷ *Land Use Survey*, "From Intramural to L" (1923), Document #9, Chicago History Museum pamphlet collection.

⁹⁸ It is significant to note that these numbers did not include those born in the United States, where one or both parents were born in the specified country. Furthermore, by the 1890s, Minneapolis and St. Paul claimed a significant number of Scandinavians (33,364 in Minneapolis and 16,753 in St. Paul), yet the two cities were still conceived of by many Scandinavians as lacking in industrial opportunities in comparison to Chicago. See Ernest Burgess, *Census Data for the City of Chicago, 1920*, Table 8: Number and Proportion of Foreign Born in Chicago, distributed according to country of birth, by decades, 1920-1870, pg. 21; O.N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians*, table viii, pg. 260; *Swedes in the Twin Cities: Immigrant Life and Minnesota's Urban Frontier*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001).

arrived in Chicago at the same time the city witnessed a level of excitement unprecedented in its short history. With the arrival of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, Scandinavians from all three communities would collectively decide that there was no better time but the present to display their achievements and traditions in the city and in the homeland, much to the delight of fairgoers. The subsequent displays, festivities, and general excitement of the Scandinavian community would in turn create a set of images and perceptions for the world to see, and in later years, would set the stage for a larger discourse on European immigrants at large.⁹⁹

While traveling from their countries of origin to Chicago, Scandinavians, over a very short period of time, were able to assert their independence as an immigrant group and move into city spaces they would eventually reflect upon with great pride. Within these communities and within the public sphere, a significant negotiation would take place between the 1880s and the early 20th century that would define who these curious "Nordics" were along lines of physical and behavior traits. As Carl Lundquist pointed out, the notion of "Scandinavian stock" and the meanings attached to such an identity were transferred from the Scandinavian countries and interjected into American public discourse of the late 19th and early 20th centuries through various means. These ideas, which were still in their infancy prior to the 1880s would transform into a much livelier discourse as immigration from Scandinavia increased, but also a "new" immigrant class made its mark on Chicago society. A larger discussion of the meanings behind the perceived outward appearance attached to "Nordic" identity, coupled with the idealized

⁹⁹ The displays and exhibitions shown at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, which begins with this crucial outward portrayal of Scandinavian culture as it was intended to be interpreted by Americans who visited the fair.

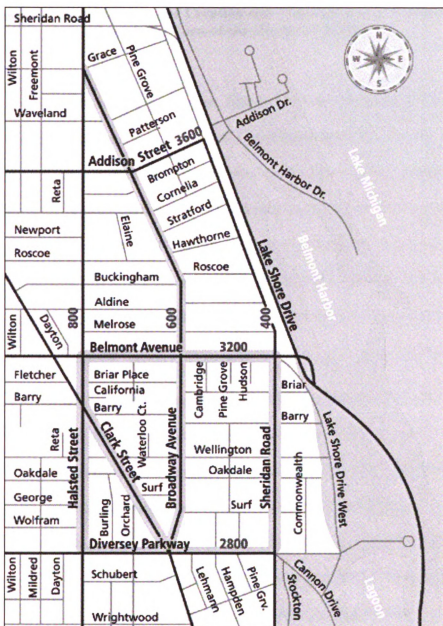
ways that “Nordics” navigated the public sphere would be negotiated by Americans and Scandinavians alike in the years to come.



(Fig. 1: Chicago City Map of the first Scandinavian Settlement, 1889. Courtesy of the Maps Library, Michigan State University Main Library)



(Fig. 2: Chicago City Map of "Swede Town," 1889. Courtesy of the Maps Library, Michigan State University Main Library)



(Fig. 3: Chicago City Map of Lakeview (Source: Lakeview East Chamber of Commerce Guide Map)

Chapter Two

Vikings and Dumb Blondes: The Creation and Negotiation of a Gendered Nordic Identity in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago

As a city built entirely by migrants, Chicago's diverse population was the point of great observatory discourse amongst its visitors and inhabitants from its very origins. In one early travel account of 1850s Chicago, writer John Lewis Peyton recorded his interactions with "passing parties" of European migrants who were "wild, rough, almost savage looking men from North Germany, Denmark, and Sweden – their faces covered with grizzly beards, and their teeth clenched upon a pipe stem." Coupled with these wild men, Peyton noted, were "stout, well-formed, able-bodied wives and healthy children."¹ Over the course of the 19th century, Chicago rose from its swampy foundation to become the epitome of a modern Midwest metropolis and with the changing city, the interpretations of the city's inhabitants shifted as well. Immigrants like those Peyton encountered who in earlier years appeared backwards and slovenly softened their outward physicality to American observers and became respectable citizens of the city. By 1893, just months before the growing city celebrated the World's Columbian Exposition, another commentator observed that the city was full of "strange faces" of a type he was not used to in the East: "a dish-faced, soft-eyed, light-haired people...Scandinavians; but they are malleable as lead, and quickly and easily follow and

¹ John Lewis Peyton's observations as recorded in his book, *Over the Alleghenies and across the Prairies. Personal Recollections of the Far West One and Twenty Years Ago* (1848) in *As Others See Chicago: Impressions of Visitors, 1673-1933*, ed. Bessie Louise Pierce (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933): 100-01.

adopt every Americanism.”² Ralph’s attention to the “malleable” nature of Scandinavians was expressed by many Chicagoans that came to prefer Scandinavians over other immigrant groups within the city. At this time, an assumption about the physical appearance of Scandinavians as blond-haired, blue-eyed was one that, while somewhat common amongst Scandinavian immigrants, became a public stereotype created by native Chicagoans to distinguish Scandinavians from other groups. By 1893, Chicagoans and Scandinavians were in the process of creating a set of ethnic, cultural, and gendered identities centered upon new national trends and ideals of beauty, efficiency, and integrity. This public discourse would come to associate people of Nordic descent with fair physical features – a gendered physicality that would come to be highly regarded as beautiful and strong.

In considering these observations, as well as the creation of an ethnic identity based largely on physicality, several historiographical questions arise: How did the prototype of the blonde-haired, blue-eyed individual become synonymous with Scandinavian descent, but also with beauty and attractiveness? Why today, when we are asked to consider a person of Nordic origin do we initially create a vision of a person with such fair physical features, as well as an additional set of virtues including a generally calm demeanor, a strong work ethic, and a gentle spirit? And probably most importantly, why was blonde considered the standard for beauty and why were fair features prized as beautiful over others? These questions are integral in distinguishing a discourse that has now become second-nature to many Americans over time. American media and social commentators at the peak of migration from the Northern and Western

² Julian Ralph, author and journalist, wrote a commentary on Chicago of 1893 which was reprinted in *As Others See Chicago*, 300-01.

European countries to America in the 1880s discussed ethnic attributes and, following these commentaries, many Chicagoans began to form very specific conceptions of the “typical” Scandinavian. These images focused on both the physical and behavioral ideals of Nordic identity, equating Scandinavian women with fair beauty and men with a virile, yet gentle brand of masculine traits. From that point forward, as Scandinavians flooded into cities like Chicago, despite their strong ethnic ties to native culture and their countries of origin, they were immediately viewed as more desirable than other groups based on their physicality. In a matter of a few years, the burgeoning urban elite of the city would come to view Scandinavians as trustworthy and poised, thereby placing advertisements in papers such as the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Daily News* which would note their preference for Swedish, Norwegian, or Danish women and men as workers in their palatial homes. Waves of new Scandinavian immigrants prompted an internal conversation and backlash in Scandinavian newspapers against their own, who community members viewed as frivolous and an embarrassment to the “true” nature of Nordic group identity. At the point when public discourse regarding a “true” Nordic identity reached its apex, the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 would play a vital role in the transmission of ideals that represented ethnic identity. Sweden’s and Norway’s pavilions at the Exposition represented their own as well-educated, poised, and culturally proud – even in the wake of nativist calls for acculturation into American society for all who wished to be “American.”³ These combined social practices would create a vital

³ A number of articles dedicated to Scandinavian representation at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 exist, including those by historians Odd Lovoll and Dag Blanck. Their articles, which focus primarily on the advent of urban Scandinavianism as expressed in the displayed heroic images of Leif Ericson and the Vikings, fail however to recognize the significance of such displays in regards to gendered identities. See Odd S. Lovoll, “Swedes, Norwegians, and the Columbian Exposition of 1893,” in *Swedes in America: New Perspectives*, ed. Ulf Beijbom (Växjö, Sweden: The Swedish Emigrant Institute Series, 1993): 185-194; Dag Blanck, “Swedish Americans and the 1893 Columbian Exposition,” in *Swedish-American Life in*

public discourse focused on representations of how Americans perceived Scandinavians. Over time, the prototype of “Nordic” physicality became increasingly gendered as it was further associated by Americans with a set of social and behavioral traits and adopted by Scandinavians as a method of “getting ahead” in their jobs and their private lives. Therefore, as this chapter argues, the concept of Nordic ethnic identity in Chicago was one that was negotiated by Americans and Scandinavians – Americans who viewed Scandinavians as blonde-haired, blue-eyed “preferred” immigrants, and Scandinavians who supported this beneficial identification of their ethnic group. The cultural identities this process would create were shaped at the turn of the century by the media through a growing consumer culture in Chicago that supported the image of blonde-haired, blue-eyed women and men as strikingly attractive. This was a dynamic process, equally grounded and undertaken by immigrants and citizens alike, where physicality and gendered notions of ethnicity were key components.

In the years following the publication of “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” authored by Kathleen Neils Conzen, David Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George Pozzetta, and Rudolph Vecoli, a scholarly discourse on the notion of ethnicity as a malleable concept gained strength and continues to be renegotiated. As a departure from anthropological debates, like that of the writings of Clifford Geertz, which pointed to ethnicity as primordial and inherent to the group’s survival and basic identity, or sociological ones that addressed the contemporary discourse on “symbolic ethnicity,” the authors of “The Invention of Ethnicity” instead supported ethnicity as a process of

Chicago: Cultural and Urban Aspects of an Immigrant People, 1850-1930, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992): 283-295.

cultural construction accomplished over time.⁴ The “invention of ethnicity” poses the possibility that ethnic identity incorporates outside factors, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities and memories, thereby, ethnicity is most importantly grounded in social experience.⁵ Aside from this scholarly discussion of the invention of ethnic identity, studies of ethnic groups from an urban perspective continue to focus on a set of cultural attributes and behaviors “typical” to said immigrant group, narrowing in on the perspective of the featured group. In defining a group’s collective ethnic identity, attention is paid to features such as language, religion, and cultural representations of homeland traditions including food, celebration, dress, and “typical” habits of a group.⁶ Yet, this perspective shifts when viewed from the viewpoint of Norwegian and Swedish scholars, especially in regards to methodology. Many Scandinavian authors tend to use tunnel-vision when writing about the dynamics of the collective group, incorporating little on the native-born American perspective and relying on immigrant newspapers and

⁴ The most comprehensive discussion of the invention of ethnicity from a historical perspective continues to be “The Invention of Ethnicity,” by Kathleen Conzen et al. See Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta and Rudolph J. Vecoli, “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” *The Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 3-41. See also Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973); Herbert J. Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and cultures in America,” in *On the Making of Americans: Essays in Honor of David Riesman*, ed. Herbert J. Gans et al. (Philadelphia, 1979): 193-220; Richard Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven, 1990).

⁵ Conzen et al., 4-5.

⁶ Many of these ethnic group studies originated from a surge of materials written by American authors in the 1980s and 1990s dedicated to the collective experiences and ethnic identities of a single immigrant group. Some examples of studies most pertinent to this discussion include Virginia Lans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Hasia Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican-American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicago Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1995); Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2004).

commentary.⁷ In doing so, these studies fail to include a vital component of the process of “inventing” and negotiating a unique Nordic identity in America.

Scholars of immigration and ethnicity often agree that celebratory displays of culture from the old country offer the most significant illustrations of outward ethnic identity in history. From the perspective of turn-of-the-century Chicago, the World’s Columbian Exposition offers quite possibly the most pervasive display of ethnic identity in recent American history. April Schultz explored a similar mode of ethnic celebration and argued in response to the creation of a collective Norwegian identity that “ethnicity is not inherent, but a constructed dialogue between immigrants and the dominant society.” She viewed ethnic identity as not something to be preserved or lost, but rather a process of identification marked by a particular moment to cope with historical realities.⁸

Schultz’s portrait of ethnic identity as a concept that is constantly renegotiated is useful in exploring the possibilities for further negotiation of ethnicity in history. Even though I would agree with Schultz and others on the concept of an invented ethnic identity, I would emphasize the importance of the perspective in distinguishing these concepts. For

⁷ The majority of the studies that rely on the Scandinavian perspective and fail to incorporate larger ethnic histories are written by scholars who originated from Scandinavian countries. However, even some American scholars like Joy Lintelman have taken similar approaches, incorporating very little on how Americans conceived of their Nordic neighbors. See Odd Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago before 1930* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1988); Joy Lintelman, “Our Serving Sisters”: Swedish-American Domestic Servants and Their Ethnic Community,” *Social Science History* 15:3 (Fall 1991): 381-95; Lintelman, *More Freedom, Better Pay: single Swedish Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1991; *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1992); *Swedes in America: New Perspectives*, ed. Ulf Beijbom (Växjö, Sweden: The Swedish Immigrant Institute Series, 1993). The most recent work to make a departure from this methodology is Margareta Matovic’s chapter in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life,” yet her focus is predominantly on the perspective of the immigrant women of her study. See Matovic, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life: Swedish-American Women in Lake View,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America*, eds. Christiane Harzig et al. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997): 261-297.

⁸ April Schultz, “The Pride of the Race Had Been Touched”: The 1925 Norse-American Immigration Centennial and Ethnic Identity,” *Journal of American History*, vol. 77, no. 4 (March 1991): 1267.

Scandinavians, the World's Columbian Exposition served as both a showcase of homeland products as well as a chance to display the "true" nature of Nordic culture as a collective ethnic identity. To Chicago's Scandinavians, this was a tangible persona linked to traditions of home, rather than a superficial set of physical and behavioral traits. In the subsequent years after the fair, American perceptions of this collective identity continued to focus more on the "typical" physical and behavioral traits. However, the "invented" ethnic identity that had once defined Scandinavians was now emphasized by a shift in American culture which placed gendered traits in a new perspective.

The turn of the twentieth century in America forced many to consider roles for men and women in new ways, largely due to the influx of an immigrant class that changed the ways Americans thought of women and men in work and in leisure. In recent years, the work of historians such as Donna Gabaccia, Joy Lintelman, Christiane Harzig, and Margareta Matovic has begun to open up a vital discourse on the experiences of female immigrants apart from that of men, yet as Joan Scott has argued, the ideological study of gender as a category of analysis in history is most essential. In an essential historiographical essay on the subject of the unique experiences of immigrant women in history, Donna Gabaccia's "Immigrant Women: Nowhere At Home" distinguished a gap in the collaborative efforts of historians of women and immigration and both Joy Lintelman and Margareta Matovic recently pointed out a significant omission of the experiences of single women.⁹ Yet, as this chapter illustrates, it is vital that we analyze

⁹ For recent discussions on the place of immigrant women in history see Donna Gabaccia, "Immigrant Women: Nowhere at Home?" *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 10:4 (Summer 1991): 61-85; Joy Lintelman, "More Freedom, Better Pay: Single Swedish Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1991; Joy Lintelman, "On My Own": Single, Swedish, and Female in Turn-of-the-century Chicago," in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago: Cultural and Urban Aspects of an Immigrant People, 1850-1930*, ed. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992): 89-99; Sydney Stahl Weinberg, "The Treatment of Women in

the gendered experiences of both men and women as an immigrant class; in Chicago and across America at the turn of the century, a unique process took place in which the physical identity of an immigrant group informed American conceptions of gender, rather than the hegemonic culture informing ethnic identity. By investigating the reasons for this phenomenon, this chapter seeks to open up further discussion on the gendered experiences of Scandinavians in Chicago who actively sought to “invent” a uniquely urban ethnic identity, only to be met with hegemonic American conceptions of the group.

Nordic Identity: Etymology and Ideological Origins of the term “Nordic”

Before looking at the history of the “creation” of a Nordic ethnic identity, it is vital to first explore the etymology and ideological origins of the actual term “Nordic” in both America and Scandinavia. The term *Nordic* is and was historically used as both a noun and an adjective – a derivation of the German term *nordisch* concerning, belong to, originating in, or characteristic of the north of Europe from as early as the 17th century.¹⁰ As an adjective, *Nordic* is also used in relation to Scandinavia, the Scandinavian people, or their languages. Yet, as noted in the simplest of definitions, the perceived physicality of said people remains universal, characterized by tall stature, a bony frame, light coloring, and dolichocephalic, or long and narrow, heads.¹¹ In the 1920s and into the 1930s, nativist doctrines emphasized such characterizations through various avenues like

Immigration History: A Call for Change,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 11:4 (Summer 1992): 25-46; *Peasant Maids – City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America*, ed. Christiane Harzig et. al. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th Edition Revised (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): “Nordic.” The etymology of the term is also related to the Swedish and Danish term *nordisk* originating in the same time period.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the eugenics movement, the Immigration Act of 1924, and in the Nazi movement, which regarded the “Nordic race” as essentially superior to other races. Eugenicists in America who believed in the study and practice of selective breeding applied to humans with the aim of improving the species, helped to inspire the Immigration Act of 1924. Created out of the eugenic belief in the racial superiority of “old stock” white Americans as members of the “Nordic race,” the Immigration Act of 1924 strengthened the position of existing laws prohibiting miscegenation.¹² Due to this latter set of ideologies, the term “Nordic,” when used in the wrong context can today be construed as a form of bigotry, but in an earlier era, the term was central to identifying Scandinavian identity and character.

The most recent works on ethnic identity and the study of whiteness make the distinction between the etymology and definition of the term *Nordic* when used in reference to Scandinavian ethnicity. In their works, David Roediger, Matthew Frye Jacobson, and Noel Ignatiev sometimes use *Nordic* as a blanket term to refer broadly to all northern and western European immigrants, while other times using it to refer more specifically to groups arranged by nation, yet still wholly inclusive: Scandinavians, Germans, Finns, and “Alpines” (another ambivalent term). The majority of their scholarship is based on the wording used in the restrictive legislation of 1924 which sought to regulate world immigration to the United States – legislation that over time has been defined as problematic in terminology. In *Whiteness of a Different Color*, instead of defining a distinct Nordic identity, Jacobson used “Nordic” in racial terms to define nordicism rather than ethnic prevalence of a shared identity. The history of American

¹² As discussed in the following chapter, many social commentators applauded Scandinavian immigrants for responsible reproductive habits, including delay of marriage and childbirth and the preponderance of intra-ethnic marriages (at the turn of the century, almost 95% of Scandinavians married within their ethnic group). For further discussion, see chapter three.

nativism from the 1840s to the 1920s, Jacobson explained, is largely the history of “a fundamental revision of whiteness itself,” and the resulting legislation was intended to favor the continued arrival of “desirable” Nordics and curtail larger numbers of “problematic ‘Alpines’ and ‘Mediterraneans’.”¹³ In works like Roediger’s that take a more comprehensive approach to the combined study of ethnic identity and whiteness, the use of “Nordic” is linked to notion of an “embraced” identity. Scandinavians, who were intelligent in their interactions with the “right” types of immigrant groups from “favored” nations, including Germans and Finns, would eventually reap the benefits of their success – that is, just as long as they embraced American values of liberty, republicanism, and prosperity and eventually became part of the “English-speaking races.”¹⁴ Therefore, it is imperative to create both a working definition of “Nordic” in historic terms, as well as a term meant to refer specifically to Scandinavians. Historically in Chicago Scandinavian immigrants used the term “Nordic” to signal race *and* ethnic identity; however during this time period American citizens often used the term “Nordic” to solely refer to a race of people.

From the very origins of Scandinavian migration to Chicago, interactions within group were centered upon a distinctive set of symbols, folklore, and characteristics that would eventually combine to create a specific Nordic identity based in racial and ethnic

¹³ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999): 68-9.

¹⁴ David Roediger adapted this discussion from a theoretical concept posed in the 1960s by Milton M. Gordon, who argued that “previously vague and romantic notions of Anglo-Saxon people-hood, combined with general ethnocentrism, rudimentary wisps of genetics, selected tidbits of evolutionary theory, and naïve assumptions from an early and crude imported anthropology produced the doctrine that the English, Germans, and others of the “old immigration” constituted a superior race of tall, blonde, blue-eyed “Nordics” or “Aryans,” where the peoples of eastern and southern Europe made up the darker Alpines or Mediterraneans – both “inferior” breeds whose presence in America threatened, either by intermixture or supplementation, the traditional American stock and culture.” See Milton M. Gordon, “Assimilation in America: Theory and Reality,” *Daedalus*, vol. 90, No. 2, Ethnic Groups in American Life (Spring 1961): 268; David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2006): 53.

terms. In Swedish scholar O.N. Nelson's narrative on the beginnings of Scandinavian life in America, he pointed out that racially, the English, the Germans, the Dutch, the Scandinavians, and their descendants were all members of the Teutonic family. However, he explained that one could determine the identities of individual groups by examining the common traditions and behaviors they shared. Nelson noted that while Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, Dutchmen, and Englishmen all shared a common mythology and common superstitions, he singled out Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes, as having the closest ethnic group connection based on the common language they spoke.¹⁵ Similarly, as Nelson added, there was a basic set of physical characteristics that Scandinavians shared indicated by their locations in Northern Europe: "the diverse influences of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have developed different characteristics of the people in the respective countries. But the people of the northern part of Sweden differ more from the inhabitants of southern Sweden than the latter do from those who live on the Danish islands – the last two having a very fair complexion, being the purest descendants of the Goths the former are often as dark as Frenchmen, which is also the case with many Norwegians, and those residing in Danish Jutland."¹⁶ Nelson's distinctions between racial features and ethnic traditions for the Scandinavian groups resonated with scholarly communities in America at the turn of the century, but the first mention of this duality originated much earlier as a product of a new wave of immigrants to Chicago beginning in 1879. This group was like no other that came before – young, mostly single, and perched on the edge of change for a city ready to emerge into an age of cosmopolitanism.

¹⁵ O.N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States* (Minneapolis: O.N. Nelson & Company, 1901): 1-2.

¹⁶ Nelson, 23.

The Newcomers – Third Wave Immigration to Chicago

The year 1879 is often considered by historians of Scandinavian immigration as a momentous time when a major generational shift took place in Chicago. For Chicago's Swedes, it was during this year that the older Swede Town was said to have reached its "high point" according to Ulf Beijbom, when almost half the Swedish population resided in the neighborhood's seventeenth ward.¹⁷ The neighborhood, as discussed in chapter one, would undergo extreme changes during the next two decades as an influx of "new" immigrants from Sicily and Poland infiltrated the neighborhood and caused the upwardly mobile Swedes to move north into the newly annexed portion of the city called Lake View. Approximately at the same time, Norwegians took part in similar inner-city migration patterns – after the new boundary system of 1876 divided the city into 18 wards placed under city regulations, around 80% of the Norwegian population moved just outside of the city limits to the near Northwest Side.¹⁸ In doing so, the Norwegian population separated from their more affluent Swedish neighbors, remaining just west of the Chicago River – a short distance from their original shared community of Swede Town. Yet, the neighborhood that would become known as Wicker Park would encompass those Swedes and Danes, as well as Norwegians, who had not yet experienced upward social mobility comparative to Scandinavians in Lake View. For the majority of the 1880s, Norwegians and Danes displayed nearly identical mobility patterns moving

¹⁷ Ulf Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago: A Demographic and Social Study of the 1848-1880 Immigration* (Uppsala, Sweden and Chicago: The Historiska Institutionen at the University of Uppsala, Sweden and Chicago Historical Society, 1971): 218.

¹⁸ Lovoll explains in his fifth chapter, "Norwegians in Industrial America," that the near Northwest area became a refuge for Norwegian workers who wished to build cheap frame homes outside the city limits, Odd Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago before 1930* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 139.

into Wicker Park, as well as Humboldt Park to the south of the city. The southern neighborhood, which Danish historian Christian Nielsen referred to as “a compatible environment for Scandinavians,” appealed to such working immigrants who delighted in the evenly-spaced, yet cheaply produced dwellings.¹⁹ By 1879, Chicago’s Scandinavians were distributed across the city into three urban enclaves as an effect of the Great Fire, yet this redistribution would only be one part of a much larger agent of change in the Nordic community.

By the late 1870s Europe’s economic crisis reached its apex as several factors contributed to both the downfall of the Scandinavian export market and the rush of the largest influx of emigrants ever. Following the famine that spread across Scandinavia in 1867 and 1868, the importation of cheap American grain for survival contributed to a long-standing crisis within Scandinavian agriculture, especially in rural Sweden. For those troubled by the effects of agricultural failures and subsequent economic depressions, letters and cards from friends and relatives already in America comforted the troubled Scandinavians. Similarly, the constant invitations from loved ones encouraged many to make the trip to America, either until conditions in the homeland improved, or for good. Between 1878 and 1879 in Sweden alone, the number of emigrants more than doubled from 5,390 to 11, 001 and by 1888, emigration to America reached 54,698 people in one year – its absolute high point.²⁰ Aside from sheer numbers, these “new”

¹⁹ Christian Nielsen, “Halvfems aar,” 41-42, in Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life*, 146.

²⁰ Between 1878 and 1879, immigration from Norway and Denmark also rose, as the number of Norwegian emigrants jumped from 4,759 to 7,345 and Danish emigrants from 2,105 to 3,474. Comparatively, Swedish immigration between 1879 and 1893 is usually regarded as the most significant of the three countries due to the fact that Swedish immigrants arrived in such magnitude. For census figures, see Reports of the Immigration Commission, *Statistical Review of Immigration 1820-1910*, Table 9: Immigration to the United States, 1820-1910 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910):33, 36. For further discussion of the European economic struggles of the 1870s and 1880s, see H. Arnold Barton, “Swedish Reactions to the Emigration Question around 1900,” in *The Old Country and the New: Essays on Swedes and America*

Scandinavian immigrants were more diverse than those who had come before them in many ways. The two most important differences between the generations of immigrants were, first in age, and second, in their reasons for emigration to America. These immigrants, who were mainly young unmarried men and women, traveled to Chicago to join family and friends who had arrived in the previous waves. Most notable, was the striking number of young women who arrived at this time; the arrival of Swedish immigrants effectively tipped the ratio of females to males in the age group 15-29 years to 136 females to 100 males.²¹ For Norwegians, the numbers of young, unmarried immigrants were similar, however men continued to outnumber women as they had in the waves before – by the turn of the century more than 70% of all men and 62% of all women who left Norway for America were between the ages of 15 and 30 and nearly 80% of those men and women were single.²² In the remaining years of the 19th century, this group of young, unmarried Scandinavians would be the first to come into constant, daily contact with their Chicago neighbors through employment and in the media. As Chicago newspapers began to take note of their physical presence within the city, their physical and symbolic identities began to take the shape of gendered American ideals.

Some of the first recollections of Scandinavian men in Chicago during the 1880s reflected upon representations of the Viking age and the heroic tradition of a brute form of masculinity. The symbol of the Viking in popular memory painted a picture of tall,

(Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007): 54-6; Sten Carlsson, "Why did they Leave?" in Nils Hasselmo, ed., *Perspectives on Swedish Immigration* (Duluth, 1978): 25-6; Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder, "European Immigrant Women in Chicago at the Turn of the Century: A Comparative Approach," in *Swedes in America: New Perspectives*, ed. Ulf Beijbom (Växjö, Sweden: The Swedish Emigrant Institute's Series, 1993): 92-3; Leslie Page Moch, "The European Perspective: Changing Conditions and Multiple Migrations, 1750-1914," in *European Migrants: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds. Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996): 125-6.

²¹ Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago*, Table 14, 121, 125, 142.

²² Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life*, 152.

“wild” men whom O.N. Nelson posed as “strong and robust, having white bodies, yellow hair, broad shoulders, wiry muscles, florid complexion, and fierce blue eyes that during excitement gleamed with fire and passion.”²³ The cultural symbol of the Viking was characteristic of a strong individuality and love for freedom – traits that Scandinavian men adopted as an identity that connected homeland traditions to their adopted culture. However, the adopted image of the Viking as characteristic of the common Scandinavian man was much tamer in comparison than to the historical discussions of the true homeland heroes, especially through the lens of the American media. In one article that told of the celebration of Leif Eriksen Day, the author gave a tongue-in-cheek description of the event which set out to prove Eriksen to be the true discoverer of America:

“Columbus had the honor last week, Leif Eriksen had his turn last night at Scandia Hall on West Ohio Street near Milwaukee Avenue, and where a large company of sons and daughters of the land of Vikings paid their tribute to the man whom they claim discovered America 400 years before Columbus set foot on San Salvador. Speech-making, dancing, songs, and instrumental music were the features of the Eriksen “Fest.” It was an evening that bore much significance to the people from the Northland, for it meant nothing less than a claim on the part of the Norwegians to the honors for discovering America.”²⁴

As the speakers of the event, including A.J. Elvig, historian John Fisk of Harvard University, and the editor of *Scandinaven* P.A. Conradi recounted the heroic traditions of “Erik the Red,” journalists of the event were instead infatuated by the “pretty girls with

²³ Nelson’s is an intriguing inference because it creates an assumption of how the Vikings would have appeared – a description that would have been created over time without any hard evidence of merit other than primitive records of Viking pillage in ancient times. See O.N. Nelson *History of the Scandinavians* (1901): 6, 19, 22.

²⁴ “Leif Eriksen’s Day, His Discovery of America Celebrated by Norwegians,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 28, 1892, pg. 6.

red frocks” and their beautiful mothers and fathers with Nordic features.²⁵ Another more unfortunate recollection of Scandinavian men in Chicago reflected upon their early days in the pioneer shantytown on the river. In describing the criminality of early Scandinavians of the Chicago shantytown, “where all the scum gathers,” Anders Larson wrote that there was a definite type of “Swedish-born rogue” – a frequent patron of the local pub whose heavy drinking and hard-living gained him a reputation for delinquency.²⁶ Even as the newest group of Scandinavians to arrive in Chicago sought to dispel these stereotypes of Nordic masculine character, their image in the eyes of the American public fluctuated between a confused picture of Vikings and drunkards.

At the same time in 1880s, Chicago newspapers such as the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *Chicago Daily News* illustrated a new preference amongst potential employers. Within the classified advertisements, there was a clear call for a certain type of worker – one who could sew, do general housework, and cook. While the call for domestic workers was common in the burgeoning city and others like it, a new specification was put into place. Ad after ad announced a specific request for “competent” and “young” girls of Swedish, Norwegian, or Danish descent to be put to work at some of the most prestigious addresses in the city. As an additional mode of employment, agencies such as G. Duske of 195 Milwaukee Avenue published special requests for “good German and Scandinavian girls for private families, hotels, and

²⁵ Ibid. Odd Lovoll also recounted the celebration of Lief Eriksen as first to discover America, yet focused mostly on the actual celebration and events rather than the attention of Chicago’s newspapers. See Odd Lovoll, “A Scandinavian Melting Pot in Chicago,” in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, 62.

²⁶ See H. Arnold Barton, “Rascals and Ne’er-Do-Wells: The Underside of Swedish America,” in *The Old Country and the New: Essays on Swedes and America*, ed. H. Arnold Barton (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007): 264-66)

boarding houses” alongside classified ads.²⁷ Similarly across Scandinavia, newspapers and recruiters in the homeland promised young men and women secure employment and a sense of personal fulfillment in return for their emigration to cities like Chicago. By today’s standards, a recruitment campaign of such measures would be viewed with great skepticism. Yet, to the youth of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, the promise of markedly high wages and comfortable living conditions in some of the most opulent areas of the country was a wish fulfilled. This call for Scandinavian workers would bring the largest group of female immigrants from the homeland in vast waves to the streets of Chicago between 1879 and 1893.

As David Katzman found, by the turn of the century a fourth of Chicago’s domestic servants were of Swedish origin. On the national level, Swedish women were among the predominant groups in household labor, along with the Irish, Germans, and Norwegians. The booming rate of Scandinavian women working in Chicago as domestic servants was part of a larger phenomenon in America as 62% of Swedish-born women and 46% of Norwegian-born women took domestic positions in 1900.²⁸ In a series of state labor studies, it was found that employers preferred American-born domestics as their first choice, followed by Scandinavians as their second choice.²⁹ Yet, the question remains: why would American employers actively recruit recent immigrants from

²⁷ In a review of advertisements from both the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *Chicago Daily News*, classifieds between 1879 and into the 1890s reflected a substantial call for women of Scandinavian descent. While the experience of work for Scandinavian men and women will be addressed in the next chapter, this chapter will briefly focus on the images that Americans associated with Scandinavians they encountered, using domestic servants as an example. See *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Classified Ad. 11, November 21, 1880, pg. 14.

²⁸ Reports of the Immigration Commission, Volume 1 (New York, 1970): 830-838.

²⁹ Maine Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics, *Annual Report 1910* (Augusta, Maine, 1910): 340; Minnesota Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Biennial Report 1887-1888* (n.p., 1887): 154; David Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978): 49, 70. Similarly, Odd Lovoll also would note that in 1880, about three-fourths of Norwegian-born women working outside the home were domestic servants. See Lovoll, 155.

Sweden, Norway and Denmark to work in their homes when many of them did not have a firm grasp of the English language or American domestic customs? Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder explained that Scandinavian housemaids were popular as live-in servants and gained a reputation for being honest, diligent and hard-working, willing to learn and without complaint.³⁰ It could be argued, then, that the time period that preceded the turn of the century was an integral time for the creation of these perceptions, coupled with a new image of the beautiful housemaid.

Beginning in the 1880s with the influx of the “new” immigrant group, it became clear that Americans began to desire Nordic immigrants within their homes and workplaces based on the formation of a distinctive set of stereotypes and cultural images centered on the “prototypical” Scandinavian. While it was not unique from the perspective of industrial America for Chicagoans to have formed preconceived notions of various immigrant groups, the significance of these images lay in the optimistic nature of said images. Prior to their arrival in Chicago, the seemingly simple lives of Scandinavian women were nonetheless a topic of much discussion in newspapers and public commentary. Some of these commentaries would often place the beautiful physicality of such women against the backdrop of a similarly striking landscape in order to emphasize the significance of their choices to emigrate for better opportunities. In one such article, the author introduced the “dreary existence of some Norwegian women” who worked as dairy maids during the early summer months of May and June. The women, who by nature of their jobs were forced to stay with the cattle in the valleys and high up in the

³⁰ Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder, “European Immigrant Women in Chicago at the Turn of the Century: A Comparative Approach,” in *Swedes in America: Intercultural and interethnic perspectives on contemporary research: A Report of the Symposium Swedes in America: New Perspectives*, ed. Ulf Beijbom (Växjö, Sweden: The Swedish Emigrant Institute Series, 1993): 101.

mountains, “lead lonely lives...with only fortnightly visits at the most from their relatives or lovers.”³¹ Coupled with the depiction of a mostly rural existence, Chicago newspapers would also portray Scandinavian women as quiet and loyal, rarely capable of a disagreement.

Many of the earliest domestic servants of Scandinavian descent helped to support the perceptions of the American media, as well as their employers. A significant number of domestic servants worked as live-in help, which provided them with continual interactions with their Americans and enabled them to learn English quickly. In comparison to Irish and German women, many rural Scandinavian women gained experience in the homes of wealthier people in the major cities of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, and were thereby accustomed to “appropriate” social interactions between employers and domestics. Once in America, although Scandinavian immigrant domestics were still doing similar work to that in the home country, they were rewarded by higher wages and greater esteem. Margareta Matovic pointed out that their success as domestic servants, in comparison to other groups, facilitated rapid upward mobility – Scandinavian women made a profession out of housework and used their knowledge and skills to specialize in their field.³² Therefore, early in their careers, as Scandinavian women illustrated pride in their positions as domestics, they were rewarded by their employers with a public discourse of their success. This discourse was not ignored by American advertisers; the producers of Sapolio scouring soap claimed in an ad proudly published in the pages of *Skandinaven* that “American families learn that Norwegian girls are tidier,

³¹ “The Domain of Woman: Some Good Things Said of and by the Gentler Sex,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 25, 1886, pg. 16.

³² Margareta Matovic, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life: Swedish-American Women in Lake View,” in *Peasant Maids and City Women*, 290.

cleanlier, and faster than the Irish and German girls,” by using their product.³³ During an era when advertisers failed to recognize the discriminatory nature of such advertising, Scandinavian women were nevertheless pleased to receive such accolades for their work and subsequent benefits in their capabilities to be selective in the work they chose.

Yet, somehow over time, this loyal and quiet nature would be transformed into an unfortunate cultural stereotype that would depict especially the Swedish as slow, dimwitted, and gullible. The title of another article, “Swedish Girls Not slow; they have been working for freedom if they don’t say much,” epitomized this stereotype as it depicted Swedish women as eager to attain greater rights in society without causing a scene or drawing attention to themselves. One Scandinavian woman interviewed for the article corroborated this image in her explanation that Scandinavian women “go to the colleges, they practice the professions...but they didn’t get their rights by too much talking.”³⁴ Historian Joy Lintelman stated that American public opinion of Scandinavians prior to the turn of the century tended to focus predominantly on their “slow” nature as a coping mechanism in dealing with linguistic and cultural difference.³⁵ Scandinavian language and social practices would create an initial barrier between immigrants in search of employment and American employers who could not understand their sing-song speech patterns. However, in an interesting turn of events, Scandinavian women, especially domestic servants, would also find themselves at the center of a debate regarding behavioral practices from their own community.

³³ Advertisement for Sapolio scouring soap, *Skandinaven*, March 30, 1901.

³⁴ “Swedish Girls Not Slow; they have been working for freedom if they don’t say much,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 14, 1891, pg. 16.

³⁵ Joy Lintelman, “Our Serving Sisters”: Swedish-American Domestic servants and Their Ethnic Community,” *Social Science History* 15:3 (Fall 1991): 381-95.

When Scandinavian women first began to work as domestic servants in the homes of Chicago's elite, their community rallied in support of their "sisters in service" and viewed their work as both safe and beneficial to their future endeavors. Women who attained positions with Chicago families often received room and board, uniform pieces, three square meals a day, and most important, a family to watch over them. Historian Stina Hirsch recollected of her family members' own experiences in the homes of Chicago's elite, that "many employers were gracious and generous, and shared some of their affluence with the domestic help." However, she also pointed out that their generosity could sometimes have the taint of condescension, "as in the case of leftovers from costly meals prepared for the family and their guests or hand-me-down clothes."³⁶ Therefore, for domestic servants of all nationalities, there was an unavoidable social stigma attached to domestic service within American culture – the women who worked as servants *were* taken care of for the most part, but above all, were servants to others.³⁷ And while many Americans saw the economic discrepancies of their workers as an opportunity to treat their help whatever way they saw fit, many Scandinavians began to view the labor of domestic servants as above "their girls."³⁸ In playful jabs aimed at the

³⁶ Stina Hirsch's master's thesis, "The Swedish Maid: 1900-1915," serves both as a secondary and primary source for the study of the experiences of Scandinavian domestic servants in Chicago at the turn of the century. Hirsch was the daughter and niece of five former Swedish domestic servants who were employed at the turn of the century in Chicago; her thesis is a combination of both oral history and contextual information on the North Shore region, thereby offering a vital contribution to the existing source base. See Stina Hirsch, "The Swedish Maid: 1900-1915," Master's Thesis, De Paul University (June 1985): 40.

³⁷ Lillian Pettengill, who worked as a domestic at the turn of the century, concluded in her widely-referenced study that the reason American women viewed domestic service so negatively was due to the negative "social stigma" attached to it, due to a lack of prestige in American society in relation to the job. Yet, regardless of this open disdain, Scandinavian women nevertheless flocked to accept positions in the homes of American women. See Lillian Pettengill, *Toilers of the Home: The Record of a College Woman's Experience as a Domestic Servant* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1903).

³⁸ In an article published in the Swedish-language newspaper, *Svenska Nyheter* in 1903, the editor created a comparison of two positions available to Swedish women: maid or "factory girl." The editor used this comparison to stress the importance of domestic work for women who sought security and pushed for them to avoid the various problems that factory girls encountered. Nevertheless, the author also stressed the

work of domestics, the Scandinavian press used ethnic humor to diffuse this discussion; within cartoons and humorous commentaries, Scandinavian domestics would often be portrayed as dim-witted or frivolous. One common joke illustrated in the pages of the Scandinavian press featured a servant standing in the kitchen next a cooked pig, holding an apple in her mouth and curled paper in her ears because she did not translate the recipe correctly.³⁹ This seemingly harmless poke at Scandinavian domestics who struggled to accommodate to American culture would transform into a wide-ranging iconic stereotype and point of cultural ridicule over time. The epitome of this joke would come in the form of a new character in American history – the “dumb blonde.” As the American media caught on to the cultural influence of the “Swedish maid” in society, magazines and newspapers across the country regularly featured jokes aimed at the prototypical domestic. In one commentary, *Puck* featured a popular joke that contributed to this cultural trend:

Fortune Teller: I can read that there is to be a wreck in your home, and it will be caused by a blonde woman.

Patron: Oh, that has already occurred. Our new Swedish maid let the dumb-waiter fall and broke all the dishes.⁴⁰

The cultural foil of the “dumb Swedish maid” would come to be magnified in both American and Scandinavian commentary as the joke added a new element of absurdity.

difficulty of work within domestic service and hinted at the fact that, at the turn of the century, Swedish women had more opportunities than other immigrant women. See “Maid or Factory Girl,” *Svenska Nyheter*, June 23, 1903, pg. 4.

³⁹ Andrew L. Löfström, *Bland Kolvingar och Kogubbar*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1908) as illustrated in Joy Lintelman’s article, “Our Serving Sisters,” pg. 384.

⁴⁰ “Two Good Reasons,” *Puck*, July 28, 1909, pg. 13; the joke was also featured the same week in the *Baltimore American* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

In an era where Americans perceived of cross-dressing as humorous (rather than “deviant” as it became in the 1930s), male sports teams, actors, and cabaret acts alike would expand upon the joke by dressing as the cultural foil for a laugh.⁴¹ The *New York Times* featured commentary on one such public display, where the residents of Englewood, New Jersey, were treated to a match between the Women’s Club and a rival team of eighteen “girls” comprised of well-known local amateur baseball players. Receiving the biggest laugh, however, was a “girl” dressed in a yellow wig tied up with a green ribbon – “a big Swedish maid with flaxen locks” – the man, who had a big mustache, was said to have “brazenly smoked cigars” in an effort to play up the gag for the crowd.⁴² By the time the famous silent screen actor, Wallace Beery, performed his infamous character of “Sweedie” – a caricature of a hardworking Swedish domestic who behaved like a man and was incredibly dumb – for Chicago’s audiences, the stereotype of the “dumb Swedish maid” was engrained in American cultural discourse as an unfortunate misrepresentation of an immigrant group.⁴³ Before “Sweedie” became a movie star, the Scandinavian community united in preparation for one of the most important displays of national identity to date – the World’s Columbian Exposition. In an effort to correct some of the American public’s misconceptions of Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish culture in the United States and in the homeland, delegates from the three

⁴¹ As George Chauncey and John D’Emilio argued, the “closet” and notion of cross-dressing was not perceived as “dangerous” until the 1930s, when the closet was “constructed” by way of the red scare and the Great Depression. For further discussion of these historical myths as first identified by D’Emilio, see John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of a Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

⁴² “Englewood’s Field Day,” *New York Times*, September 13, 1908, pg. 8.

⁴³ Wallace Beery’s personal life, particularly his marriage to Gloria Swanson, and his professional life portraying “Sweedie” will be discussed in much greater detail in chapter three.

countries gathered in Chicago and conceived of the ways that their representative countries could most properly be displayed for the world to see.

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and Scandinavian Representation through Public Display

During Swedish Week in Edgewater in 1935, one newspaper wistfully recalled the excitement of the community leading up to the World's Columbian Exposition: "The World's Fair of 1893 brought the importance of the Swedish people to the city's notice startlingly on July 20, 1893, when a parade of 10,000 marched to Swedish day at the exposition...again the Swedish showed their pioneering spirit, always keeping ahead of the city's outward expansion."⁴⁴ In looking back at this historic period in the evolution of Chicago's Swedes, historian Dag Blanck commented that Sweden's representation in the fair, notably "Sweden's Day" represented a massive, concerted effort on behalf of the Chicago Swedish community to communicate to the larger American society that their community was active, numerous, and an important component of the growing metropolis of the West.⁴⁵ The pomp and circumstance of the event could be seen throughout Lakeview in the months leading up to the world's fair as Scandinavians celebrated their triumphs within the city while also carefully selecting the ways that they would enter the public stage and create a representation of Chicago Scandinavians as a cultured and distinguished immigrant group. Most importantly, however, Scandinavians would use this opportunity to mark their entrance into larger American society as a group

⁴⁴ Newspaper article spread on Swedish Week in Edgewater in *The Edgewater News*, Wednesday, September 4th, 1935.

⁴⁵ Dag Blanck, "Swedish Americans and the 1893 Columbian Exposition," in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, 292.

inherently tied to the homeland, yet willing to compromise their cultural heritage and practices for the sake of becoming successful Chicagoans in the interim. The foundational idea that drove the fair itself was built on the basis of expansion to mark the anniversary of Columbus's landing in the Western Hemisphere; when a group of financial and political elite won the campaign to host the fair against stiff competition from representatives in New York, their win was symbolic of the very expansion of Chicago as a cosmopolitan American city. For Chicago, the World's Columbian Exposition grew in symbolic importance for the city as Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his now seminal lecture on the significance of the frontier in American history; for many, the notion of the frontier as "closed" indicated that Chicago would grow as a metropolis on the border of the once-promised land for those travelers sought the West as an escape.

Swedish participation at the exposition was closely linked to the official national Swedish delegation, and in turn, the Royal Swedish Commission for the fair was made up almost entirely of Swedes who would travel to the event to present goods and products on behalf of Sweden.⁴⁶ Those involved planned the exhibits in a way that representative goods would be displayed in the various pavilions as well as in the official Swedish pavilion, modeled in appearance to reflect a rural Swedish barn. A careful distinction would be created at the exposition between two groups of products: those which Swedes were prideful of and would represent them in a positive light as a society, versus products and displays that would represent Swedish culture as separate from American practices.

⁴⁶ In preparation for the fair, circulars were sent out by the various bureaus of commerce requesting that firms notified the subsequent governments of their intentions to exhibit at the fair. While many of the representative countries received little to no feedback from potential firms of exhibit, Sweden's delegates received a significant response from those excited to display the goods of the homeland in Chicago. See "Sweden and the World's Fair," *Chicago Tribune*, December 29, 1891, pg. 8.

In the agricultural department, a selection of typical Swedish fare was present, including various displays of Swedish fish, such as caviar and pickled herring, as well as various types of sweets and Swedish cheeses, or Herrgårdsost, and cheese-making machines.⁴⁷ In the manufactures department, various Swedish ladies displayed embroidered table décor including curtains, wall hangings, and rugs, representing a distinctive Swedish style that combined old world handiwork with more modern design. One of the most memorable departments, however was that which focused on education, literature, public works, and sport, where Swedish delegates exhibited a large display of gymnastic equipment, including all sorts of items for use in winter sports such as skates and toboggans.⁴⁸ An emphasis on physical development, training and condition was clear at the Swedish pavilion, where displays illustrated the extent to which Swedish education centered on especially Gymnastics.

The skills and methods of Scandinavian gymnasts were dominant features many took away from the fair as definitive elements of the group. The Swedish system, founded by P.H. Ling in the early 19th century was said to have been inspired “to revive the ancestral spirit in the Swedish people by the help of sport...to draw out once more the great qualities, the strength, the courage and the will, which in old times had distinguished the Scandinavian race.”⁴⁹ A short aside at the display noted the recent growth of women’s gymnastics in the Ling tradition, and explained that gymnastic associations which catered to women of the working classes in Sweden were growing in practice in Chicago as well. Additionally, the commission was careful to distinguish the

⁴⁷ *World's Columbian Exposition 1893, Swedish Catalogue, Exhibits and Statistics*, Commissioned by the Royal Swedish Commission for the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, pg. 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 15-16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 192.

advancement of Swedes in higher education, as well as the strides that the country saw over the course of the 19th century in education. As the commission explained, “at the commencement of the century a person who could not read was rarely met with, and nowadays the whole nation may be said to be able to read, with hardly a single exception;” both the Swedish delegation and the Swedish Ladies’ Committee to the World’s Columbian Exposition reflected upon a dedication to education for all Scandinavians regardless of sex, class, or age. Scandinavians emphasized this commitment, especially in comparison to other European nationalities: Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were found to have incredibly low rates of national illiteracy as 99 ½ people out of 100 could read and write, in comparison to Russia at 21, Italy at 58, Hungary at 61, Austria at 75, and even the United States at 78.⁵⁰ By these numbers alone, the commission was able to make a case for the overall intelligence and athletic capabilities of the Swedish people as a whole, which played into American perceptions of them. Yet, the commission was also deliberate in its efforts not to display mistruths, and therefore, showcased what Americans would consider to be the more scandalous parts of Swedish society as well.

One of the more astonishing displays for modest Americans was that of the public baths on display at the Swedish pavilion. As the display explained, in the later portion of the 19th century, public bathing grew in popularity in Sweden when the climatic conditions of the country coupled with the sparse population made public baths possible. The display was careful to distinguish the importance of public hygiene as the cause for these baths, but also made clear the cultural importance of such public baths for a

⁵⁰ Nelson, 33.

population that prided itself on cleanliness and public health. Scandinavians had different ideas in regards to modesty than that of their American neighbors, yet the Swedish Royal Commission pointed out that the larger baths in Sweden are generally provided with separate divisions for men and women, with additional “class” divisions with different fittings and charges – the warm baths, either hot-air (Jacuzzi) or vapor (sauna) baths, or large swimming pools, where bathers would also receive scrubbing and massage by the bath-attendants.⁵¹ The practice of “social bathing” on display at the Swedish pavilion was so popular in Sweden that Saturday was declared “tub-day” by many in the North, which the commission explained, was “very Swedish” by practice and part of a larger cultural practice.⁵² Perhaps even bolder on the part of the Royal Swedish Commission was their admission of a national problem of alcohol consumption particularly amongst Swedish men, which was vastly improved by the work of a powerful temperance movement in the homeland. In the earlier portion of the 19th century, when Swedes “had not the best of names,” it was estimated that each inhabitant consumed no less than *10 gallons* a year of alcoholic beverages – a number that was rounded to include every individual regardless of temperance status. Furthermore, in the 1880s and 1890s the Commission admitted to a constant increase in the consumption of alcohol, but attributed the increase to the social acceptance of drinking ale or wine with a meal as opposed to drinking for the sole purpose of becoming intoxicated.⁵³ While these admittances on the part of the Swedish Commission were honest and forthcoming, nevertheless, Chicagoans in later years would use similar admittances to color their perceptions of Scandinavians as a whole as immodest and frivolous.

⁵¹ Ibid, 200.

⁵² Ibid, 201.

⁵³ Ibid, 15-16.

One display that would ingrain a firm understanding of social difference between Swedish women and men could be found at the Women's Pavilion at the exposition, where an elected group of Swedish women created an outward portrayal of what constituted female social behavior in Sweden. Amongst the most conspicuous features in the character of the Northern woman, "self-sacrifice, presence of mind and prudence, ability and acuteness, together with a passionate sense of revenge" defined the nature of Swedish women, according to the group.⁵⁴ Northern women were additionally defined by their domestic capabilities, yet were able to enjoy a wide independence as the mistress of her own home as "the emblem of her house-wifely authority were the keys, handed over to the bride, and often remaining with the house-wife in her grave," even in ancient times.⁵⁵ Many ancient traditions, laws, and rituals in Swedish society showed a pattern of relative independence amongst Swedish women, both single and married, including legislation that prohibited against women being forced into marriage and prevented abuse within marriage; a law that stated that both men and women within families were considered equally eligible as heirs of their parents' estates and therefore "entitled to inherit equal shares" of an inheritance; and the capability of women to take on many kinds of work due to a considerably unbalanced sex ratio in the Northern countries during the 19th century.⁵⁶ The group told of foreigners who visited Sweden during the early 19th century and extolled of their admiration for the Swedish woman in her performance of such "manly" pursuits, and the "spirit and intrepidity she evinced."⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *The Social Condition of the Swedish Woman*, prepared with a design to the World's Columbian Exposition (Stockholm: A.L. Normans Boktryckeri-Aktiebolag, 1893): 3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

Over the course of the late 19th century, Swedish women received additional legislative gains, including the right to manage their own property, the right to separate property owned in common with her husband, and the revocation of the need to attain consent of her nearest kinsman for marriage. Coupled with the comparatively progressive legislation for women in Sweden was the introduction of the “woman problem” by the Fredrika Bremer Association as a point of discussion to the Swedish public; their goal was to promote, by the cooperation of men and women, “a sound and steady development of reforms in the condition of women, morally and intellectually as well as socially and economically.”⁵⁸ Through their display, it became increasingly clear to their intended audience that women in Sweden were not to be considered as backwards, rural, or uneducated – instead, in many ways, women’s position in Sweden was more advanced than that of American women, especially in the rights women had within marriage (as well as outside of it).

Physical and Behavioral Characteristics of an Immigrant Group on Display

In the years before the publication of O.N. Nelson’s *History of Scandinavians in America*, a prominent group of Scandinavians placed sets of statistics and facts on display for the American public in an effort to choreograph a distinctive Scandinavian identity separated by sex in the homeland and in America. The display at the World’s Columbian Exposition would set the stage for larger discussions on the behavioral and physical characteristics of Scandinavians as their displayed facts would be combined with

⁵⁸ Ibid, 27.

American perceptions of their character and group identity. At the World's Columbian Exposition, the Swedish exposition and catalog mirrored Nelson's later viewpoint of physical characteristics shared by Scandinavians, and created a further emphasis on health and vitality in Nordic culture. Giving accolades to a healthy climate and reasonable social conditions, the catalog compared Sweden to England in regards to the birth rate of healthy children in both countries. The study found that out of 1,000 children born between 1871 and 1880, 775 boys and 798 girls in Sweden survived their fifth birthday, compared to only 734 boys and 763 girls in England.⁵⁹ In addition to displaying the significant portion of Scandinavian culture dedicated to sport, health, and vitality as discussed in chapter one, the Swedish delegation was careful to note the distinguish physical characteristics that would be seen as favorable in the eyes of American viewers. One such example pointed out the average height of Swedish men as noted in the compulsory military examinations; the catalogue emphasized that "the Swedes are acknowledged to be one of the tallest nations of the world...in Jemtland, the mean height of the conscripts was no less than 172 centimeters (5'8"), and the same height has been found to be the average for scholars of the same age (20-21), though at that time of life, in this northern climate, the men are not fully developed."⁶⁰ The eagerness of the delegation to place an emphasis on the further growth of Swedish men between the ages of 22 and 23 exhibited a desire to portray Nordics in a way that highlighted their virility as a race.

In addition to an emerging discussion of physical characteristics that comprised Scandinavian identity, a large portion of the featured displays focused on the positive

⁵⁹ *World's Columbian Exposition 1893, Swedish Catalogue, Exhibits and Statistics*, Commissioned by the Royal Swedish Commission for the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893: 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 14.

behavioral characteristics of Scandinavians, including the pursuit of formal education in Scandinavia and in America. In a more specific focus on women's education, at the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, the Committee of Swedish Ladies exhibited a portfolio which contained various statistics on the position of women in Sweden, including statistics on female students at the universities of Sweden and woman's work in high schools for girls, common and primary schools, practical schools, and schools for "abnormal" children. While the members of the Swedish Ladies' Committee made note of a priority for Swedish men to receive a proper education in light of the social composition of Swedish society, the Committee emphasized the desire of many women to attain higher education – a goal which the Committee recognized as vital to the success of Swedish society in the face of economic turmoil in the late 19th century.

The Committee noted that while female labor was largely made up of "practical" occupations including house and farm work, "several women of learning are mentioned in our chronicles, and a certain school education has for centuries been considered necessary to women."⁶¹ The portfolio of the Committee reflected a viewpoint on the dedication to women's education that was similar to a Progressive stance in America during the same era – women deserved the right to higher education, but that right was not to interfere with their commitment to their roles as women. The education system of Sweden reflected the "appropriate" place for women in society; the catalog listed the various levels of education including the national school education (same for both sexes); higher education (for boys, the cost was state sponsored, for girls, education was "an entirely private undertaking"); female training colleges ("conferred upon women the

⁶¹ *Reports from the Swedish Ladies' Committee to the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago 1893*, printed by Central Tryckeriet, Stockholm 1893, pp. 7-8. Printed in Swedish and English.

same rights as upon men for studying at the Universities); and the professional schools of Sweden (where women “were excluded with the exception of all the fine art schools as well as those for Gymnastics,” which were open to both sexes).⁶² Swedish girls and boys learned similar curriculum focused on Swedish language and literature, religious instruction, Swedish history, foreign languages (including French, German, and English), as well as arithmetic and natural science. In later years, students would focus their studies more intensively on the study of Scandinavian geography, zoology and botany, hygiene, cookery, geometry, and drawing. A significant portion of the school week was to be dedicated to health and wellness as teachers drilled students of all ages in Ling’s gymnastics, facilitating the growth of several voluntary female gymnastics clubs across the country.⁶³ Once Swedish women completed primary school, several families would send their daughters to special cookery and housekeeping schools, where they would spend an average of six to twelve months focused on the basic skills necessary in keeping their own homes, or more importantly, the homes of other families.⁶⁴ Despite the noted commitment to formal education for both men and women in Scandinavia, the second portion of the *Reports from the Swedish Ladies’ Committee* focused on Scandinavian domestic service would eventually become the single largest component of Scandinavian female identity within America for numerous decades.

Another component of Scandinavian identity defined at the World’s Columbian Exposition was a general commitment to the integrity of moral character for both men and women. In Denmark, Sweden, and Norway during the 1880s and 1890s, a noted commitment to philanthropic work focused specifically on “preventative philanthropy” –

⁶² Ibid, 8-9.

⁶³ Ibid, 20-23.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 53.

a term used to distinguish the commitment of men's and women's reform groups who worked to protect children from the dangers of society. Such organizations created outlets for self help, charity, nursing and medical care, prison discipline, poor mothers, and mission service (focused on piety, morality, and temperance). Particularly, Swedish women and men are historically known for their work in various temperance organizations in America and throughout Europe as they noted a significant problem that linked Scandinavians to drink. Mostly Lutheran-based, these organizations sought to combat the problems connected to alcohol consumption from various directions, targeting Scandinavians of all ages, class positions, and both sexes. Even the Women's Committee noted in their catalogue that, "as a rule, the Swedish woman is temperate, though sad exceptions exist. Of the whole number of persons found guilty of drunkenness in the years 1870-1889, 2.6% were women, and, during the same time, of 2,208 alcoholic patients among the poor, 7.7% were women. Among the 902 persons who died in Stockholm from 1861-1888 of alcoholism, 6.2 or 6.7% were women."⁶⁵ Therefore, while the numbers reflected a very small component of women who regularly imbibed alcohol, the Committee still felt that it was necessary to publish the numbers of those who did as a word of caution to those who could potentially fall onto the same path.

The Women's Committee specified within their catalogue a detailed outline of measures taken to fight immorality and prostitution in Sweden between 1879 and 1891, which included a federation fund for interest-free loans offered to young women to prevent them from turning to prostitution; a refuge for servant girls which offered a cheap home for girls arriving from rural areas; and a night shelter for homeless women that

⁶⁵ Ibid, 44.

offered three succeeding nights of shelter for free.⁶⁶ Similarly, there were reading rooms and associations dedicated to assisting working men as well as women. One noted refuge was the pavilion run by the Women's Temperance Union called "The Workman's Friend," situated in a Stockholm tramway terminus, where drivers, conductors, and other working men could obtain coffee, tea and sandwiches at a low price.⁶⁷ The majority of these shelters and others like them were located in the major industrial regions and port towns of Scandinavia, including Stockholm, Christiana, Upsala, Gothenburg, and Copenhagen, where the "adrift" gathered, much to the dismay of charitable and progressive societies. However, the outreach campaign of several of these societies did not end at the borders of Scandinavia; one refuge, "The Scandinavian Sailors' Temperance Home in London," sought to extend charity to Scandinavian men in order to maintain the moral character and integrity of their nation of origin, even in remote locations. The mission home, called "Strangers' Rest" and situated near the London Docks, was run by Mrs. Agnes Hedenström Welin who began her work in 1878 with Scandinavian sailors who she sought to lead in better directions. As she recounted, her first goal was to "rescue" them from the hands of their "destroyers," including grog-shops and dancing saloons, which were eventually forced to close due to lack of business from their now reformed customers. As this dedication to moral uplift and appropriate behavior spread amongst Scandinavian sailors who docked in London, Welin's "Swedish Room" at the Strangers' Rest soon became a favorite resort for seamen of other nationalities, as well as visiting Scandinavians.⁶⁸ Based on this perspective, the Royal Swedish Commission hoped that Americans would come to recognize Scandinavians as

⁶⁶ Ibid, 42-3.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 47.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

largely moral and upright citizens of society, and therefore capable of blending into society and “becoming” American. Yet, as the *Swedish Catalogue of the World’s Columbian Exposition* would show, the fair marked the beginning of a sort of confusion as to a distinct Scandinavian identity from an American perspective.

On display at the Exposition, the State, National, and Foreign Government exhibits, presented by the Nordiska Museet (The Ethnographical Museum of the North), created displays intended to “illustrate in the best manner possible the life and culture of the Scandinavian nations in past times.”⁶⁹ The series of exhibits, with a large concentration on Swedish peasantry and life, featured some of the brightly colored and intricately detailed folk-costumes of Scandinavia, which were quite possibly the most integral display of Scandinavian culture in American memory. The exhibits represented the twenty-five provinces (historical, geographical, and cultural divisions rather than political) of Sweden, which Swedes and Norwegians regularly engaged in discussions of cultural distinction, and therefore interpreted as outward reflections of their character to Americans. Furthermore, many of the exhibitions contained reflections of Scandinavians as flirtatious, somewhat sexualized, and in many ways “backwards” as a society in relation to American cultural representations, especially in regards to women. In one display, young girls from Österåker in the province of Södermanland entitled “Yes, No, Yes, No,” represented two young girls who, according to the catalogue, “consult the ox-eye-daisy regarding a love-affair.” The catalogue went on to note that the costume itself, a summer-dress worn by young girls as late as the 1860s “is one of the handsomest ever found amongst the Swedish peasantry.”⁷⁰ In another display entitled “Hösta-grebbba”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ World’s Columbian Exposition Swedish Catalogue, 60.

(harvest girl), a young girl from the district of Herrestad in the province of Scania appeared, by comparison, to be more scantily clad – her dress, which consisted of a chemise only, was commonly used for outdoors farm work during harvest time. Unmarried women (a “sort of stock” noted the catalogue) would adorn their simple sheaths with a knitted woolen ribbon and head gear made of colored kerchiefs to indicate their status as single women to the young men who would pursue them during midsommar and harvest celebrations.⁷¹ After the fair, these and other representations of Nordic physical and behavioral traits would be openly negotiated within the media and the public spaces of Chicago. At the dawning of a new era, the significance of the displays of the fair, coupled with the emergence of a fresh image of what constituted beauty within American society would place Scandinavian women and men at the forefront of a definitive discourse on gender, culture, and society.

American Consumer Culture built upon a New Esthetic of Beauty

In the aftermath of the fair, a significant cultural shift took place that would shape the image and ideology of the “ideal” woman in American society. Historian Lois Banner noted this shift in image from what she deemed the “voluptuous woman” of the Postbellum era to that of Charles Dana Gibson’s iconic “Gibson girl” as a successful challenge to European hegemony over popular standards of beauty. Between 1800 and the 1890s, two contrasting images of feminine beauty dominated cultural standards for women; as Banner described, during the antebellum years the “frail, pale, willowy

⁷¹ World’s Columbian Exposition Swedish Catalogue, 61.

woman enshrined in the lithographs of fashion magazines” was the norm, but during the Civil War era, the former was challenged by a “buxom, hearty, and heavy model of beauty.”⁷² She attributed this shift to the influence of a popular burlesque troupe known as the “British Blondes”; led by an audacious British showgirl, Lydia Thompson, the troupe’s comic plays entertained working- to middle-class Americans by making fun of (or “burlesquing”) the operas and social habits of the upper classes.⁷³ During these comedic performances, the shapely troupe of women would play men’s roles in tights and what were then considered skimpy costumes – a great departure from the bustles, hoops and frills that kept the female body of the Victorian era hidden. However, what Americans found most fascinating about the British Blondes was their blonde hair, to the extent that audience demand prompted several members of the troupe with darkish hair to don blonde wigs. Banner attributed this fascination to the small number of blondes in the United States in the 1860s, but regardless, blonde hair was generally in vogue as portrayed by the popularity of the British Blondes.⁷⁴ Over the course of the 1890s, this fascination would return and grow with the advent of a burgeoning beauty industry that offered women the chance to improve upon their physical appearance.

As the World’s Columbian Exposition exhibited, a popular health movement and a new athleticism prevailed in the 1890s, in effect shifting standards of beauty away from

⁷² Banner divides her study of the history of “American beauty” into four major periods between 1800 and 1921: the antebellum years, the Civil War era, the era of the Gibson girl, “whose vogue was superseded in the 1910s by a small, boyish model of beauty – the “flapper model.” See Lois Banner, *American Beauty: A Social History Through Two Centuries of the American Idea, Ideal, and Image of the Beautiful Woman* (New York: Knopf, 1983): 5.

⁷³ Americans of the 19th century made use of the term “burlesque” in reference to a spoof or farce rather than how it is used contemporarily to refer to a provocative dance form. Historian Robert Allen noted the significance of burlesque’s legacy as a cultural form as it established patterns of gender representation that changed the role and “place” of woman in American society. See Robert G. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991): 258-59; Banner,

⁷⁴ Banner, 124.

the “voluptuous woman” of the postbellum era to instead focus on healthy bodies and natural beauty. Charles Dana Gibson’s drawings reflected this new standard of beauty, which first appeared in *Life* magazine in 1890. According to Gibson’s “girls” the “ideal” in feminine beauty included a slimmer figure than that the “voluptuous woman,” an appreciation for athleticism, and a dedication to comfort in clothing. Like many important cultural models, the Gibson girl appeared to represent a number of styles to different groups of women. The blouses and skirts she wore for athletic activities appealed to female reformers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who wrote that the Gibson girl was “braver, stronger, more healthful and skillful and able and free, more human in all ways.”⁷⁵ From another perspective, the working classes also claimed the Gibson girl as one of their own. Journalists were often haunted by the question of Gibson’s original model for the figure; as Banner revealed, Gibson would not comply with the demands of journalists to know who his vision encompassed, and therefore, reporters were even more determined to find the original model amongst the working classes in order to “demonstrate that the wealthy were not the sole possessors of beauty, that beauty, in the end, was democratic.”⁷⁶ In actuality, Gibson’s creation of an ideal female type originated from the months he spent studying as an artist in Paris. After a relatively negative experience focusing on the Dutch masters, Gibson concluded that he did not like their portrayals of heavy, voluptuous woman; upon his return to the United States, Gibson told his sister that he was “determined to sell the American way” by depicting American female form as athletic and natural.⁷⁷ Regardless of who Gibson intended as his

⁷⁵ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics*, ed. Carl N. Degler (New York: Harper & Row, 1966): 148; Banner, 156.

⁷⁶ Banner, 158.

⁷⁷ Gibson Knowlton, *Longfield: The House on the Neck* (Providence: Oxford Press, 1956): 311.

prototypical “girl,” his illustrations appeared to perfectly match the young, athletically-minded Scandinavian women who were increasingly becoming the topic of great discussion in Chicago during the late-1890s and into the next century.

In the early stages of the developing cosmetics industry in the 1890s, as Kathy Peiss found, women were largely responsible for the formulation and organization of an emerging “beauty culture” to a remarkable extent. Both Peiss and Nan Enstad emphasized the importance of immigrant and working class women as entrepreneurs in this “beauty culture,” who played a surprisingly central role in redefining mainstream ideals of beauty and femininity into the 20th century.⁷⁸ By the turn of the century, it became increasingly acceptable for women of all classes to venture outside of the home for public entertainment and leisure – therefore, the meaning of being visible in the public sphere changed the ways that women viewed themselves and others. For many women of different racial or ethnic backgrounds, the notion of using cosmetic products to enhance or reshape their physical appearance to meet American standards of beauty meant the possibility to blend into mainstream society. While this was true for many groups of women, those who had the lightest features were actually placed in the forefront as the models of beauty according to popular cosmetic trends and media portrayals. One example of this trend was the invention of a new product in the midst of the explosion of cosmetics introduced to female consumers: bleach. Female consumers who made use of hydrogen peroxide and bleach as household cleaning products were

⁷⁸ For further discussion of the use of cosmetic goods by female immigrant consumers, see Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998): 4-5; Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999): 61, 95, 215n20, 229n18; Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Class Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986): 56-87.

warned of the potential of those products for changing the color of fabrics. The hair-bleaching properties of hydrogen peroxide were first discovered by actresses who hoped to replicate the new image of feminine sensuality introduced by the “British Blondes” who combined purity and voluptuousness with their iconic light features.⁷⁹ Influenced by displays at the World’s Columbian Exposition and trends practiced by the modern American woman, Sears Roebuck introduced a new product in 1896 to female consumers in the pages of its’ catalog: a liquid, hydrogen peroxide-based cosmetic product that promised to transform even the deepest tresses into flaxen locks.⁸⁰

Additionally, women with darker skins tones could choose to lighten their skin with a variety of products. These products held a dual purpose for immigrant and working class women; for them, cosmetics and paints marked distinctions between and within social classes in a time when white racial beauty was considered superior and civilized.⁸¹ One Scandinavian retailer in Chicago recognized the demand for products that would change the skin tone and color of women who desired to have more Nordic features. In an advertisement, Elén Maria Nordic offered women a return to the days of “creamy, flawless complexions enjoyed by the world renowned beauties in the court of King Gustav III of Sweden.”⁸² By using these tissue creams, cleansing oils, and astringents, Chicago’s female population could highlight the same admired features as

⁷⁹ Banner, 124.

⁸⁰ On an interesting note, at the same time Chicago’s Sears Roebuck introduced peroxide for use dyeing hair blonde, the company simultaneously sold blonde wigs and hair pieces made from real hair at a premium. While the brunette and black-haired pieces sold for \$1.00, blonde and grey-haired wigs sold for anywhere from \$1.50 to \$2.00. Sears Roebuck & Company Catalog, June 1896.

⁸¹ Kathy Peiss explained of this process, that “because appearance and character were considered to be commensurate, the beauty of white skin expressed Anglo-Saxon virtue and civilization,” thereby equating whiteness with a civilized demeanor for women. See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 31.

⁸² Advertisement from the pages of the newsletter of the Nordic Country Club, “The Nordic Fairway,” Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #6, Periodicals 1925-29, F. M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University, Chicago, IL.

their Scandinavian neighbors – a promise made to both Scandinavian and American consumers in the pages of Chicago’s various periodicals. For women who used these products to bleach their hair and skin, the choice to manipulate their appearance in such a drastic way to conform to a new ideal of femininity was significant; this physical change would later be linked to a set of stereotypes based on the selective actions of women who replicated these features.⁸³ While the invention of this singular product and resulting practice of physical manipulation would later explode into a contemporary feminist debate over female identity and character, it was clear that at the edge of a new century, Americans were in the midst of a transformation that placed the attainment of “Nordic” features as a priority.

In the years following the Exposition, American consumers began to pay attention to some of the novelty products from the Scandinavian countries; as one article in the *New York Times* noted, until the World’s Columbian Exposition, there was no established Scandinavian center for the distribution of the countries’ goods in America. After the fair, one of the Swedish Commissioners made a decisive move to create a center that would make available products from the “land of the midnight sun” to Americans who desired “something novel” in their homes.⁸⁴ As the author of the article noted, urban dwellers of the upper classes were aware of the positive qualities of Swedes their handicrafts from the Exposition: “We know Sweden as the home of the wood sloyd work. We are familiar with Swedish gymnastics; recognize a graduate from a Swedish school of domestic

⁸³ In the years following the modern women’s movement, a lively debate has emerged that links the essence of “becoming” blonde to a negotiated and tangible persona. One of the most fascinating contemporary feminist debates originated from a multimedia interactive exhibition, “Blonde,” which invited visitors to explore the notion of blonde not just as a hair color but as a state of mind. For further discussion of this exhibit see Jane Round, “Altogether Different: From Black to Blonde and Back Again,” *Feminist Review*, no. 81, *Bodily Interventions* (2005): 105-08.

⁸⁴ “Novelties from Sweden: Quaint Wares which have come into popular favor,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1899, pg. 21.

science as a household treasure, and when a Swedish artist shows us how to carve wood we know it is well done.”⁸⁵ The author went on to further recognize the positive qualities of Swedish women noted from the Exposition displays, and described the Swedish woman as “more independent than the majority of European [women]...she is able to take care of herself, travels alone, is well educated, and is more frequently than not educated to support herself if need be. She often does make her own living, even though she belongs to a good family, and is in good circumstances.”⁸⁶ At the same time, Chicago’s newspapers began to echo a similar preference for Scandinavian women; in one article, the author joked that the legal age at marriage be lowered especially for Swedish women while another found Danish women to be the most beautiful of the city’s Scandinavians.⁸⁷ Over the course of the following decade, Chicago’s newspapers would expand upon this vital concept of Scandinavian beauty and preferred physical attributes, thereby forming a new standard of feminine identity at the dawn of the modern era.

Scandinavian Culture, Nordic Identity, and the Urban Media

At the turn of the century, the formation of the “urban celebrity” – a social darling of the media whose only real accomplishments entailed marrying well and remaining visible in the public spotlight – had begun in both Chicago and New York. These urban celebrities preceded the famed ingénues of film or the cabaret girls and performers of the Ziegfeld follies and were the standard media fodder of the day. Female readers were able

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ “Marriageable age for Swedish Women,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 1892; “The Wonderful Blonde Beauties of Denmark,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 8, 1905.

to follow the everyday activities of their favorite social debutants through the gossip columns of their newspapers, which would often focus on large events such as weddings or romantic scandals. One such section in the *Chicago Tribune* featured “Gossip from Gotham” to its readers who sought to follow the urban celebrities of the city often epitomized for its glamour and cosmopolitanism. In February 1898, the section, which reported the courtship of Nellie Neustretter by railroad mogul William K. Vanderbilt, was quick to equate Neustretter’s “beautiful face and wondrous eyes” with her Swedish ancestry:

“Nellie Neustretter, who has had all Paris at her feet, is in New York, it is said, and living in luxurious apartments in an up-town street. In all of history of mad, extravagant, heartless Paris no other woman has played the dizzy part that has fallen to the lot of this beauty. Nellie Neustretter is a rather tall blonde of 28 or 29 years. She is part Swedish, and is known as the luckiest woman in Paris. William K. Vanderbilt met her in Paris five years ago, and was at once smitten with her beauty.”⁸⁸

Continuing with the air of scandal, the *Chicago Tribune* reported Neustretter’s pairing with Vanderbilt much to the dismay of his wife who immediately separated from him upon word in America of the pairing. Despite the reported adultery committed by Neustretter and Vanderbilt, the author carefully omitted any suggestion of wrong-doing on the part of Neustretter. In another less scandalous pairing within the city, the *Chicago Tribune* reported in April 1903 of the “romantic marriage” of Miss Lotten Lillieberg, described as “a cultivated woman of the highest type of Swedish beauty” and “highly connected in Sweden,” to Judge Arthur Henry Chetlain of the Cook County Superior Court. The couple, who met when Lillieberg worked as a companion to Chetlain’s mother, secretly married and kept the family in the dark until the newspapers reported the

⁸⁸ “Other Gossip from Gotham: Nellie Neustretter in New York,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, 1898.

marriage in the society columns.⁸⁹ While it is unclear as to why the couple kept their marriage a secret, one indication from the article points to the fact that the careful wording of “companion” may have stood in place of “domestic” – despite the level of “connection” Lillieberg had in Sweden, the marriage of a domestic servant to a high-standing public official could have potentially led to undesired gossip for the Chetlain family. Other articles featured in the pages of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Daily News* focused on the more casual pairings of society figures, nevertheless reporting every detail of the background of the bride and groom to their country of origin. An article published in July 1907 reported the pairing of Miss Ingeborg Katherine Grace Bade, described as “one of the leading society belles of the Norwegian capital,” to Dr. Anders Frick, an established Chicago doctor and “member of an aristocratic family in Malmo, Sweden.” The couple, who met in Chicago when Bade was traveling with the members of the student chorus of the University of Christiania, would publicly create a symbolic importance through their union, which Chicago’s newspapers enthusiastically noted as an “international alliance” between Norway and Sweden.⁹⁰ Each society column that featured women of Scandinavian descent contained an underlying discourse focused on their physical attributes as a factor in their social positions in addition to their status inherent in familial standing. For women who read Chicago’s society columns, one message was clear – while societal standing was a significant component in climbing the social ladder, the attainment of physical beauty could greatly enhance the possibility of “marrying up.”

⁸⁹ “This is my birthday – A romantic marriage: Miss Lotten Lillieberg,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 12, 1903.

⁹⁰ “Norwegian Belle is to Wed a Swede,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1907, pg. 6; the article was also reported in the *Chicago Daily News* on the same day.

The era of the Gibson girl represented a general American fascination with the female figure on public display – in connection to this created public personality formed by the media, a new form of pageantry took the stage around the turn of the century. Women in America had taken part in beauty pageants ever since Phineas T. Barnum held the first public display of women’s faces and figures before a panel of judges in 1854. Significantly, Barnum first used the concept of the beauty pageant as a display of female beauty as a showpiece of Swedish songstress Jenny Lind; Barnum praised Lind as a “mantle of moral respectability,” according to Lois Banner, yet he held an equal fascination with the regular newspaper accounts of noted New York City beauties.⁹¹ Despite the lavish prizes Barnum offered to the winners of his public pageants, potential contestants were difficult to come by during an era which prized female presence in the home and dissuaded her from the public stage. For Barnum, the concept of the photographic beauty pageant was much more of a success; women who feared association with those of disreputable social standing were much more inclined to participate in media promotional devices that portrayed them as society beauties. Between the 1850s and the 1890s, newspapers across the country regularly held photographic beauty contests, which remained a staple long into the 1920s. However, it was not until the World’s Columbian Exposition that the public beauty pageant would gain credibility as a morally acceptable activity for young female participants. At the World’s Columbian Exposition, alongside the buildings which housed statues of classical female goddesses, featured international displays like those of Sweden and Norway

⁹¹ Banner stated that Barnum first began the public beauty contest upon his realization of the “powerful appeal of beautiful women to their audiences,” and initially failed to realize the amount of moral opposition the public would display in protest of such public displays of the female form. For further context on the history of pageantry and female beauty, see Banner, *American Beauty*, 255-57.

placed female participants on the public stage as a symbol of proud cultural heritage in America and in the homeland. One featured display, the Congress of Beauty, comprised of young women from various countries represented at the fair dressed in the folk costumes of their native lands, became one of the most widely visited displays at the fair.⁹² After the fair, public commentators came to realize the significance in the popularity of this and other public displays of the female form, thereby resulting in the modern day beauty pageant.

Despite the push for further beauty pageants, Europeans were the first to truly accept the notion of female beauty on public display. Nevertheless, Chicago's newspapers were quick to report the minute details of such cosmopolitan beauty pageants, especially those focused on international beauties. One such contest held by a popular French magazine carefully illustrated the virtues of its various international beauties; in catering to its readers the *Chicago Tribune* paid particularly close attention to the Norwegian and Danish contestants. The *Tribune* described the small Norwegian with a French name, Hugues Le Roux, as a "blonde beauty" who nevertheless lacked a sense of style which the author unfortunately mistook as representative of all Norwegian women. Despite this fashion faux pas, the author found Le Roux to be equal in feminine beauty to her Scandinavian counterpart Adolphe Brisson – a Danish girl who showed a great sense of poise that influenced the author to describe the young Scandinavian girl as "more interesting" than a "grown American woman."⁹³ A similar international pageant inquired as to which Scandinavian country would prove to have the "world's most

⁹² For further discussion of the Congress of Beauty see David Berg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1982): 218; Banner, *American Beauty*, 259; Ellen Strain, *Public Places, Private Journeys: Ethnography, Entertainment, and the Tourist Gaze* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003): 55.

⁹³ "Paris excited over a beauty contest of all nations," *Chicago Tribune*, March 1, 1903, pg. 53.

beautiful living woman” – Sweden or Norway? As the *Chicago Tribune* would point out, the most beautiful woman would surely be found in one of these two countries, regardless of the fact that the pageant accounted for women of countries from all over the world. The remaining contestants were both described as “slender, straight, and well developed,” but the author specifically noted his surprise over the physical appearance of the Swedish contestant; she was not “blue eyed” or “light haired” as he assumed, but instead “a woman of finely chiseled, severe features, with eyes the depth and color of the wonderful dark blue mountain lakes, and with heavy, generally dark hair.”⁹⁴ In June, the judges of the international contest decided upon the Norwegian beauty, who they described to the press as “of the purest Norwegian type and is a girl of great charm as well as beauty.”⁹⁵ While it may never be known whether or not the aberrant features of the Swedish contestant resulted in her loss of the title of “the World’s Most Beautiful Living Woman,” it is clear that the media played a significant role in determining public opinion in relation to female beauty at the turn of the century and beyond.

Around the same time in Chicago, the reported beauty pageants in sophisticated European cities like Paris encouraged immigrant communities to hold their own “international” displays on a much smaller scale. Later that June, the Swedish Society’s Central Association for the Old People’s Home held a local beauty contest that resulted in an embarrassing outcome. The pageant held at the Society’s annual picnic at Park Ridge sought to decide upon the “prettiest Swedish girl in Chicago”; naturally, upon announcement of the contest, the picnic’s attendance more than doubled to over 6,000 attendees. After the pageantry, the judges announced six finalists, but due to the

⁹⁴ “Will the World’s Most Beautiful Living Woman be found in Sweden or Norway?” *Chicago Tribune*, January 19, 1908, article 3.

⁹⁵ “Most Beautiful Woman in Norway,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1908, pg. 21.

contestants' comeliness, the judges could not agree upon a winner, resulting in a **deadlock**. The head judge jokingly declared: "We will bring beauty experts to our next **picnic**, and with their aid will make the award."⁹⁶ While the local Swedish community **insinuated** that Swedish women were, indeed, the most beautiful in the city, several **Chicagoans** continued to instead find beauty in all Scandinavian women. In another **report** of a national beauty contest, the author posited that Chicago's Scandinavians were **the most beautiful women in the world**:

"The reason of Chicago's eminence in the beauty world is not far to seek. Chicago is the most cosmopolitan city on the globe, and the result of the contest shows all the types of world beauties...Chicago has all these national types of beauty, heightened by the mental and physical perfections of the Chicago spirit and the Chicago climate...Scandinavian beauties more radiant than any that bloom along the fiords of the North sea or the bay of Bothnia [are found here]. Nowhere in Europe may be found a local type of loveliness that may not be surpassed here."⁹⁷

In **March** 1912, a Chicago beauty pageant asked the public to be the judge in determining "**Chicago's** most beautiful working girls;" the contest counted Miss Goldie Johnson, a **Swedish** saleswoman in Marshall Field & Co.'s candle shade section as one of its **contestants**. In an interesting illustration, the *Chicago Tribune* pointed out that Johnson **did not** have "typical" Swedish features and instead described Johnson as having a "mass of **light brown** hair, big brown eyes emphasized by finely penciled brows, [and] a pretty **mouth**," but pointed out her Nordic complexion "that would make any beauty parlor

⁹⁶ "Judges unable to decide Swedish beauty contest; Embarrassment of Comeliness Results in a Deadlock and young women must wait for the next picnic," *Chicago Tribune*, June 29, 1903, pg. 4.

⁹⁷ "Here are the Rest of the 96 Prize Winning Beauties. Is the Most Beautiful of All Among Them?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, 1907, pg. 16.

famous.⁹⁸ Chicagoans and Scandinavians would continue to form opinions about what **feminine** traits and features were considered beautiful as the city's newspapers and **periodicals** reflected such public discourse – both positive and negative.

Conclusion

In 1901, O.N. Nelson asked a professor at the University of Minnesota about his **impressions** of the behavioral characteristics of Scandinavians – a group the professor **was** very familiar with at a university and city comprised largely of Scandinavians. To **Nelson's** inquiry, the professor commented: “the Scandinavians, with all their virtues, are **not** without faults. They are often narrow-minded, in the city sometimes clannish and **given** to making demands, political and social, as Scandinavian-Americans. The Swede is **frequently** jealous of the Norwegian, and vice versa. But as a class they are sober, **earnest**, industrious, and frugal.”⁹⁹ Nelson built upon his interviewee's comments, **breaking** down his own perspective on the specific characteristics that came to mind **when** he considered Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians separately as national groups. **Nelson** described Danish islanders (including southern Swedes in Skåne and Blekinge) as “**open** and frank, easy to become acquainted with, polite to strangers, not specially witty, but **refined** and polished in their intercourse with other people,” and found them to be **industrious**, frugal, peaceful, and held a great amount of energy and shrewd business

⁹⁸ “Are these Chicago's most beautiful working girls? Do you know of any more beautiful?” *Chicago Tribune*, March 10, 1912, pg. G4.

⁹⁹ O.N. Nelson unfortunately left his source as anonymous, yet noted in his text that he was a prominent scholar and respected Scandinavian-American at the University of Minnesota, giving credit to his opinion as a notable commentator on the subject. See Nelson, 65.

tactics.¹⁰⁰ In comparison to Norwegians, Nelson did not view Danes as agitators or **extremists**, nor as “aristocratic and conservative” as northern Swedes, but instead a **careful** combination of both Swedes and Norwegians in behavioral composition.¹⁰¹ In **consideration** of Swedes, Nelson painted the group as generally reserved, difficult to **become** acquainted with, and in many ways, as viewing themselves as part of an older **aristocracy**, and therefore above the other two groups. Speaking specifically of the **Swedish** man, Nelson noted that “he is proud of his country, its history, and himself...he **must** dress well, comply rigorously with the latest rules of etiquette, and drink the most **expensive** wine. He has a large assortment of bows, bobs, courtesies, and hat-liftings, **varying** according to the age, condition, and class distinction.”¹⁰² Because of these **behavioral** characteristics, the distinction between classes in Sweden, Nelson explained, was **far** greater and varied more than any of the other Scandinavian countries.

Ending his description with a final witty jab at his own group, Nelson pointed out that **to** many other Scandinavians (and Europeans as a whole), Swedes were often called the “**Frenchmen of the North**” for their snobby air and distinctive refined tastes.¹⁰³ In **comparison** to Swedes and Danes, Norwegians, Nelson found, were far less ceremonious and **held** very little class distinction amongst them. If a Norwegian happened upon a **stranger**, they would be treated, according to Nelson, with a certain kind of cold courtesy **described** more as a casualty of shyness than rudeness. Above all, Norwegians were “**independent**, somewhat haughty, radical, progressive, extreme, and above all,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 24.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Norwegians...called the Englishmen of the North.”¹⁰⁴ Despite all of his characterizations, Nelson only briefly noted the fact that his findings were based on his own observations as a Swede. As Nelson’s discussion would show, a new Nordic identity was forged in the shadow of the World’s Columbian Exposition – one that continued to be negotiated by Scandinavians and Americans alike. At the commencement of a new century – one that would encompass all that is soon-to-be modern – Chicagoans were unknowingly perched on the edge of social and physical change for their city. As this chapter has investigated, there was a significant process undertaken by Scandinavians and their neighbors in distinguishing social perceptions on racial and ethnic identity around the turn of the century. The process of selection was negotiated by both groups, however for Scandinavians, the process of identity formation turned in their favor as native Chicagoans came to prefer Nordic immigrants over other groups based on a set of physical and behavioral characteristics. After both groups determined the basis of a “preferred” immigrant class, these ideological discussions would expand to include the process and experience of work. The combination of these thematic discussions would continue to influence the lives of Chicago’s Scandinavians into the 1910s, as many found themselves faced with societal pressures to live up to the images Chicagoans created for them, and those which they created for themselves.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Chapter Three

“Everywhere were Swedish women, much sought after and well paid”: Scandinavians, Domestic Service, and the Experience of Work in Chicago

In 1912, after his travels to the United States, Swedish author Johan Person **dedicated** a chapter of his book, *Svensk-Amerikanska Studier*, to “Our Serving Sister[s]” – **S**wedish domestics who, he believed, were the pride of the country. By this time, **according** to Person, employers and the media in Chicago came to view Sweden and the **other** Scandinavian countries as “nation[s] of servants – most domestic, happy, willing to **work**, friendly and beautiful servant girls.”¹ In his piece, Person went on to further boast **that** Scandinavian girls were “much more popular” than any other immigrant group in **domestic** employment as many American families counted Swedes and other “service girls” as their “favorites.” Not only were Scandinavian women an asset to families who **were** lucky enough to employ them, but they were also good citizens in the eyes of their **community**; as Person emphasized, “the Swedish-American newspapers count them as **their** best subscribers, the Swedish-American churches as their best members, and **S**wedish-Americans in general, we believe, as their “best girls.”² One U.S. study showed **that** Person’s observations were not just another example of national pride; next to **A**merican-born servants, American employers showed comparatively high preference for **S**candinavians to work in their homes because they had gained a reputation for being “honest, diligent, and hard-working, willing to learn and they were seldom

¹ Johan Person, “Den Tjänande System” (Our Serving Sister”), in *Svensk-Amerikanska Studier* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern, 1912) *Translations mine*, 106.

² *Ibid*, 104.

complaining.”³ Scandinavian women came to Chicago well-prepared, with extensive information on working conditions and wages they could expect to receive for their work. Most importantly, as this stream of single young women arrived in the city between the 1880s and the 1910s, many were admittedly conscious of their value and took full advantage of the preferential status established by employers and their own communities. For Scandinavians, the experience of domestic service offered a chance to become versed in the characteristics of a “real lady,” live in one of the palatial homes of Chicago’s affluent North Shore region, and potentially move up the social ladder through their comparatively high earnings as domestics. Stina Hirsch, whose family worked as domestics in some of the most beautiful North Shore homes, recalled that their experiences as domestics influenced their values, habits, styles, and behaviors as they acquired tastes “they could hardly afford.” Nevertheless, Hirsch admitted that these were the qualities “that seemed to distinguish live-in Swedish domestics from any other group of immigrants” and on Chicago’s North Shore, “everywhere were Swedish women, much sought after and well paid.”⁴ The favorable experiences of Scandinavian domestic servants in Chicago offer a vital illustration of preferential treatment on a larger scale afforded to Scandinavian workers, and to their children as second-generation ethnics.

Domestic service is an occupation that is given an extensive amount of attention within the historiography of women, immigration, and labor as the position lends itself to

³ U.S. Senate, *Reports of the Immigration Commission, Occupations of the First and Second Generation of Immigrants in the United States* (Washington D.C., 1911): 71. Another localized study of Minnesota’s immigrant workers reflected a similar preference for Scandinavian domestics amongst American employers, who applauded their servants for their hard work and their willingness to learn English. See *First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Minnesota for the Two Years Ending December 31, 1887-88* (St. Paul: thos. A. Clark, 1888): 157, 154, 165, 160.

⁴ As discussed in chapter two, Stina Hirsch’s thesis serves as a vital primary source in detailing the experiences of herself and her family members as Swedish domestic servants on Chicago’s North Shore at the turn of the century. See Stina Hirsch, “The Swedish Maid: 1900-1915,” 5.

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a vibrant discussion on various themes including class conflict, gender relations, and the effects of industrialization. Prior to David Katzman's seminal work, *Seven Days a Week*, and the study of "new social history," historians had only looked superficially at the position, yet Katzman brought significant attention to the dynamics of domestic service, a position he referred to as "the last pre-modern occupation" and also the most prevalent form of women's paid labor prior to 1900.⁵ Katzman's early work emphasized the negative connotations associated with domestic service as his study argued that while servants' wages and living conditions were equal or better than those of female factory workers, domestic service was generally looked down upon by working class women and servants themselves, stressing the incompatibility of live-in service with modern values.⁶

⁵ Some of the more prevalent studies on domestic service and female immigrants published prior to Katzman's work include a number of studies dedicated to Irish domestics – a group associated with domestic service as much, if not more, than Scandinavian women – as well as Italians, and African Americans. However, as Katzman explained, the study of African American domestics in the north was, prior to 1978, still an incredibly understudied topic due to the combination of an absence of contemporary research in the area and the historical invisibility of such workers. Therefore, the majority of studies available on African American domestics in northern cities were limited to sociological studies conducted in the 1920s, aside from a select number of monographs. For a few notable examples of studies on domestic service published before 1978, see Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants: A Study in Acculturation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941); Blaine e. McKinley, "'Strangers in the gates': Employer Reactions Towards Domestic Servants in America, 1825-1875 (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1969); Douglas V. Shaw, *The Making of An Immigrant City: Ethnic and Cultural Conflict in Jersey City, New Jersey, 1850-1877* (New York, 1976); Virginia Yans McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Elizabeth Ross Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service in the United States," (M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1923); Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago* (Chicago, 1922); David Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973). See also David Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978): vii-viii. The influence of Katzman's monograph was notable, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a number of studies dedicated to the study of domestic work and household labor in America helped to expand the historiography of an occupation with great depth. Some useful studies include Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1981); Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York, 1982); Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Industrial America* (Middletown, Conn., 1983); Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983): 70-105; Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Christine B.N. Chin, *In Service and Servitude: Foreign Female Domestic Workers and the Malaysian "Modernity" Project* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁶ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 44.

However, Katzman's narrative not only failed to distinguish between the experiences of native-born and immigrant domestics in its vast study, but also fell short in recognizing the vital position Ulf Beijbom took on the occupation in his 1971 demographic study, *Swedes in Chicago*. In his study, Beijbom instead found that Scandinavian women took pride in their skills as potential domestics and showed great determination in locating service positions prior to their arrival in Chicago. Beijbom would later argue in his chapter, "The Promised Land for Swedish Maids," that Katzman's assertion, that domestic service was looked down upon and rife with social stigmas, did not apply to Scandinavian domestics, who instead were of "a sort of privileged class of working women."⁷

Historians of Scandinavian America, such as Beijbom, Joy Lintelman, and Margareta Matovic would continue to build upon this notion of preference and privilege in relation to Swedish domestics, culminating in Lintelman's most recent work, *I Go to America*, however none of these works successfully interrogate the significance of urban space, American social mores, or the meanings of "privilege" in connection to the proposed ease in employment and work experience. Furthermore, these studies employ a focused vision of Swedish domestic servants on a national level, detailing the opinions of their communities towards their jobs, yet fail to examine the role of the larger ethnic group or American opinion, in the experiences of domestics within a single city.⁸ My

⁷ Ulf Beijbom, "The Promised Land for Swedish Maids," in *Swedes in America: Intercultural and Interethnic Perspectives on Contemporary Research*, ed. Ulf Beijbom (Växjö, Sweden: The Swedish Emigrant Institute Series, 1993):122; David Katzman, 143.

⁸ The larger contribution of Scandinavians to the occupation of domestic service continues to be a topic that is understudied in comparison to other immigrant groups and African Americans. Furthermore, while the prototype of the "Swedish maid" has been defined and redefined by scholars like Ulf Beijbom and Joy Lintelman, the specific experiences of Norwegian and Danish domestics are, to a large extent, omitted from the historiography. For further examination, see Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago: A Demographic and Social Study of the 1846-1880 Immigration* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1971); 172-73, 197; Odd

chapter looks to fill these gaps in the historical narrative by examining the various intersections of preference in employment as indicated by domestic servants in Chicago and its outlying suburban enclaves between the 1880s and the 1910s. This focused examination of Scandinavian domestic servants in Chicago connects larger themes of ethnic group identity, the larger meanings of work for Scandinavian men and women, and the influence of elite Chicagoans in building such preferential ideologies in reference to Scandinavians and their work. Furthermore, this chapter begins to investigate the issue of agency in relation to the experience of work for Scandinavians. Whereas previous standard works on women's work limited the scope of worker agency within employment, this study takes a different perspective to explore the notion of significant agency within what would seemingly be an oppressive workplace on the surface. Just as the current historiography on American immigration focuses on active people who were subjects of their own lives rather than objects of historical processes, it is vital to study the experiences of this group of men and women as part of a larger process of personal agency.

In an elite world that valued characteristics in their employees that would become the leading catchwords for the Progressive movement – efficiency, expertise, beauty – Chicago's north shore residents would contribute a vital component of this story. Yet, historians of urban Scandinavian-Americans have missed the opportunity to delve into

Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago before 1930* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 155-56; Joy Lintelman, "'America is the woman's promised land': Swedish Immigrant Women and American Domestic Service," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, v. 8, n. 2 (Spring 1989): 9-23; Lintelman, "'Our Serving Sisters': Swedish-American Domestic Servants and their Ethnic Community," *Social Science History*, v. 15, n. 3 (Autumn 1991): 381-395; Beijbom, "The Promised Land for Swedish Maids," in *Swedes in America*, 110-125; Margareta Matovic, "Embracing a Middle-Class Life: Swedish-American Women in Lake View," in *Peasant Maids – City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America* ed. Christiane Harzig et. al. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997): 261-298; Lintelman, *I Go to America: Swedish American Women and the Life of Mina Anderson* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009): 92-134.

this intriguing world, where domestic work in any of these homes was highly valued and placed at a premium by its workers. As Joy Lintelman previously indicated, Swedish women frequently changed employers and geographic location as “they chose positions in domestic service as well as other occupations that offered them the best combination of wages, working conditions, and time off.”⁹ Yet the question still remains: Why were these women able to make choices in employment to a great extent than their immigrant peers? And why were Scandinavian women eager to take such positions that were considered to be “beneath” American women and other immigrant groups within the “old” immigrant class? In answering these questions, a majority of the chapter focuses on women in domestic service for two major reasons: first, because of the importance of the position as the most popular employment choice of single Scandinavian immigrant women in Chicago and throughout America. As the Dillingham Commission reported in its study of the U.S. Census of 1900, 62% of Swedish-born and 75% of Norwegian-born, gainfully employed women worked in service positions at the turn of the century in America, therefore, the significance of this position is clear.¹⁰ Second, work as a domestic servant in Chicago provided many benefits to Scandinavian women including reasonable wages, security, English-acquisition, and a beneficial social persona – all factors that would positively affect their children in later years. And while the role of men and their work were a vital contribution to later economic and social success, Scandinavian domestic servants made use of their beneficial positions to save money, marry later, and provide for their families, later emphasizing the importance of education

⁹ Joy Lintelman, *I Go to America: Swedish American Women and the Life of Mina Anderson* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009): 94.

¹⁰ As a note, the statistical information of Danish women working as domestic servants was combined with Swedish and Norwegian statistics due to the comparatively smaller number of Danish female immigrants. See *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, v. 1 (New York, 1970): 830-38.

and cultural preservation to their children. As the editors of *Swedes in America* pointed out, Scandinavian live-in servants often met better material conditions than newly arrived men, and therefore had the capacity to contribute more to the community, and later to their families through their earnings.¹¹ Even more importantly, many Scandinavians took domestic positions with clear goals of becoming a member of the modern urban bourgeoisie of Chicago; Margareta Matovic emphasized this goal in her study of Swedish women in Lake View who told of how they saved money for a respectable dowry, would postpone marriage until they found a husband who met their standards, and would later move to the middle-class section of Lake View to give their children a healthy, clean environment to prosper within.¹²

The chapter begins with a demographic study of the two most populated Scandinavian communities in Chicago at the turn of the century as a contextual backdrop to the larger experiences of Scandinavians and work. After establishing the demographics of the community, the chapter focuses more directly on both sides of employment in Chicago's elite households – the American perspective as employers and the

¹¹ The editors of *Swedes in America* specifically emphasized the vital importance of women in Swedish communities throughout America at the turn of the century through their work as domestic servants, but also through their work to preserve cultural traditions within their communities. "Women played a great role for ethnicity," they noted, as "both formal and informal expressions of Swedishness were supported and often generated by females" through social clubs and programs, as well as a faithful readership of the ethnic press amongst immigrant women. Furthermore, Joy Lintelman recently pointed out that while gender, along with social class, race, time of migration and marital status, worked to shape immigrant women's experiences, she also considers women as historical actors in their own right – not as suggested in Vilhelm Moberg's classic work, that their experiences were largely shaped by the males in their lives. While this study supports Lintelman's position on the vital importance of immigrant women's voices in history, I argue that it is imperative to study the role of Scandinavian domestics within the larger perspective of their communities and their families. See *Swedes in America*, 10; Lintelman, *I Go to America*, 10; Vilhelm Moberg, *The Emigrants: A Novel* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951).

¹² As Matovic and other scholars found, once Scandinavian women were far enough removed from the cultural practices of the peasant classes at home, many made the conscious decision to postpone marriage and limit their families to a number of children they knew they could support on the family economy. As will be discussed later in the chapter, Scandinavian women, perhaps more than any other immigrant group in Chicago, chose to marry within their national group, which also played an important role in their choice of spouse. See *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 5.

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Scandinavian perspective as servants – to show the correlation between the opinions employers and Chicagoans at large formed in regards to Scandinavian domestic service and the capacity of domestics and their children to “move up” the social strata through employment in positions not readily available to other immigrant groups. As a concluding discussion, the study of domestic service will then focus on the second-generation in regards to available employment, and the educational and intellectual goals of young Scandinavians – goals which would carefully blend traditions from home with American ideals.

Two Scandinavian Neighborhoods at the Turn of the Century: A Demographic Comparison of the Experiences of Work and Community

As discussed in chapter one, the pull of American industry in the burgeoning cities of the United States was insatiable for Scandinavians in the midst of a dire time of crop failures, over-population and unemployment in the homeland. Between 1879 and 1893, Chicago’s immense economic growth coincided with the largest influx of Scandinavian immigrants to reach the city’s borders as a group comprised largely of single youth between the ages of 15 and 29 came to Chicago in search of employment.¹³ Ulf Beijbom explained of this time period in Sweden that many migrants of this wave followed a similar pattern of movement; both men and women would migrate to larger cities in the homeland for better employment opportunities, and would soon find that

¹³ For further statistics on the “peak” wave of Scandinavian immigrants between 1879 and 1893, see chapter one. On a larger scale, between 1881 and 1890, 65% of Scandinavians to arrive in Chicago were between 15 and 40 years of age, 11% were over 40 years old, and 24% of Scandinavian immigrants were children under 15. See U.S. Eleventh Census, 1890, “Population,” Part II, 650-651; O.N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States* (Minneapolis: O.N. Nelson and Company, 1901): 46.

their chances for upward mobility would be much greater in the United States. As tradition in Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish cultures dictated, children were responsible for taking care of their families when they were unable to support themselves. When remembering her decision to leave Sweden for Chicago, one young woman considered her journey as the only solution to helping her parents. Upon the prompting of her best friend to come to Chicago to work as a domestic servant, she later explained to author Edith Janson her realization that if her journey turned sour, she could always turn to her parents to return the favor: “many receive a high rate of interest on [American] money in Sweden, so I have decided to send some home from time to time and let father place it in the bank.”¹⁴

In considering the possibility of emigration for the purpose of employment, many Scandinavians perceived the typical American workplace as highly valued and revered by its workers. One editorial in *Svenska Tribunen* reflected this viewpoint in the homeland, noting that “[the worker in Sweden] knows that the American worker is more respected socially, even if the requirements for good work are higher than here, and he submits to these strict demands, because it increases his self respect. He, therefore, emigrates.”¹⁵ Family lineage also played a major role in determining the path of potential immigrants of this wave; in rural areas of Scandinavia – much like other places such as Ireland and parts of England – family estates would commonly pass intact to the eldest son, thereby leaving the younger sons and daughters at the mercy of their eldest siblings.¹⁶ In turn,

¹⁴ Florence Edith Janson, *The Background of Swedish Immigration 1840-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931): 22.

¹⁵ “The Emigration from Sweden and the Cause of it,” *Svenska Tribunen*, June 7, 1882 (Editorial).

¹⁶ A number of historians of immigration previously noted this practice throughout the countries of Northern Europe. For some examples, see Janson, *The Background of Swedish Immigration 1840-1930*, 14; Hasia Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 1-29; Matovic, “Maids In Motion: Swedish Women in

young men and women from rural Scandinavia comprised the majority of immigrants to the United States in search of unskilled work from the 1880s through the turn of the century.

After deciding to migrate to the United States, a portion of the peasant classes would temporarily migrate to neighboring countries for transitory employment to fund their migration to America. However, as the subject of Joy Lintelman's book, Mina Anderson complained, domestics in Sweden and Norway were poorly paid; for her first year as a full-time domestic Norway, Anderson's wages were "twenty-five kronor, two pairs of shoes, and a few other small things," which averaged far below the average wage of about sixty-eight kronor per year for female farm servants in the 1880s.¹⁷ While both Sweden and Norway were slow to urbanize, many women would migrate to larger cities such as Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Christiania (Oslo) to look for positions that could fund the cost of a one-way ticket to America. Mainly due to this pattern, the number of urban domestics doubled between 1870 and 1900, with Stockholm drawing the highest numbers out of the three Scandinavian cities.¹⁸ In looking at the sex ratio of those who followed this pattern, it was clear that Chicago surpassed Scandinavia's cities in attracting young Scandinavian women of typical working age to make the journey to America. Similar observations on age and sex showed that Chicago's Scandinavians had good prospects of furnishing the growing city with young manpower. Ulf Beijbom alluded to the notion that both the youth and willingness of young Scandinavian men to accept almost any kind of employment may have outweighed the fact that they arrived

Dalsland," in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 110-126; Dierdre Mageean, "To Be Matched or to Move: Irish Women's Prospects in Munster," in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 75-87.

¹⁷ Lintelman, *I Go to America*, 46.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 50.

without any real vocational training for the industrial and constructional work that predominated the labor market.¹⁹ In 1890, the majority of Scandinavians in the American workforce held unskilled, working class positions in comparison to other immigrants of the “old” immigration of Northern and Western Europe.²⁰

Table 3.1: Percentage of Manual Workers of Selected Groups in the Labor Force, Chicago, 1890

Country of Origin	Male	Female
Native White	53.56	55.59
Great Britain	72.40	71.73
Germany	85.85	90.48
Ireland	86.24	91.17
Sweden and Norway	90.39	95.10
Denmark	86.02	91.44

(Source: U.S. Eleventh Census, 1890, “Population,” Part II, 650-651; Michael Funchion, “Irish Chicago: Church, Homeland, Politics, and Class: The Shaping of an Ethnic Group, 1870-1900,” in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, eds. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d’A Jones (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995): 78.

While some public accounts lamented the position of the common immigrant worker in Chicago’s unskilled labor class, several Scandinavians were quick to show the pride they held in the positions and their willingness to learn quickly and adhere to their employer’s demands. Looking back on the prior two decades, in 1900 Scandinavian historian O.N. Nelson commented proudly that age, sex and occupation “prove that the Scandinavian

¹⁹ Beijborn, *Swedes in Chicago*, 141.

²⁰ The above table refers to Chicago’s workers who were not considered “white-collar” workers of the percentage of the population that worked, including immigrants and their children. The percentages noted are based on the total labor force less the number in unlisted and unclassifiable occupations. The percentage of workers in unlisted and unclassifiable occupations ranged from a high of 19.5 percent for native white males of native parentage to a low of 2.25 for Swedish- and Norwegian-born females. See U.S. Eleventh Census, 1890, “Population,” Part II, 650-651; Michael Funchion, “Irish Chicago: Church, Homeland, Politics, and Class: The Shaping of an Ethnic Group, 1870-1900,” in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d’A. Jones (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995): 78.

immigrants are the cream of the working classes.”²¹ Speaking more broadly of Scandinavians in America, Nelson was quick to point out between 1881 and 1890, 1 out of 5,914 was a clergyman, 1 out of 5,089 a musician, 1 out of 7,236 a physician or surgeon, and 1 out of 3,074 a teacher – “in other words, only 1 out of 1,017 had a profession, while 1 out of 12 was a skilled laborer, and one-half of the Scandinavian immigrants were either farmers, merchants, or servants.”²² While Scandinavians would continue to work as manual laborers into the twentieth century, the numbers of those considered to be unskilled fell within ten years as workers acquired skills on the job, learned English, and thereby moved into higher paying positions. An influx of “new” immigrants including Poles and Italians assisted in this process however, Scandinavians were both quick and eager to learn in their attempts to climb Chicago’s social ladder. According to the U.S. Census of 1900, in relation to the other groups of the “old” immigrant class, Scandinavians still gravitated to manual labor, but by comparison, Italians and Poles outnumbered them as unskilled laborers.²³ These numbers stand out more juxtaposed to other immigrant and native demographics as shown in the following table:

²¹ Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians*, 46.

²² Nelson, 46.

²³ These percentages are based on the total labor force minus the number in unlisted occupations. Unlike the 1890 census (see table 1), all listed occupations could be classified, and the percentage of unlisted occupations was less than 5 percent for most groups. See U.S. Twelfth Census, 1900, “Special Reports: Occupations,” 516-523; Funchion, “Irish Chicago,” in *Ethnic Chicago*, 79.

Table 3.2: Percentage of Manual Workers of Selected Groups in the Labor Force, Chicago, 1900

Country of Origin	Male	Female
Native White	43.16	39.18
British	56.07	45.53
Germans	69.03	70.03
Irish	71.67	61.72
Scandinavian	78.02	80.54
Poles	90.67	87.66
Italians	83.99	80.03

(Source: U.S. Twelfth Census, 1900, "Special Reports: Occupations," 516-523; Funchion, "Irish Chicago," in *Ethnic Chicago*, 79.)

In an effort to understand the problems of congestion of immigrants in large cities throughout America, during the beginning years of the 1900s, the Dillingham Commission conducted a comprehensive study of representative immigrant groups in America's seven largest cities. The result of the wide-ranging study created a snapshot of urban immigrant communities, exhibiting the living and working conditions of the largest immigrant groups in each city. In the Immigration Commission's study of Chicago, researchers located the Townsend street district between Oak and Elm streets to the west, and the north side of Oak between Sedgwick and Orleans streets, as the most congested Swedish area in the city. The neighborhood, described as one whose racial character was in the midst of change, was predominantly Swedish; out of the 161 households examined for the study, 85 were occupied by first- or second-generation Swedes.²⁴ Based on the numbers of other ethnic groups, the Immigration Commission would predict the inevitable flight of Swedes and other immigrants of northwest Europe from the area as a

²⁴ *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Immigrants in Cities; A Study of the Population of Selected Districts in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Milwaukee*, vol. 26 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911): 262.

result of the encroachment of South Italians – an occurrence that pushed many to move away from the original Swede Town on the north side of the Chicago River. Prior to this eventual flight however, the finding of the Commission showed that the Swedes who lived in the Townsend District were loyal to the area and had lived in the neighborhood for more than ten years. The district exhibited a comparatively balanced sex ratio of men to women (327 men to 332 women), and were relatively older than those who resided in Lake View to the north (50% of men and 45% of women were between the ages of 30 to 44 years of age).²⁵ In helping to pay for their living quarters, 40% of the Swedish households examined took in boarders or lodgers, but for the most part, Swedes largely took up gainful employment outside of the home in order to contribute to the family wage in comparison to other immigrant groups. Within this older demographic of the Swedish population of Chicago in the Townsend District, the following table illustrates that native-born females were much more likely to be employed than their foreign-born counterparts, whereas employment for both native- and foreign-born males was relatively static.²⁶ The results of this study pointed to a community in flux, whereas a high percentage of foreign-born females at home pointed to a large demographic of older, married women, with their daughters completing school or working throughout the city, as depicted in table 3.3:

²⁵ The Commission report noted that “next to the Swedes the race most important numerically is the South Italian. The South Italian settlement is expanding in this direction and already 27 households have moved into this section of the street, the majority into basement apartments,” thereby signaling an influx of immigrants outside of the margins of Swedes who had built homes within the area. Prior to their eventual movement, the report noted that of 141 foreign-born Swedish immigrants interviewed, 103 had lived in the area and 126 had lived in the city for over ten years – one of two groups exhibiting the highest percentages of entire residence in a single neighborhood. See *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, 262-3,268,269, 328-30.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 311,312.

Table 3.3: General Occupation of Swedish Males and Females 16 Years of Age or Over in the Townsend District

	Native-Born		Foreign-Born	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Number Reporting	23	43	135	150
(Percent)				
Domestic Service	0%	4.7%	5.9%	16.7%
Manufacturing	56%	25.6%	60%	8.7%
General Labor	0%	0%	3%	0%
Trade	26.1%	25.6%	11.1%	3.3%
Transportation	17.4%	0%	14.1%	0%
Other	0%	2.3%	3%	.7%
At Home	0%	4.7%	0%	0%
At School	0%	4.7%	0%	0%

(Source: *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, 262-3, 268, 269, 328-30.)

In analyzing the demographics of Scandinavian women at work between 1890 and the turn of the century, historians like Margareta Matovic concluded that, once Scandinavian women married, they did not work outside the home “as a rule.”²⁷ Yet, this assertion is misleading, especially in light of the history of the marriage practices of Scandinavians in Chicago, as well as comparative demographics of neighborhoods like the Townsend District, or of neighboring immigrant groups. In the Townsend District, the number of Swedish wives who worked outside of the home was 20.7% - a small number compared to the majority within the group who did not work outside the home. However, as table 3.4 illustrates, when compared to all of the other immigrant groups included in the

²⁷ Matovic uses her chapter in the edited volume on the experiences of four different immigrant groups in Chicago to create a snapshot of Swedish families living in Lake View at the turn of the century, when the Swedish community experienced the benefits of middle-class status. As Matovic uses the term “middle-class” to loosely describe the comparative ease that Swedes experienced in their adjustment to urban life in Chicago, she misses the opportunity to examine the demographics of Swedes in the labor force to further interrogate the notion of what it meant to be part of the middle-class in Chicago as an immigrant. See Margareta Matovic, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life: Swedish-American Women in Lake View,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America*, ed. Christiane Harzig (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997): 268-9.

Immigration Commission's study of immigrants in Chicago, Swedish wives ranked the highest of those who worked²⁸:

Table 3.4: Wives at Work, by general nativity and race of head of family in Chicago, 1890

Nativity/Race	Total number of wives reported	Number of wives at work (%)	Average annual earnings
Bohemian	143	27 (18.9%)	\$137
German	122	10 (8.2%)	\$151
Hebrew (Russian)	90	7 (7.8%)	(No answer)
Hebrew (Other)	29	0	(Not applicable)
Irish	78	3 (3.8%)	(No answer)
Italian, North	53	7 (13.2%)	(No answer)
Italian, South	218	41 (18.8%)	\$127
Lithuanian	117	3 (2.6%)	(No answer)
Magyar	20	0	(Not applicable)
Polish	338	23 (6.8%)	\$153
Serbian	7	0	(Not applicable)
Slovak	64	3 (4.7%)	(No answer)
Swedish	111	23 (20.7%)	\$205

(Source: *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, 324)

Furthermore, as the Commission was quick to point out, Swedish wives who worked reported average annual earnings of \$205 - \$50 higher than the average for any of the other immigrant groups studied.

Of the Swedish women who did work within this district, married or single, it was clear that a command of English was vital in earning higher wages as native-born women were able to command far more in average yearly wages than those who were foreign-born; of those who reported their wages to the Immigration Commission, their earnings averaged \$327, with the majority earning \$400 to \$500 a year, compared to foreign-born

²⁸ In the column listing the annual earnings of wives at work, the Immigration Commission noted that it did not compute the earnings for those groups due to the small number of subjects involved; reporting these numbers would have skewed the balance of earnings to appear that these groups made more than those who had larger numbers of wives who worked. See *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, 324.

women who only brought in \$221. Out of all other immigrant groups in Chicago, Swedes (and Scandinavians in general) prioritized learning English above all other assimilatory functions stressed by nativist Chicagoans. This priority was obvious in the investigation of the Townsend District, which found that out of 117 males and 139 females investigated, 91.5% of the men and 82% of the women spoke English – numbers far higher than any of the other groups examined.²⁹ In regards to literacy, Swedes reported the highest numbers out of all foreign-born immigrants polled who could both read and write; with competency of English and the abilities to read and write, Swedes held the potential to move up the social ladder relatively quickly in comparison to other groups. The Commission report noted that the Swedes, Germans, and Irish formed a group of immigrants in Chicago whose yearly earnings were distinctly higher than the earnings of other immigrant groups, while Swedes earned the highest wages among the foreign-born and were second only to the wage-earners of native parentage.³⁰ The reasons for this phenomenon, the Commission concluded, was based on the eagerness of Swedes, Germans, and Irish to adapt to American society, but hinted that the Swedes had more factors working in their favor. “The Swedes show great readiness in acquiring this most valuable equipment for industrial life,” the Commission claimed, and many illustrated the essential capabilities of social networking, adaptation, and even forgery if deemed necessary in finding steady work.³¹ One Swede who desired to work with “big machines” upon arrival to Chicago found that such keen tactics coupled with a bit of know-how from the old country would come to benefit him in finding good work: “The boss was German. He asked me if I had any experience on big machines and I thought of the

²⁹ *Ibid*, 332-33.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 315-16.

³¹ *Ibid*, 316, 336-37.

threshing machine at home and answered in German: "Naturlichtvis, mein herren. ["Naturally, sir]" "You can start tomorrow," he said."³² Within the more insular community of Lake View, Scandinavians were required to form different tactics in relating to their own thereby creating a community that resembled an urban environment from the old country.

In comparison to the Townsend District just north of the burgeoning downtown business district, Lake View was the center of Scandinavian life in Chicago. Annexed to Chicago in June 1889, the small farming community quickly transformed into housing divisions and a bustling commercial district made up of businesses that catered to its Scandinavian neighbors who were mostly Swedish or Norwegian; at the turn of the century, Swedes constituted 54 and 57 percent of the total population of enumeration districts 763 and 765 in the 25th ward, or the area which spanned the neighborhood of Lake View.³³ In comparison to the Townsend District, the Scandinavian occupants of Lake View were relatively younger; 40% of Swedes were children under 15 and the majority of the adult population was between the ages of 20 and 40. Of the adult population (15 and older), Scandinavian men often worked in skilled positions or as artisans while women who lived in the neighborhood largely chose work as needleworkers or domestic servants.³⁴

³² Lilly and Lennart Setterdahl, *Bror Johansson's Chicago: with poems by Bror Johansson* (Moline, IL: Lilly and Lennart Setterdahl, 1985); in Swedish and English: 78 (*Translation mine*).

³³ Matovic, "Embracing a Middle-Class Life," in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 268.

³⁴ Analysis of the Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900; Matovic, 269.

Table 3.5: Occupational structure in 1900 of men and women in enumeration districts 762 and 765, in percent of the population older than 15 years

Men			Women		
Occupation	Number	%	Occupation	Number	%
High officials	6	1.2	Entrepreneurs	6	1.2
Large entrepreneurs	7	1.4	Domestic servants	22	4.4
Low officials/clerks	47	9.5	Laundresses	12	2.4
Small entrepreneurs	42	8.5	Saleswomen	11	2.2
Artisans	149	30.0	Needleworkers	43	8.6
Skilled workers	84	16.9	Clerical workers	14	2.8
Unskilled workers	44	8.9	Factory workers	2	0.4
Service workers	66	13.3	Nurses	6	1.2
No answer given	51	10.3	Boarding	2	0.4
Total	496	100	Teachers	5	1.0
			Service workers	5	1.0
			No answer given	373	74.5
			Total	501	100

(Source: Matovic, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, Table 7.1, 269.)

In her analysis of the occupational structure of Lake View in 1900, Matovic found that the results of the sexual division of labor were misleading due to the fact that several married or widowed women had “invisible” employment inside and outside the home as small-scale entrepreneurs running a bakery, a boarding house, or a laundry – jobs that responders did not consider as “work” and therefore did not report to the census enumerator.³⁵ Another misleading result of the census records stems from the number of women reported as domestic servants; significant numbers of women who previously called Lake View their home worked as live-in domestics with families on the North

³⁵ Matovic uses this assertion to point to the significant number of women who did not give an answer for occupation, despite the fact that many of them actually worked and reported their places of work as their home address. See Matovic, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 269.

Shore and throughout Chicago thereby creating a preponderance of young, Scandinavian women in areas other than Lake View. What remains clear about the census results, however, was that Lake View was a vital location in Chicago for both young Scandinavian families looking for an insular community to raise their children and for recent immigrants who wished to surround themselves with the familiarities of home.

At the turn of the century, Lake View was abuzz with activity, as new immigrants moved into the neighborhood and business owners capitalized on the needs of their Scandinavian neighbors in keeping the traditions of home alive – a place where Scandinavians “could find anything that they needed.” “Actually, it was better and more convenient there than in Sweden,” Bror Johansson described of the consumer district of Lake View, comprised of popular meeting places, Scandinavian restaurants, dancing halls, and theaters where patrons could engage in the language and culture of home.³⁶ In addition to the network of small businesses that catered to its Scandinavian patrons, a number of churches saw an increase in patronage as growing numbers of immigrants swelled their ranks. While not all Scandinavians attended church on a regular basis, four Lutheran churches were built in Lake View throughout the 1880s and 1890s, including the Elim Swedish Methodist Episcopal and Trinity Lutheran Church, the Lake View Mission Covenant, and the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant Church of America. Both the church and the educational system in Lake View were instrumental in preserving the culture and tradition of home; many of the churches and schools in the area taught lessons in both the language of home and English. Over time, this practice would become a problem for Swedish children of the first- and second-generations because daily life in Lake View often included use of a jumbled form of the combined

³⁶ Stetterdahl, *Bror Johansson's Chicago*, 71.

languages: Swedish was used in private for home and church while English was used in public at school and work.³⁷ The nature of the community only reinforced such confusions for those living in between both worlds; businesses like the Dalkullan book store sold only Swedish-language books and literature and in shops and restaurants like Belmont Hall, the Viking Temple, and later with the Temperance Café Idrott, Swedish was the dominant language spoken – and expected – amongst patrons. In many ways, expectations in Lake View were backwards from those of other communities throughout Chicago; neighbors often times took offense to the actions of other Scandinavians who wished to assimilate into American life.

The insular nature of Lake View was reinforced over time by several factors, but the most important of these were patterns of marriage and settlement. From their origins in Chicago, Scandinavians became known as a group that practiced strict endogamy; according to the census of 1900, two Swedish-born parents were the norm as 92% of Swedish-American households followed this pattern. Comparatively, 86.5% of Danish-American households and 86.9% of Norwegian-American households followed the same principles.³⁸ Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder found in their comparative study, “European Immigrant Women in Chicago at the Turn of the Century,” that if intermarriage with other ethnic groups took place, the partners often came from other Scandinavian countries, from Germany, or they were native-born Americans – choices the authors attributed to the ethnic composition of Lake View.³⁹ Harzig and Hoerder, as well as Margareta Matovic illustrated how, despite their strict desires to marry someone

³⁷ Matovic, 265; Anita R. Olsen, “The Community Created: Chicago Swedes 1880-1920,” in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, eds. Dag Blanck and Harald Runblom: 11.

³⁸ Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900; Matovic, 271.

³⁹ Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder, “European Immigrant Women in Chicago at the Turn of the Century: A Comparative Approach,” in *Swedes in America*, 98.

from the same country, Scandinavian men and women maintained marriage patterns of their home countries opting to delay marriage until financially secure individually – a process that often confused American neighbors who chose to marry much younger. In 1900, according to the marriage records of Trinity Lutheran Church of Chicago in Lake View, the average age at first marriage for members of the church was 28 for men and 24 for women compared to the average ages of 25 for American men and 22 for American women in the same year.⁴⁰ Numerous employment options, coupled with a surplus of single young men, reinforced the choice to delay marriage for young Scandinavian women. In order to facilitate meetings between Scandinavian youth, groups such as the Order of Vikings, the Svithiod Order, and the Good Templars organized a number of social events such as concerts, dances, and picnics. In later years, concern grew amongst such groups over their youth engaging in immoral behaviors in “unapproved” social settings as those of the second-generation sought to distance themselves from their immigrant ties. At the turn of the century, however, Scandinavian youth continued to take part in community-approved activities in efforts to meet potential mates who shared their cultural heritage.

As previously discussed, in looking at the range of positions Scandinavians occupied while living in Chicago, no job has become more synonymous with the Scandinavians than that of the domestic servant. In the 1860s, what was once a simple job suited for an older woman who wished to supplement the family wages grew into a vital position for younger, immigrant women with the rise of an elite class of Chicagoans during the 1870s and 1880s. Likewise, this shift coincided with the largest wave of Scandinavian immigrants to date, as young men and women flocked to America with the

⁴⁰ Matovic, 270; Harzig and Hoerder, 98; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900.

promise of good employment and a place to live – a promise, even if left unfulfilled, was **comparatively** better than what they could expect at home. Traditionally, young women **in** the largely agricultural setting of Sweden, Norway and Denmark contributed to a **system** of migratory work as maid-servants on nearby farms. Such positions entailed **endless** backbreaking, manual labor with no promise of upward mobility or a share of the **farm** if they worked for their families – a promise only made to the eldest sons. As **witnessed** in the letters of friends and family already in the United States, the lure of **higher** status and independence was a significant factor in the decision of many young **women** to emigrate. In many of these letters, friends and relatives emphasized the **opportunities** cities like Chicago offered Scandinavian women. In 1871, Stina Wibäck, a **young** Swedish domestic, explained in a letter to her sister that a Scandinavian domestic **in** Chicago “can support herself and her husband rather well on her earning, without his **earning** anything, for that is what I have been doing ever since I came here.”⁴¹ Similarly, **books** by Scandinavian travelers and researchers played a vital role in the decision to **emigrate** for many women who hoped to secure employment as domestics. Isidor Kjellberg, a popular Swedish author, painted an idyllic portrait of work as a domestic **servant** in the home of Chicago’s elite in the 1890s: “Her workday is from 6 in the **morning** until 7 in the evening. Every Sunday and Thursday afternoon she is **free**...Christmas presents, from those, for whom he works, can be expected...There is **never** a question of “earnest money.”⁴² For many, the realization of a dismal future in

⁴¹ Letter from Stina Wibäck in Chicago to her sister Cari, January 1, 1871 (Emigrant Institute), in Beijbom, 173.

⁴² Isidor Kjellberg, *Amerika-bok* (Linköping, 1893): 36 (*Translations mine*). Kjellberg uses the “earnest money” to refer to the unfortunate situation many immigrant workers found themselves in of being **promised** a certain salary for their labor, but receiving far less when their work was complete. This was an **all** too common practice in a time before fair labor laws protected workers from being undercut by their **em**ployers in pay.

their rural homes coupled with the draw of potential advancement pushed many to make **the** vital decision to pack their belongings and seek their independence in Chicago.

Maids and the “The Tuxedo of Chicago”: Scandinavian Women and the Experiences of Domestic Servants on Chicago’s North Shore

In 1889, prior to the opening of the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a **select** group of elite Chicagoans began to ponder the possibilities for outward mobility **from** the city center. Residents of the Prairie Avenue social set, many of which were **former** east coast residents drawn to Chicago by industrial growth, grew increasingly **attracted** to the idea of moving away from the confines of the dirty, depression-ravaged **city**. As early as 1850, German immigrants who found early success through boosterism **successfully** organized New Trier Township on the North Shore – an idyllic village **modeled** after Trier, Germany from which many had come.⁴³ Looking to this area and **others** like it, many of Chicago’s elite saw the North Shore as an opportunity to build **their** “perfect” Chicago, one modeled on the finest communities of the East Coast. One **such** member of this group was Joseph Sears, a financier with money to spare, who **purchased** the 223 acres of land between Chicago’s neighboring regions to the north, **Wilmette** and Winnetka, in preparation for what he referred to as a “pioneer experiment **in** planned living.”⁴⁴

His utopian vision, Kenilworth, centered upon palatial mansions with modern **Plumbing** and heat, paved streets and walkways, and planned community parks for **recreation**, but most importantly an overall “homogenous character.” In order to maintain

⁴³ Coleen Browne Kilner, *Joseph Sears and his Kenilworth* (1990, second ed.): 138.

⁴⁴ Diary of Dorothy Sears, wife of Joseph Sears, dated August 8th, 1905, Kenilworth Historical Society, Kenilworth, IL.

such homogeneity, the deeds by which homeowners acquired their lots contained rigid **restrictions** in order to preserve the character of the town as envisioned by Sears, **including** large lots and premiums, high quality construction for both homes and **businesses**, and sales to Caucasians only.⁴⁵ Kenilworth drew the attention of many **prominent** visitors to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, including famed **architect** Daniel Burnham who designed Sears' home and another residence; Franklin **Burnham**, who designed the railroad station and a number of homes; and George W. **Maher**, a contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright, who brought the distinctive Prairie style **to** the small, affluent village. After the Exposition, Kenilworth and the North Shore as a **whole** was often referred to as the "tuxedo of Chicago" – the playground of the very **wealthy**.⁴⁶ Within a matter of several years, Kenilworth and its neighboring communities **would** become one of the most affluent areas in all of the United States, thereby drawing **potential** employees from all over the world in hopes of living and working amongst the **very** rich.

As increasing numbers of affluent Chicagoans moved northward to Kenilworth **and** the surrounding North Shore suburbs of Wilmette, Glencoe, Highland Park, Lake Forest, and Evanston, families began to build upon the notion set forth by Sears of **planned** living and homogeneity. Large estates were set back from roads and surrounded **by** coach houses, garages, and stables to keep the family unit and its staff in close **proximity**. Beyond these gated estates, the main houses were set amongst formal and **informal** gardens and the lawns were dotted with reflecting pools, terraces and arbors in

⁴⁵ Lot deed dated 1893, Kenilworth Historical Society, Kenilworth, IL; Kilner, 143.
⁴⁶ Kilner, vi.

order to bring maximum esthetic appeal to the integrity of the estates.⁴⁷ In building their estates into homes, the elite sought to staff their homes with the very best workers, looking for both efficiency and high moral character, but also servants whose physical features would blend into the opulence of their homes. Based upon the public commentary in newspapers and in the community regarding Scandinavians discussed in chapter two, many of the mistresses of the home actively sought such immigrant workers through advertisements and employment agencies. In finding Scandinavian workers, several employers would even go to the length of placing advertisements in Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish-language newspapers as well as English-language newspapers. In an era before fair labor practice laws, potential employers felt comfortable placing ads that specified the exact qualities they desired in their servants. Some advertisements made the expectations and moral standards of potential employers clear, such as one advertisement placed by a female employer in *Svenska Tribunen* who specified her desire to find a “Christian Swedish young or middle-age girl for housekeeper.”⁴⁸

Advertisements in English-language newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune* often demanded competence as the most vital quality the desired of potential employees, and were often time very specific as to which groups they would – and would not – employ. One Michigan Avenue family called for “a competent German, Swedish, or Norwegian girl for general housework in an American family” and made it very clear that “no Irish need call.”⁴⁹ In this advertisement, as well as others, the desire for competence was often a thin veil for establishing a racial and ethnic social hierarchy in Chicago and other cities. Other employers were as specific as noting that they only wanted

⁴⁷ Hirsch, 1.

⁴⁸ Advertisement for “help wanted”, *Svenska Tribunen Nyheter*, September 7, 1909 (*Translation mine*), 9.

⁴⁹ Advertisement for “help wanted”, *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1880, 14.

Scandinavian women who fit within a certain age range to work in their homes, as one potential employer, who specified in a help wanted advertisement that they desired a “Swedish maid, not over 30 years,” for general housework and cooking in their home.⁵⁰ According to many similar advertisements that requested younger help, it was clear that competence and youth were at a premium in the eyes of potential employers who desired workers who made their homes more attractive, and could also do their jobs well. As time went on, Scandinavian women would prove themselves as especially talented cooks and attentive servants for Chicago’s upper crust, while Chicago’s newspapers would continue to illustrate this preference for their ethnic group in service jobs.

Similar to the calls Chicago’s elite placed for reliable help, Scandinavian girls in need of employment advertised their services in the “situations wanted” section of Chicago’s newspapers – many of which illustrated self-awareness of their preferential status as domestics by carefully noting their countries of origin. Several were quite frank about only wanting to take on “light housework” in a small American family, while one Swedish girl was so bold as to state her desire to work for a “first-rate” family in a “large North Shore home” in the “situations wanted” section of the *Chicago Tribune*.⁵¹ Others played upon the notion of their perceived strong, Scandinavian work ethic, like one “green” Swedish girl who described herself as “strong and willing” and in need of a “good home more than wages.”⁵² In later years, Scandinavian women became even more specific as to the types of tasks they would – and would not – take on in potential employment. Many specified that they were in search of second jobs that required light housework and would not be required to do laundry or other such arduous tasks; their

⁵⁰ Advertisement for “help wanted,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1925, 27.

⁵¹ Advertisement for “situations wanted,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1880, 14.

⁵² *Ibid.*

calls supported their desires for light work by specifying the knowledge of English and the ability to provide excellent references.⁵³

Scandinavian women were not the only ones to illustrate this acknowledgement of preference for their ethnic group in service positions; Scandinavian men were equally specific in the level of work they could provide in service positions. Men would also note their ages and marital statuses; however their requirements differed from that of women's. Instead, men would often make note of their sobriety and their desires to return to "the countryside." In one such advertisement, J. Anderson, a Norwegian chauffeur and skilled mechanic described himself as "strictly sober" specified that he was 28, single, and could work in the city or country; an adjacent request listed by a "middle-aged married Swede" who worked as a coachman and also noted his sobriety, indicated his distinct desire to return to a rural environment away from the city.⁵⁴ Some Scandinavian men chose to emphasize their sobriety in order to distance themselves from the negative stereotypes associated with other immigrant groups; others, however, brought attention to this concern to separate their behaviors from one well-known negative stereotype created in the early years of "Swede town" – that of the belligerent, drunken Scandinavian male.⁵⁵ For Scandinavians in service work, the practice of seeking better employment when dissatisfied with their current positions was one that was carried over from home

⁵³ In a select analysis of the *Chicago Tribune* between April 1909 and May 1910, the "situations wanted" section illustrated such acknowledgement of preference in service employment by Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish women and men. Joy Lintelman recently noted that domestic jobs were plentiful enough that Scandinavian immigrant women did not hesitate to leave positions where daily wages, tasks, and accommodations did not meet their expectations. The bountiful job market at the turn of the century, coupled with their admittedly preferential status gave Scandinavian domestics a "degree of power" within the employer/employee relationship. See Lintelman, *I Go to America*, 102.

⁵⁴ Select advertisements from "situations wanted," *Chicago Tribune*, April 29, 1909, 22.

⁵⁵ As a note, this negative stereotypical character will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four, which explores the negative connotations and social faux pas of Scandinavians within Chicago and popular culture.

according to Christiane Harzig and Dick Hoerder; in this process of horizontal mobility, Scandinavians would try to advance and complete their skills, often times giving them a better bargaining position for the next job, with the goal of becoming a live-in servant in a millionaire's home as the ultimate sign of upward mobility and acceptance in American society.⁵⁶

Upon entering into Chicago's workforce, Scandinavian men and women would soon learn that they were required to work as their own advocates in finding good work, or fall into unfortunate situations by employing the help of conniving private employment agents. As industries grew up with the city, so did private employment agencies, which took advantage of typical newcomers to the city and stationed agents at Union Station to descend on the droves of immigrants arriving on trains from New York. Scandinavian men and women would be approached by these agents, who spoke their native language and therefore appeared to have the best interest of their neighbors in mind. Nevertheless, on the North Side of Chicago, scores of "offices" that seemingly catered to the interests of young Scandinavian men and women operated out of individual's homes, where business transactions took place across a kitchen table. Some agents were especially pervasive in their efforts to exploit new immigrants, not only waiting for incoming trains, but also walking the streets of Lake View, combing through rooming houses, restaurants,

⁵⁶ Harzig and Hoerder noted this practice as representative of a larger pattern used in seeking employment in America as previously used in Scandinavia; similarly, David Katzman posed that, for women in domestic service, changing positions was part of a constant search for better working and living conditions, however for Scandinavians, the opportunities appeared to be much more readily available. See Christiane Harzig and Dick Hoerder, "European Immigrant Women in Chicago at the Turn of the Century: A Comparative Approach," in *Swedes in America: Intercultural and Interethnic Perspectives on Contemporary Research; a Report of the Symposium Swedes in America: New Perspectives*, ed. Ulf Beijbom (Växjö, Sweden: The Swedish Emigrant Institute's Series, 1993): 101; David Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 139.

churches, and immigrant aid societies in the neighborhood.⁵⁷ When these employment “agencies” would nab a potential client, they would require registration fees regardless of the applicant successfully finding employment and would often garnish their first month’s wages. In response to the problems created by exploitative agencies, good-hearted community members worked to establish free employment agencies that would serve the needs of Scandinavians looking for work and help them enter into safe and happy working conditions. One such advocate, Othelia Myhrman, combined her efforts with the Swedish National Union to create an employment agency to specifically aid newly-arrived Scandinavian women who sought positions as domestic servants. Myhrman’s ambition was personally inspired by her work as a domestic after her arrival in Chicago in 1874; after a series of bad employment choices, Myhrman settled into a comfortable position after a fellow Scandinavian domestic suggested her employer to Myhrman. Newspapers such as *Svenska Nyheter*, *Svenska Kuriren*, and *Skandinaven* would regularly report on the positive efforts of such agencies, as well as the number of employees who made use of their services, often totaling several hundreds in a month; in May of 1903 alone, the free employment bureau of the Swedish National Association placed 225 men and 120 women in open positions throughout Chicago, which was the largest number to date to find employment through the efforts of the bureau.⁵⁸ The Norwegian National League Employment Office witnessed similar numbers of successful employment transactions, especially noting its success in employing women as domestics. An article which highlighted the benefits of the employment office explained

⁵⁷ Stina Hirsch noted such a transaction recalled by her mother, who experienced several unfortunate service positions in disjointed homes before learning of the correct ways to go about finding good employment. See Hirsch, “The Swedish Maid,” 29.

⁵⁸ “Swedish National Association’s Employment Bureau,” *Svenska Nyheter*, June 9, 1903, 2 (*Translation mine*).

that finding employment for women to do housework proved to be “most difficult,” as there were many requests for such work with good pay, but the demand was actually greater than the number of applicants as Chicagoans clamored for Scandinavian help in their homes and employed the efforts of the office in finding servants.⁵⁹ The majority of young Scandinavian women who went to work in the homes of Chicago’s elite, however, were able to avoid unfortunate situations through family connections prior to their arrival in Chicago – a vital distinction between other immigrant groups and Scandinavians employed as domestics.

Once men and women were able to locate secure positions, their experiences would vary greatly, yet the location of their employers often times determined the context of their experiences. In the mansions of the North Shore region, roughly one-third of any home was designed for use by the employed staff and therefore divided from the family’s living quarters. Based on the size of the family and their home, and likewise on the family’s wealth, employers kept a staff that ranged from two to three servants, all the way up to twenty in some homes; between the 1890s and prior to WWI, many Chicagoans considered the number of servants employed as an outward determinant of wealth and family status within society. Stina Hirsch recalled of the Laurence Armour family of meatpacking wealth that their Lake Forest home regularly kept a staff of eleven; her mother, who worked for the family for a number of years, lived in the main building with the other female servants and the males resided in the coach house.⁶⁰ In a useful description of the home in which she worked, Hirsch’s mother recollected the spacious

⁵⁹ The article also specified that the average pay for Scandinavian domestics employed through the office ranged from \$4.00 to \$5.00 a week “without their being required to do the washing.” See “The Norwegian Employment Office,” *Skandinaven*, April 24, 1907, 3.

⁶⁰ Hirsch, 24, 25.

interior which maintained the style of Victorian living. On the “servant” side of the home stood a number of rooms devoted to work, including sewing, ironing, floral arranging, and silver polishing, which adjoined a spacious laundry room. Conversely, the family’s living quarters were vastly spacious and dedicated to indoor leisure, including living and sitting rooms, a library, dining areas, dens, studies, music rooms, billiard and other playrooms, sun rooms, a terrace, family bedrooms and guest rooms, dressing rooms and palatial bathrooms with separate baths for adults and children.⁶¹ The divisions of the home and its opulence symbolized a tradition addressed by sociologist Robert Coles who wrote that the North Shore families largely represented that of the “old stock” of Americans who inherited their wealth and therefore continued to view society as one comprised of “separate spheres.”⁶² However, with the massive influx of good help in their homes over time, affluent North Shore wives were able to enjoy both “spheres” – the leisure of home life and the benefits of travel and volunteer work within North Shore and Chicago society.

The experiences of work in the North Shore homes varied from family to family, yet Scandinavian domestics could expect a generally positive experience based on the accounts of various workers. Many families, like the Sears family who established the village of Kenilworth, expected their staff to maintain an outward appearance of professionalism and efficiency; the Sears family, however, went above and beyond to

⁶¹ Hirsch, 24.

⁶² Robert Coles, “Introduction,” in Mary Lloyd Estlin, *To the Manor Born* (Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1979): 11. For further discussion of the benefits provided to upper-class women by way of their domestic help, a few of the more notable sources on “separate spheres” include Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* xviii (Summer, 1966): 151-174; Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven, 1973); Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 147-49. One notable study which illustrates the progressive advancements of middle- to upper-class women in Chicago is Maureen Flanagan’s, *Seeing with their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of a Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

guarantee the satisfaction of their staff, which was largely Scandinavian at any given time. A monthly bill from Marshall Field's and Company sent to Mr. J. Sears on July 1, 1904 listed various service necessities, including aprons, caps, maids' dresses, collars and cuffs, household cleaning items, and three feather mattresses and comforters, and at the corresponding date in her diary, Mrs. Sears noted the hire of three new domestic servants in their home.⁶³ In the Sears' home, servants could expect to take on a majority of the house work, as Dorothy Sears' diaries and letters illustrated that her daily schedule was representative of a life that affluence could afford her. According to her diary, from August until October of 1905, the Sears family enjoyed a vast European tour, and upon return, Dorothy returned to recording the events of daily life, which often lamented of "awful fit[s] of laziness," "playing with the baby until bedtime," voice lessons, trips "into town," and shopping.⁶⁴ However, like many other elite families of Chicago, the Sears family sent their children away to boarding preparation schools on the East Coast when they reached school-age, and therefore, the servants were only required to care for the children up to a certain point. And as Dorothy Sears' diary and various accounts illustrate, many families that employed Scandinavian domestics were incredibly kind to them and offered them the vital outlets needed for upward mobility in Chicago society.

One such outlet many North Shore families provided was the opportunity for their help to learn English. Various advice columns in Chicago newspapers indicated that society women sought to provide lessons to their maids; one woman asked advice columnist Marion Harland: "I have a Swedish maid who is anxious to learn English. Can

⁶³ Sears' family account books (1903-05) and the diaries of Mrs. Dorothy Sears (1903-04), Kenilworth Historical Society, Kenilworth, IL.

⁶⁴ Review of entries between October 1905 and January 1906, diaries of Mrs. Dorothy Sears (1905-06), Kenilworth Historical Society, Kenilworth, IL.

you suggest some books [with] interesting yet simple words that I could get for her from the public library?”⁶⁵ While Harland’s response, that her responder converse with her servant rather than force her to read books, indicates suspicion of more selfish desires of employers for servants to learn English, the question nevertheless shows a genuine desire to educate servants in American customs and traditions. One popular cookbook written by Carl Grimsköld, *Swedish-American Book of Cookery and Adviser for Swedish Servants in America*, became a best-seller after employers and employees purchased the book in order to help servants learn English. The book, designed for the “newly-arrived Swedish servant girl” contained advice, menus, and recipes in double-columned pages with Swedish on the left and English on the right. In the introduction of the book, the author explained in Swedish that he hoped that his book would rid its reader “of difficult problems which are associated with the greenhorn’s position as a result of being unfamiliar with local language and habits – first and last, *cooking*.”⁶⁶ The author simultaneously wrote an introduction in English intended for the “mistress of the house” to read in “modeling a kitchen mechanic”:

Let the mistress of the house take two pounds of the very best self-control, one and a half pounds of justice, one pound of consideration, five points of patience, and one pound of discipline. Let his be sweetened with charity, let it simmer well, and let it be taken daily (in extreme cases in hourly doses), and be kept always on hand. Then the domestic wheels will run quite smoothly.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ “Marion Harland’s Helping Hand,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 2, 1916, 16.

⁶⁶ Grimsköld is careful to point out that his book was intended for both women and men, including discussions of various American customs for cooks, waiters, and drivers as well. Furthermore, as a Swedish man who worked as a cook in several American homes, Grimsköld noted that he understood the experiences of domestics who made use of his book, and could attest to the accuracy and taste of all the book’s recipes. See Carl Grimsköld, *Swedish-American Book of Cookery and Adviser for Swedish Servants in America* (New York: Otto Chils’ Print, 1890), in English and Swedish. (*Translations mine.*): 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 2.

Grimsköld's attention to the position of both the servant and the "mistress of the house" acknowledged that it was clear most employers actually cared about their charges' well-being and genuinely wanted to help them improve their English and their knowledge of American ways.

Over time, the draw of service positions in the opulent homes of Chicago's North Shore spread through publications and letters that expressed the benefits of higher wages and beneficial treatment in comparison to domestics from other countries. Scandinavians who worked in the homes of Chicago's elite would often write home to their loved ones to inform them of their experiences in America, and would often boast about the preferential treatment they noticed in relation to other experiences they were told of. One Chicago domestic wrote to her family that for Scandinavian women, the benefits of domestic work far outweighed any other position available in Chicago. She exclaimed that "the striking thing here is that a [Scandinavian] servant girl never brushes any shoes for her employers, on the contrary they do that themselves. A servant is always on a first name basis with those for whom she works."⁶⁸ Historians of immigration often attribute the positive content of her correspondence, like numerous letters sent home during the peak years of industrial growth in Chicago, to loneliness and isolation domestics experienced in their employment. However, as Joy Lintelman recently pointed out, while desires for their family to join them in America motivated many Scandinavian women to sometimes overemphasize their positive experiences, the specific details and content of their letters suggested that their experiences were, for the most part, largely positive. As an example, Lintelman uses a letter written by a Swedish domestic in Chicago who wrote

⁶⁸ Letter from Stina Wibäck in Chicago to her sister Cari, January 1, 1871 (Emigrant Institute), in Beijbom, 173.

to her family that, working as a domestic, she received three dollars a week and was “free every Thursday afternoon” and “every Sunday afternoon too” where she did not have to come back to her place of employment until 10pm.⁶⁹ The schedule described in the letter was reminiscent of a growing tendency of employers to allow Scandinavian domestics Thursday afternoons and Sundays off to engage in leisure, but also to allow them to go to their own churches. By the 1900s, this allotted time for leisure became so common that on Thursdays, as young Scandinavian women flocked to the trains exiting the North Shore for the city, conductors would sing out stops in Swedish and Norwegian for “Torsdagsflickor,” or “Thursday girls.”⁷⁰ While one could speculate as to the validity of the positive experiences encompassed in their employment, further evidence from the employers’ perspective suggests that Scandinavian domestics were indeed treasured in the homes of Chicago’s elite.

One series of letters between a member of one of Chicago’s oldest families, Walter Franklin Newberry, and his families’ former domestic servant, Hannah Mathison illustrated that the Newberrys considered Mathison a member of their family. Throughout the summer of 1893, Mathison, who worked a number of years for the Newberry family,

⁶⁹ Lintelman referenced hundreds of letters from Swedish domestics to their families in support of her argument that immigrant women’s letters are significant to the historiography on the immigrant experience in America; while some historians, such as H. Arnold Barton, expressed their disdain for mostly “mundane” letters, Lintelman instead points to the importance of such sources which provide first-hand accounts of the many different facets of the immigrant woman’s life. For further discussion, see Joy Lintelman, “Between the Mundane and the Memorable: The Letters of Single and Married Swedish Immigrant Women,” *Swedish American Historical Quarterly* (find volume, number, and year): 159-172; Sydney Stahl Weinberg, “The Treatment of Women in Immigration History: A Call for Change,” in *Seeking Common Ground: Multidisciplinary Studies of Immigrant Women in the United States*, ed. Donna Gabaccia (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992): 3-22; Wolfgang Helbich and Ulrike Sommer, “Immigrant Letters as Sources,” in *The Press of Labor Migrants in Europe and North America, 1880s to 1930s* (Bremen: Labor Migration Project, Universitat Bremen, 1985): 39-58; H. Arnold Barton, *Letters from the Promised Land* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975): 5.

⁷⁰ Stina Hirsch begins her thesis by describing the experiences of her relatives on a typical Thursday jaunt into the city, when they would often times visit Ravinia Park to listen to music or would travel to Lake View where they could visit restaurants, meeting halls, clubrooms, churches, and theaters – all “resounded with the mother tongue.” See Hirsch, 1, 47.

earned enough money in her position to travel home to Norway to tend to her ailing mother; upon her departure, however, Mr. Newberry wrote to her pleading for her return. In her reply, which recounted her gratitude to the family for a wealth of different benefits including her acquisition of English, Mathison replied to Newberry's plea: "I should like to see you all very much and hope if I ever get to America again that I must see you all alive [sic] and well."⁷¹ Furthermore, Mathison's replies suggested a genuine connection with the family that went well beyond a typical work arrangement, as she concluded each letter with "love to you all" and a plea for Newberry to "kiss little Walter, Hannah... and grandma Newberry" for her in her absence.⁷² One could argue that Mathison's correspondences with her former employers were indicative of an incredibly unique work experience, however Mathison's positive recollections of her work as a domestic are reminiscent of a majority of memories recorded by Scandinavian domestics of their work.

As increasing numbers of Scandinavian women found positions in the homes of Chicago's elite between the 1890s and the turn of the century, both Scandinavian and American commentators garnered immense interest in their experiences, which they painted as relatively enjoyable and profitable in comparison to other working women. Scandinavian newspapers such as *Svenska Tribunen* and *Norden* remarked on the praise given to their own by American employers who valued their adaptability in the

⁷¹ In addition to Newberry's plea for Mathison to return to their home, the letters exchanged between Walter Franklin Newberry and Hannah Mathison detailed an intriguing relationship between a male employer and his former servant – especially in a position where the head of the household rarely came into contact with his employee. In her letters, Mathison updated Newberry on all of the details of her family life, her new position as a cashier in a "tourist shop" in Norway, and her desires to return to America as soon as her family is self-sufficient after the death of her mother. See letters between Hannah Mathison and Walter Franklin Newberry, sent from Trondheim, Norway on June 18, 1893 and August 8, 1895, Oliver Perry Newberry papers, folder 1: "Letters from the 1890s between Walter Franklin Newberry (son) from a former Norwegian domestic servant," Midwest Manuscript Series, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.

⁷² Letter from Hannah Mathison to Walter Franklin Newberry, June 18, 1895, Oliver Perry Newberry papers, folder 1: "Letters from the 1890s between Walter Franklin Newberry (son) from a former Norwegian domestic servant," Midwest Manuscript Series, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.

workplace. In 1891, the well-known editor of *Svenska Tribunen*, C.F. Peterson, contributed a vital piece entitled “The Servant Girl” intended to offer immense praise to the Swedish domestic. Under the pseudonym of “Jeppe,” the author remarked that Swedish “girls” were in high demand by Chicago employers due to their perceived worth in society; according to such worth, “Jeppe” claimed that the domestic “underwent beautification under the influence of her enviable profession...she appears in elegant clothing, learns the language under the tutelage of the lady of the house and soon begins appearing as a lady of society.”⁷³ Compared to other positions available to immigrant women – “shop girl”, seamstress, factory worker, waitress, shop assistant – which required “10 to 12 hours of daily effort,” “Jeppe” remarked that, instead of hard labor, the first objective of the Scandinavian domestic was to become a “real lady” through her work. Achieving this objective was entirely possible according to “Jeppe,” who pointed out that Scandinavian domestics could expect to learn English, as well as how to become an “American girl” by way of their female employers.⁷⁴

Articles like those written by “Jeppe” exhibit bias however such observations were vital in building a set of ideological characteristics held by the Scandinavian domestic. A similar commentary examined an article from the *New York Herald* which offered great praise for the domestic virtues of Swedish and Norwegian women – virtues, which were more of a stepping stone to further opportunities. As the article pointed out, “neither the young women nor the young men from our Scandinavian countries come here with a view to remain merely good domestic servants, or in subordinated positions. They set out with hopes and determination to make their fortunes and gain such positions

⁷³ C.F. Peterson (under the pseudonym “Jeppe”), “The Servant Girl,” *Svenska Tribunen*, December 10, 1891, 1 (*translations mine*); Beijbom, *Swedes in America*, 119.

⁷⁴ C.F. Peterson, “The Servant Girl,” *Svenska Tribunen*, December 10, 1891, 1 (*translations mine*).

in life as they can rightfully claim by virtue of their ability, honesty and industriousness...under no circumstance do the sons and daughters of our nationality intend to remain on the bottom rungs of the ladder.”⁷⁵ Community newspapers were likewise quick to publish the average wages a Scandinavian domestic could expect to receive for their labor; as one article boasted, “a good Swedish girl often earns from fifty to seventy five, yes, one hundred kroner per month, after she becomes accustomed to American ways.” In a call for more Scandinavian workers, the article went on to explain that not in “twenty years has there been such a demand for Swedish workers” as American prosperity allowed for many more city-dwellers to hire domestic help.⁷⁶ By the turn of the century, Chicago was situated as a desired location for Scandinavian women who wanted to take advantage of the beneficial virtues associated with domestic work they heard so much about from their friends and family, and the newspapers they sent home.

American publications and Chicago’s newspapers contributed similar praises for Scandinavian domestics, emphasizing the domestic achievements of such immigrant workers in Chicago, but also in cities all over America. Features in women’s magazines such as *Harper’s Bazaar* often read like manuals on how to attain and keep valuable Scandinavian help. One article, written by a woman from Hartford, Connecticut, gave specific instructions on how she was able to keep her Swedish domestic happily employed for three years. While her method of domestic management included Thursday and Sunday afternoons off and a reasonable curfew, the author stressed that she hoped to

⁷⁵ Commentary on this particular article from the *New York Herald* circulated widely in the Scandinavian newspapers in Chicago as the Scandinavian community saw the kind remarks on their own as beneficial to the group as a whole. See “The Swedish Women as Domestics,” *Svenska Tribunen*, September 21, 1892, 1 (*translations mine*).

⁷⁶ “For the Day (Editorial),” *Svenska Tribunen*, February 6, 1901, 4 (*Translations mine*).

not give readers the impression that her house was “ruled by the maid,” but that a little tact and consideration for valuable domestics could produce “careful, neat, and most willing service” instead of a “hostile element” in her kitchen.⁷⁷ Studies written by American women including Lucy Maynard Salmon’s *Domestic Service* and Lillian Pettengill’s *Toilers of the Home* illustrated a public curiosity with the true experiences of domestics in America and took varied approaches to the discussion. In *Domestic Service*, Salmon found that, on average, foreign-born domestic servants received higher wages than native-born domestics due to the “relatively better class of foreign-born than of native-born women who enter domestic service” in work ethic, but also in appearance.⁷⁸ Scandinavians, who were the third largest group represented in domestic service, were the embodiment of this ideology according to Salmon.

Respondents to her surveys admitted that they often chose their servants based on their appearances; in one survey, “Mrs. V” applied to an employment bureau for domestic help but refused six applicants because they were not “pretty” or “refined,” eventually finding a Scandinavian woman who met her standards.⁷⁹ Lillian Pettengill experienced similar judgment from potential employers as an American college student who posed as an “undercover” immigrant girl for the sake of exposing American snobbery towards domestic help. In her first encounter with a potential employer, Pettengill commented that one of the first remarks made was in reference to her feminine appearance: “She wanted to know what experience I had, whether my home was in the city, and how long I had been here; then she paused, and having considered me from top to toe, remarked with much enthusiasm and for all the world as if I were a prize cow up

⁷⁷ “How I kept my Housemaid for Three Years,” *Harpers Bazaar*, “April 1908, volume 42, issue 4: 378.

⁷⁸ Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901): 92.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 121.

for sale, “You are a nice *looking* girl; yes, a *very* nice looking girl.”⁸⁰ Pettengill’s study similarly illustrated an underlying discourse on perceptions towards other European immigrant groups. One potential employer was skeptical about her intentions, not that she was an American posing as an immigrant, but that she was potentially a “rough Irish girl” instead of a German, as she was posing under the alias “Eliza.”⁸¹ As discussed in chapter two, by the 1910s, the “Swedish maid” was becoming a popular character in American culture used to characterize the benefits and drawbacks of immigrant workers. By this time, as the ranks of Scandinavian immigrant women grew to staggering numbers, competition for good domestic positions grew scarce. Though surprisingly, as competition grew, many Scandinavian women began to criticize the positions they had become synonymous with, like Inge Lund whose investigation of domestic service painted a negative image of the popular job.

Lund, a Swede whose 1917 work became famous for exposing the drawbacks of domestic work for Swedes, took a similar approach to Lillian Pettengill’s study, going undercover as a newly arrived Swedish immigrant. Her study, *En Piga i U.S.A (A Maid in the U.S.A.)*, recounted her experiences in New York, where she carefully navigated between two different personas: the newly arrived “greenhorn” and the Swedish immigrant who worked in the United States for years and had a firm grasp of English. Upon arrival in New York, Lund located a Swedish employment placement agency, where another Swede looking for domestic work gave her a startling piece of advice in finding a reputable job: “Lie! In God’s name! Lie! In this country, it is better to not tell the truth...tell me you never made another home in your entire life. It is nobody’s

⁸⁰ Lillian Pettengill, *Toilers of the Home: The Record of a College Woman’s Experience as a Domestic Servant* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1903): 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 36-7, 55.

business what you did when you were home!”⁸² While Lund took the woman’s advice to lie in order to receive suitable employment, it was her lies that would eventually land her in an uncomfortable exchange with a potential employer. In an interview for a domestic position, when asked by the lady of the house about her experiences with domestic work in Sweden as well as the United States, Lund lied and responded that she had been a “servant girl” for a long time. After getting tripped up over the reasons that she had such a firm grasp of English, Lund realized she was caught in her own lie by her potential employer. As she recounted of the uncomfortable situation:

Oh, no. This sounds very well and good,” but then she leaned forward and looked me straight in the eye and declared, “Tell me the truth!” I was so amazed, that – yes, I probably need not define what I felt at that moment...“I have known the whole time that not a single word of what you said is true.” It was now just a matter of indifference, what was said because the end would at least by the same...she would ask me to go my way. It was just as good to tell the truth. I couldn’t come up with a new story.⁸³

Through her personal experiences as a Swedish domestic servant, Lund not only recounted the difficulties for Scandinavians in finding positions by 1917, but also described the often cyclical nature of employment for domestics. Lund used this cyclical pattern as the basis for her topic, as she found temporary places to stay in settlement homes and “safe” hotels, went to Swedish employment agencies, and settled with a family, only to begin once again when she became dissatisfied with her employment. Lund’s investigative report was one of the only sources to expose the negative aspects of domestic service at the time, while later recollections like Stina Hirsch’s thesis would bring attention to problematic encounters with adultery and even sexual harassment.

⁸² Inge Lund, *En Piga i U.S.A.: Ett Penskafts Äventyr (A Maid in the U.S.A.: A Journalist’s Adventure)* (Stockholm: Åhlen & Åkerlunds Förlags, 1917): 31-2. (*Translations mine*)

⁸³ *Ibid*, 112-13.

Hirsch recalled the reminiscences of Caroline Hansen, who recalled her first job in a large home next to the Lake Forest Country Club as highly uncomfortable when she was forced to witness her employer's dalliances while her husband was away. "The lady was not very nice," she explained, and every time her husband had to travel out of town for work, "she had somebody else come in. I wasn't used to that. I thought it was terrible."⁸⁴ As an inexperienced and young Swedish maid, Hansen also encountered problems with sexual harassment. In one job, she reluctantly recalled one instance when she had to defend herself "against the advances of a hired man" and another time from one of her employer's sons. In remembering these instances, Hansen illustrated both her intelligence and common sense, as she remarked, "I may have been green, but I wasn't that dumb."⁸⁵

Regardless of any negative experiences she encountered, Lund nevertheless scolded her countrymen for their complaints about the mass exodus of young people from Sweden to America as she understood the draw of vast opportunities.⁸⁶ At the same time, however, the influx of Scandinavian women coming to America for work as domestics started to dwindle for a number of reasons. The onset of World War I slowed emigration from Europe altogether, while domestic service in America began to fall out of vogue for Scandinavians by the late 1910s. Those who worked as domestics for a number of years attained skills vital in moving up the social ladder of employment; they could speak English, interact with their employers and understand what was expected of them. By and large, Scandinavians had gained work experience, but most of all, gained social skills and confidence needed to attain positions that could afford them more independence. And as

⁸⁴ Hirsch, 36.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ A larger discussion of sexuality and the dangers engrained in employment like domestic service is featured in the following chapter, which explores representation of Scandinavian involvement in crime and vice during this same era in Chicago.

this shift occurred, a second-generation of Scandinavian-Americans came of age that had similar goals in “getting ahead” in society.

The Growth of the Second-Generation, the Intellectual Club Movement, and the Desire for “Better” Employment

At the turn of the century and into the 1910s, Lake View witnessed a vital shift in population structure as a large number of second-generation youth were growing into adulthood. As typical of second-generation immigrant groups, many of Lake View’s youth had dreams of leaving the old neighborhood, attaining jobs or going to school, and everything else that signified the process of “becoming” American. As early as the 1900s, young Scandinavian-American women began to express their desires to attain different types of employment as that of their mothers’ generation. In an article published in June 1903, the editor of *Svenska Nyheter* reflected these desires, which in his opinion, were driven mostly by youthful goals for independence and leisure. The debate of the second-generation, to become a “maid” or a “factory girl” offered many benefits and drawbacks for both sides; as the editor stated, “if the girl works in a factory, she is able to live at home, or together with some other girl, or alone, wherever she wants....If she takes a position as a maid, she has a safe place in which to live, and she need not worry about the food question.”⁸⁷ The editor expressed an understanding that, during the years of youth, “the desire is strong for pleasure,” and while both positions offered the benefit of some nights and weekdays off, the monotonous work of both jobs could make the common worker too weary to take part in nighttime leisure.⁸⁸ In the end, the editor concluded that

⁸⁷ “Maid or Factory Girl?” (Editorial) *Svenska Nyheter*, June 23, 1903, 2 (*Translations mine*).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

while factory work provided a tempting allure of independence, the maid's work was much healthier and provided far more security for a young working woman.

Nevertheless, young Scandinavian-Americans continued to pursue positions that offered both independence and a chance to earn higher wages and gain further credibility in the American workforce.

Quite possibly, the most alluring position available to young women with certain credentials was that of the "shop girl"; like domestic work, the job offered the chance to be surrounded by the allure of the finest goods available to Chicago's consumers. And Chicago was the birthplace of some of the world's most famous department stores, including Marshall Fields and Montgomery Ward – stores established as a direct effect of the industrial boom of the 1890s to cater to the needs of a growing elite class connected to the boom. Modeled after the traditions of fine gentlemen's shops in London and New York, the emerging moguls behind these department stores saw an immense opportunity to capitalize on the emerging tradition of female consumerism. The differences between these small shops and major department stores were vast, as moguls like Marshall Fields helped to build an empire of major stores that catered to the female buyer's needs; most famously, Marshall Fields' mantra to "give the lady what she wants" proved to be the impetus needed for such grandiose success.⁸⁹ As Chicago's department stores were built, merchants capitalized upon the latest technological and esthetic additions in order to make the female experience of shopping both pleasant and of the highest quality. Stores like Montgomery Ward and Marshall Fields painted the interior of their stores in a

⁸⁹ Marshall Field was influenced by the vast consumerism of New York City in the antebellum era and sought to create a store which would combine the notion of a general store and a mail-order catalogue in a time when "getting what you wanted" was not an easy task. For further discussion, see Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan, *Give the Lady What She Wants! The Story of Marshall Field and Company* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1952): 223.

brilliant white, accentuated with giant windows, wide columns, sprawling staircases, and ornate chandeliers imported from Europe.⁹⁰ Department stores, as Susan Porter Benson asserted, were the agencies of a class-based culture, which carried “the gospel of good taste, gentility, and propriety to those who could afford its wares,” yet the contrast of such a culture came with the women whom they hired to sell to bourgeois matrons.⁹¹ The job of the “shop girl,” therefore, became one that was quite selective both in practice and range.

As Benson pointed out, because there was a limited supply of middle-class women willing to stand behind a counter, nor were department stores willing to pay such women what they could earn elsewhere, department store employers were forced to employ the ranks of working-class women. In what Benson dubbed “the Cinderella of occupations,” employers looked to transform their working-class “shop girls” into genteel saleswomen by introducing them to the latest styles and fashion, and encouraging them to emulate the ladylike behaviors of their customers.⁹² Several early studies remarked that the average saleswoman who lived apart from friends and family paid higher than average rent than those who did not live “adrift” and gravitated toward the more “fashionable” residential districts. In many of the more industrialized areas of the country, women in stores were less likely to be foreign-born than women in other occupations. However in Chicago, immigrants from the British Isles, Scandinavia, and Germany were always well represented amongst saleswomen in department stores.⁹³

⁹⁰ Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986): 18-19.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹³ *Wage-Earning Women in Stores and Factories*, 92, 114, 133-35, 187-88; Benson, 208-09.

Those from the “old” immigrant classes were more readily accepted into the world of commerce as the following experiences of one young Scandinavian-American illustrate.

During the summer of 1902, like many Chicago teenagers who had recently graduated high school, Pauline Hegborn expressed her excitement in her journal over the potential employment opportunities the city offered. That August, Hegborn would apply for and receive a job working as a “shop girl” at Montgomery Wards located at Michigan Avenue and Madison Street – the heart of the commercial district. While Hegborn looked to separate her choice of position from that which her mother desired – for her to become a domestic servant like herself – Hegborn continued to live with her family in Logan Square, regardless of her friends’ requests for her to share a downtown apartment with them.⁹⁴ In comparison to the arduous tasks of her friends’ positions, or those of her mother’s generation, Hegborn described her job as one “she enjoyed every minute of,” regardless of the relatively low wages she received for her work in comparison to other positions.⁹⁵ Hegborn’s group of work peers, she explained, were comprised of “all types and classes of people,” whose interactions in and outside of work she remembered fondly; during lunch breaks, Hegborn and her colleagues would regularly patronize Kohlsatts, a local diner, followed by a leisurely stroll down Michigan Avenue before returning to work. Once a month on Saturdays Hegborn was not scheduled to work, she and a group of her colleagues would pull their extra money together to visit a matinee and get dessert after the show.⁹⁶ At work, Hegborn excelled in her position as a “shop girl”

⁹⁴ Pauline Hegborn (Nelson) memoirs, younger years – 1920s, Hegborn – Nelson Family Manuscript Collection, Manuscript Series #39, Box #2, F. M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University, Chicago, IL.

⁹⁵ Hegborn commented that “we did not make big wages [in] those days”...I started at four-fifty a week,” which first-generation Scandinavian women could have made in positions as domestic servants or in factory work. See Pauline Hegborn (Nelson) memoirs.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

and described Montgomery Ward as “a nice place to work” where the “bosses and crew ladies and all the help were a very nice type of people” that she admired.⁹⁷ She took great pride in her required work uniform, which consisted of long, black skirts, shirtwaists, and hair bows made of black velvet – an appearance intended to model Chicago’s elite female consumer. Quite possibly, the only negative encounter Hegborn parlayed of her time at Wards was her daily trek past Browning Kings Men’s store; in the mornings, the male employees of the store would stand in the doorway, watching the “shop girls” on their way to Wards, and would try to persuade them into a date for the evening, which Hegborn described as “unbecoming” in their efforts to attract female attention.⁹⁸ Like many other women in the 1900s, Hegborn would later resign from her beloved position at Montgomery Ward upon marriage, however, in comparison to a job she would later take at a local grocery, her job at Wards allowed for her to take part in an enjoyable working culture where she could pretend to be of another class temporarily.

Some of the new opportunities afforded to young men and women in the Scandinavian community came about by way of the advancement of the community as a whole. The Augustana Hospital of the City of Chicago opened its training school for nurses in 1913 as a unique opportunity for young Swedish women who were active members of the Lutheran Church to become certified nurses. This highly selective training program offered the opportunity for women within the community to potentially earn a significant amount of money for their skills, while keeping close watch over their students. During the school term of two years, the school required its female students to live in the home provided by the Hospital, submit to a period of probation, and take both

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

day and evening classes and unpaid work within the wards of the hospital until graduation.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the application process was markedly tedious and intended to narrow the ranks of applicants down to Swedish or Swedish-American women who were familiar with American customs, could speak excellent English, and were upstanding members of Lutheran society. As the handbook for nurses specified, the general requirements for admission included the following specifications: “Good health and physique, good moral character, age no less than twenty-one and not more than thirty-five years, love and aptitude for the work, and...an academy or high-school education.”¹⁰⁰ In order to successfully complete the probation period, applicants were required to pass an examination in English, reading, writing and arithmetic, followed by an additional examination at the end of each year.

Regardless of such intense conditions, the training school for nurses retained an average of 80 students a year with 21 graduating from the school in 1913. Upon successful completion of the nursing program, graduates of the Augustana Hospital training school for nurses found themselves in high demand as many were able to attain positions as hospital and training school superintendents, assistants, surgical nurses, visiting social service nurse, and nurses in private families.¹⁰¹ Training programs like those offered at Augustana Hospital illustrate the efforts of the community to educate their youth and give them opportunities their parents may not have had. And as a growing number of both employment and educational opportunities shaped the experiences of Scandinavian men and women in Chicago, it was clear that the group, as a whole, came

⁹⁹ Augustana Hospital Reports, Twenty-Ninth Annual Report, Chicago, IL (1913): 3-4.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 57.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

into these new opportunities by way of the hard work and dedication of the early immigrant classes.

Conclusion

Uniquely, a large proportion of Lake View's youth were able to attain many of the benefits available to American youth, while they also remained grounded in the traditions of their parents' country. A vital representation of this dual cultural identity culminated in the summer of 1913, when six members of the Scandinavian youth lodge Idrott of the International Order of Good Templars created the foundations for Café Idrott – a cooperative temperance café that would become Lake View's cultural center. The six founding members conceived of the Café project as an extension of Swedish tradition which primarily associated socializing with coffee consumption; while the project was not necessarily ground-breaking in terms of organizing Swedes, it did, however, offer a new type of meeting place.¹⁰² The café had the advantage of being accessible everyday as a reputable place for both sexes to socialize, thereby offering an alternative to the saloons. In comparison to other Chicago ethnic youth, Café Idrott illustrated a unique emphasis on education and intellectual thought grounded in both Scandinavian and American traditions. Those who visited the café could share a cup of coffee with others, catch up on news from the old country in newspapers and magazines, and participate in bi-weekly lectures offered by Scandinavian intellectuals throughout Chicago.

As Stina Hirsch and others recounted, the Café Idrott was a meeting place all Scandinavians associated with traditions of home, as well as with desires to expand knowledge. The café offered a vital example of the combination of intellectual

¹⁰² Per Nordahl, *Weaving the Ethnic Fabric*, 116.

advancement and “approved” leisure that the community desired of their youth. As this chapter investigated, the process of work for Chicago’s Scandinavians was one that was similarly significant to the formation of Nordic ethnic identity as was public discourse on physical and behavioral traits. The need for reliable workers continued well into the 1910s, however, as Scandinavians would discover the connection of work and leisure was undeniably problematic. The pull of American culture was strong, and as the next chapter will discuss, not all Scandinavians were interested in partaking in “approved” forms of leisure offered by their communities. Just like any other immigrant group in Chicago, Scandinavians found themselves involved in public scandals, negative social commentary, and crime, regardless of the otherwise positive associations created of their ethnic group. What varied, however, was the response of Chicagoans and Scandinavians to stories and events that painted both Nordic men and women as deviant, immoral, and even suspect.

N^o. 11947

Oceanic Steam Navigation
Company
Limited
White Star-Line.
Gothenburg Agency

Mess:rs ISMAY, IMRIE & Co.
30 James Street, Liverpool.

Will please give passage to
Hella Johnson

for

Adults

Children

Infant

Making

full passengers from Liverpool

NEW YORK

Gothenburg the **29 JUN 1908**
190

Carl Eriksson.

C/O

(Fig. 4: The following boat ticket is an example of one of thousands of tickets issued to single Scandinavian immigrant women. Ticket and photo courtesy of the Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL)

Hushållsorders.

Då det är af vigt för tjenaren eller tjenarinnan att på förhand ega någon föreställning om de sysslor, som kunna förekomma, lemna vi här en öfversigt af desamma i form af orders från husbondfolket.

En ensam qvinlig tjenare.

Matmoders:

Välkommen! jag skall visa dig till ditt rum.

Tag af dig dina kläder och gör dig hemmastadd.

Du bör stiga upp kl. 6.

Öppna fönstret, så att du får frisk luft, innan du går ner. Gör ren spisen från aska och kol.

Gör upp eld och sätt på vatten till kokning.

Jag skall hjälpa dig med frukosten.

Gif mig pannan, skall jag visa dig, huru man kokar hafregrynsgröt.

Se till att den är riktigt ren.

Lägg kottelterna på halstret och sätt på pannkakslaggen.

Stufva potatisen. — Stek mackrisen. — Rosta brödet och värn tallrikarna.

Ring första gången klockan half åtta.

Sätt det der fatet åt sidan.

Gå in och duka bordet.

Servant for general house-work.

The lady of the house:

Welcome! I will show you your room.

Take off your clothes and feel at home.

You must get out of bed at six o'clock.

Open the window, and let in fresh air, before you go down. Clear the range from ashes and coal.

Light the fire and put the water to boil.

I'll help you with the breakfast.

Give me the pan and I will show you, how to cook oatmeal.

Look, that it is well clean.

Put the cutlets on the griddle and the gridiron on the fire.

Stew the potatoes. — Fry the mackerel. — Make the toast and warm the plates.

Ring the first bell at half past seven.

Put that dish aside.

Go in and set the table.

(Fig. 5: Selection from best-selling cookbook, *Swedish-American Book of Cookery and Adviser for Swedish Servants in America*. As pictured, Grimsköld created a series of commonly used phrases that Swedish domestics would commonly hear or need to say in reply to their employers. Source: Carl Grimsköld, *Swedish-American Book of Cookery and Adviser for Swedish Servants in America* (New York: Otto Chils' Print, 1890), in English and Swedish, 1.)

Chapter Four

**“The desire to go out evenings is strong...the full responsibility for behavior and manner of living is placed upon the shoulders of the young woman”:
Vice, Representation, and Reform in Scandinavian Chicago**

At the height of a city-wide panic over white slavery and vice within Chicago's city limits in 1910, public prosecutor Clifford Roe warned of the dangers of female individualism in a city filled with potential white slavers. While his warnings to lone Chicago females were stern, his case studies and arguments read like many of the other numerous white slavery narratives published between the turn of the century and the city's closing of the red light district in 1912, painting Chicago's single, immigrant women as helpless victims in a cruel urban world. In one of his case studies, Roe published the testimony of one young Swedish woman who arrived in Chicago in October 1911, only to quickly “fall” into a life of forced prostitution, according to Roe. Upon her arrival from a “small town” in Sweden, a young man invited the twenty-year-old on a date at a grass plot near her uncle's home where she was staying; the woman accepted the advance, only to be subjected to the man's forced “relations” with her. While she was able to fight him off, she lost her cousin's watch in the squabble – a small indiscretion which would inevitably lead to her subsequent downfall. According to her police statement:

“Then I became frightened about losing the watch and left my uncle's home, and walked the streets all night. I had about \$1.50. About four A.M. the next morning I rented a room at 24th and State Sts. from a colored man. He registered my name in a book and I paid him fifty cents. At eleven A.M. that morning I went out and walked the streets all day until evening, when I met a colored man in the same neighborhood, and I asked him if he knew where I could get a room and he took me to a room and I stayed all night with him and he gave me \$5.00. He had

[relations] with me. The next day I met a colored woman named Mrs. D. at 24th and Dearborn. I asked her if she knew where I could get a room, and she asked me to come to her house XXX Dearborn St. in the basement. She then asked me if I like to make money and I said yes; so Mrs. D. took me into a room and powdered me up and then we went to saloons hustling for prostitution and took our men to...[the same basement] and Mrs. D. charged them fifty cents for a room and one dollar for the girl. I hustled at this place for two weeks when Mrs. D. saw in the newspapers that I was missing from home; she asked me about it and I told her it was true.”¹

While the woman’s own statement admitted to several indiscretions on her part, the message she tried to express to the Chicago police was similar to Roe’s emphasis – that she was an innocent victim lured into white slavery by a “colored” woman looking to make money in a racially-divided world where the young girl’s virtues and fair features were set at a premium. Roe’s subsequent retelling of the court proceedings of the girl’s case only perpetuated this image, painting the young Swedish woman as a victim of drugging and forced submission to the wiles of a dangerous “negress”:

“A thin, frail young woman, aided by a physician, walked slowly into the court room and took her place on the witness stand...”

“Do you remember meeting a certain young man about a month ago?” I asked her.

“Yes,” she answered. “I was then employed in an office down-town and one of the girls working in the same building with me suggested that we attend a dance on Saturday night...It was there I met this young man, whose first name was John.”

John invited her to have a drink of lemonade.

“When I began to drink the lemonade I noticed a peculiar taste about it. After drinking it I felt dizzy...”

When she regained consciousness she found herself in bed in an entirely strange room.

“Dearie, how are you?”

¹ Case 17 – Chicago Vice Study File, cited in Walter C. Reckless’ famous study, *Vice in Chicago* (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1933): 38-9.

I tried to answer, but my voice failed me. I lay still for a while, and finally I gasped out, "Where am I?"
"You are all right," said the Negress, "and you will like it here."²

When Roe inquired in court as to why the young woman did not fight against her kidnapper, she replied that the "girls" were "cowed into submission" by whippings and beatings by the "negress" and customers until "their spirits are broken" and "are forced into a life from which they cannot escape."³

In later years, upon comparison of Roe's reflections on the court proceedings and the Swedish woman's actual police statement, sociologist Walter Reckless noted a significant contrast between the "facts" presented in the case and the literary details added by Roe to draw public sympathy for the young woman. Remembering back to the 1910s, when the sensationalism of white slave traffic overshadowed the realities of female autonomy, Reckless nevertheless argued that the massive gap between truth and fiction were highly problematic when reflecting on the actual historical problem. According to the process of the case, Reckless reported that a friend of the girl's uncle appealed to Roe for help after the case reached a stand-still eleven days after her disappearance. An investigator found the Swedish woman in a rear room of a saloon at 30th and State Streets; within the case file, the investigator emphasized that he was "attracted by the fact that a colored woman was accompanied by a very pretty girl." The next day, both women were arrested and upon review of the case, the Swedish Council suggested to the United States Immigration Bureau that the young woman be deported.

² Adapted from Clifford G. Roe, *Panders and Their White Slaves* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell & Company, 1910): 11-17.

³ *Ibid.*

While Reckless admitted that the final outcome of the case was uncertain, he hinted that the young woman acknowledged her indiscretions and refused to prosecute the men she accused in her trial.⁴ The ideological gap between Clifford Roe's and Walter Reckless' studies illustrate a vital division between public perceptions of female sexuality during the white slavery "panic" of the late 19th century and more realistic images acknowledged in the aftermath of the findings of Chicago's Vice Commission. This gap is significant when considering the uniqueness of the case Reckless presented; finding any public discussion of Scandinavians acting outside of the social roles Americans prescribed them is comparatively difficult when considering the wealth of cases focused on other immigrant groups of Chicago. While historians have begun to analyze this gap in public understandings of morality and private spheres in the history of white slavery, there is a significant element that remains understudied in relation to "deviance," "vice," and "preferred" Northern and Western European immigrants who contributed to this phenomenon, regardless of stereotypes that painted them as moral, upstanding citizens of their communities.

By the turn of the century, citizens and newcomers to the city had come to regard Chicago as one of the most lawless cities in the United States, rife with crime, corruption and sexual danger that threatened young immigrants who arrived within the city looking for job opportunities and independence. One of the biggest public debates of this era focused on the threat of "white slavery" – a term which appeared with great frequency at the turn of the century to refer to an extreme form of prostitution in which a woman was often exploited through some form of physical coercion, and even kidnapping. Joanne

⁴ Case 17 – Chicago Vice Study File, cited in Walter C. Reckless' famous study, *Vice in Chicago* (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1933): 38-9.

Meyerowitz's seminal work established that Progressive-minded reformers were responsible for the creating the image of the innocent victim of male sexual exploitation within the context of a prevailing Victorian image of women as passionless beings. Over the course of the 1910s and into the 1920s, both public representations of the "women adrift" began to shift, as the assertive behavior of young independent wage earners eventually forced reformers, sociologists, and the media to acknowledge the active role they had in shaping their own lives.⁵ While recent works have begun to interrogate the actual experiences of immigrant women, the historiography focusing on reactions of immigrant communities towards major public issues like white slavery and crime remains relatively thin. Furthermore, historians of Scandinavian immigrants have only recently begun to interrogate a wealth of documentation that suggests Scandinavians were involved in a number of crimes and white slavery narratives, looking only superficially at various instances where Scandinavian women were "lured" into white slavery.⁶ From this

⁵ A number of vital works inspired by Meyerowitz original thesis have built upon the notion of a shift in ideology to include deeper discussions on the definitions of white slavery, urban space, and sexuality within Chicago including Kevin Mumford's *Interzones*, Amy Lagler's dissertation, "For God's Sake Do Something," and Karen Abbott's *Sin in the Second City*. For further discussion, see Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988): xvii-xxiii; Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Amy R. Lagler, "For God's Sake Do Something": White Slavery Narratives and Moral Panic in Turn-of-the-Century American Cities," PhD Dissertation, Michigan State University, 2000; Karen Abbott, *Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America's Soul* (New York: Random House, 2007). See also Janet E. Rasmussen, "I Was Scared to Death When I Came to Chicago": White Slavery and the Woman Immigrant," in *Fin(s) de Siecle in Scandinavian Perspective: Studies in Honor of Harald S. Naess*, eds. Faith Ingwersen and Mary Kay Norseng (Columbia, SC: Camden House, Inc., 1993): 195.

⁶ Prior to Ulf Beijbom's chapter on the experiences of Swedish domestic servants published in 1993, historians of Scandinavian immigration relied more closely on a standard narrative that emphasized the upstanding morals of their historical subjects; while these experiences were true for many, especially active Lutherans, there was much more to be said of the interactions between themes such as gender, vice and the private sphere in relation to young, single immigrants who came to American cities between the 1880s and the 1910s. A number of recent works have begun to look into this vital discourse, largely suggesting that the biggest fears in the community were centered on the role of Scandinavian domestics and their precarious social positions, yet have failed to go into more extensive analysis as to the viewpoints of Americans and Scandinavians towards young and seemingly endangered women. Furthermore, these recent works omit any larger discussion of the connections of men and crime, viewpoints of the community

vital omission, one could conclude that such documentation simply does not exist, and that Americans viewed Scandinavians as pious, responsible people in comparison to other ethnic groups, who therefore did not elicit public concern. However, this was far from the truth; Scandinavians were well aware of the dangers their young women and men faced as exhibited in a number of publications, media representations, and discourse of the community that illustrated a definitive concern. In an intriguing turn of events, as this chapter argues, Scandinavians held a completely opposite viewpoint on such issues that put them ahead of their time. As the “women adrift” of immigrant classes as a whole were viewed by Americans at the turn of the century as helpless victims, Scandinavians granted their youth agency in their own lives, and often times held them accountable for the ramifications of their decisions, regardless of sex, social or marital status. These responsibilities given to Scandinavian youth were internal, grounded first in the culture of home and continued in Chicago in deliberate ways. In community newspapers, Scandinavians would create a private discourse in the languages of home on the dangers of Chicago’s city spaces, while also warning their youth to act in ways that would bring community pride, not shame. While the community actively put measures into place to steer their youth away from dire situations, largely focusing on the establishment of settlement homes as a haven for youth living adrift, some immigrants nevertheless found trouble within the city, which community newspapers widely reported in an effort to

towards crime, and proposed solutions to prevent their youth from becoming wrapped up in criminal activities, which this chapter seeks to explore in greater detail. Some of these works include the following: Ulf Beijbom, “The Promised Land for Swedish Maids,” in *Swedes in America: Intercultural and Interethnic Perspectives on Contemporary Research* (Växjö, Sweden: The Swedish Emigrant Institute’s Series, 1993): 117-124; Rasmussen, “I Was Scared to Death When I Came to Chicago,” 194-202; Margareta Matovic, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life: Swedish-American Women in Lake View,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women* (1997): 261-97; Joy Lintelman, “A Good Position,” in *I Go to America: Swedish American Women and the Life of Mina Anderson* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009): 92-134.

show support for their accused youth. At the same time, Chicago's newspapers also took note of such social problems, but often viewed any connections between Scandinavians and city crime as isolated instances not representative of the larger group. This chapter will begin to open up larger conversations on the forgotten "dark" side of the Scandinavian community in Chicago, which included episodes involving public drunkenness, sexual crime and white slavery, prostitution, and illegitimacy based in cultural traditions. In bringing these stories to light, this significant discourse should open up further ideological connections between a city coming into the modern era, shifting ideals of sexual morality, and the establishment of social behaviors deemed appropriate for Chicago's various ethnic groups.

"We feel that Scandinavians are law-abiding": Public Image and Early Encounters with Vice

From the earliest days of Scandinavian settlement in Chicago, stereotypes were established for all immigrant groups arriving in the city in droves during the era of massive industrialization. The Irish were often times depicted as rough drunkards who were prone to public fighting, while Italians found themselves painted as insular and sneaky, not allowing outsiders into their community establishments. Just as Chicagoans created stereotyped perceptions of various immigrant groups as a method of coping with overwhelming diversity and crowding within neighborhoods, Scandinavians also dealt with negative stereotypes of their character. One of the most common focused on the drunken workingman who spent his evenings on a barstool at his favorite Scandinavian

tavern. As Perry Duis illustrated in *The Saloon*, in small “ma and pa” operations, the saloon was not just a place for drinking, but also to get a cheap, home-cooked meal, cash checks, pick up mail, and conduct other types of necessary business. Over time, as Duis contends, Chicago became “wide open” as regulations about the use of public places, from speed limits to peddler’s rules, were largely ignored; the same laissez-faire attitude prevailed about crime and liquor licensing.⁷ For immigrants, both “old” and “new,” the saloon became what Duis termed a “comfortable complement” to their ethnicity.⁸ Scandinavian saloons, especially those run by Swedes, were located almost entirely within their tightly concentrated neighborhoods. Danes and Norwegians like the Swedes owned places on the fringe of the neighborhood and designed their taverns to appeal to a narrow ethnic audience. Nearly all Scandinavian saloons featured Swedish punch during the year and “glög”, a traditional spiced wine served during the holidays, advertised prominently on their signboards outside the taverns. One Swede, Axel Nilsson, operated a “Texas” buffet adjoining his bar, while Scandia Hall hosted ethnic labor meetings, and Swedish singing societies met at Andrew Johnson’s bar.⁹ In almost every way, the family-run saloon served as the center of the community for socializing, leisure, and in some instances, the catalyst for crime.

At the same time, however, Scandinavians were quick to remind the public of their commitment to temperance as a feature of their Lutheran beliefs. Therefore, when embarrassing public scandals arose, like that of the dismissal of the superintendent of the morgue of the Cook County Poor House for drunkenness in July of 1891, Scandinavian

⁷ Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1983): 2, 8.

⁸ *Ibid*, 146.

⁹ *History and Souvenir of the Liquor Interests*, in Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago: A Demographic and Social Study of the 1846-1880 Immigration* (Uppsala and Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1971): 258-59.

newspapers often took a position of support on behalf of their blamed countrymen. As the article, "Victimized Countryman," explained of the incident, a few days prior, Dr.

Wimermark, the Superintendent of the institution, also a Scandinavian, left for Minneapolis to attend the United Scandinavian Singers' and left another man, Mr. Pyne, in charge. In Dr. Wimermark's absence, the president of the board of trustees visited the Poor House and left explicit instructions with Pyne that he would have the right to discharge anyone among the personnel who could be charged with drunkenness. The article went on to accuse both Mr. Pyne and the president of the board of trustees of discrimination against their Scandinavian workers who were falsely accused of negligence on Dr. Wimermark's behalf and drunkenness on Mr. Christianson's part.¹⁰

Amongst fairly regular stories in the pages of Scandinavian newspapers that claimed false accusations of drunkenness and vice against their fellow countrymen appeared periodically comparing the crime rates of Scandinavians to that of other immigrant groups. In January 1884, *Skandinaven* announced that during the course of the previous year, there were "only six hundred and eighty-three Swedes arrested, four hundred and thirty-six Norwegians, and no Danes," compared to "five thousand four hundred and eight Irish, and over twenty thousand American-born" – an indication that the editor deemed as a "favorable indication for the Scandinavians."¹¹ Six years later in December 1891, *Skandinaven* claimed that over the course of the year, there were fewer Scandinavians accused of crimes than ever before, indicating that "Scandinavians are law-abiding" as the few cases that came before the courts were for "minor offences."¹² While Scandinavian newspapers played a major role in calming the fears of the community in

¹⁰ "Victimized Countryman," *Svenska Tribunen*, July 23, 1891, 3.

¹¹ "Crime Among Scandinavians," *Skandinaven*, January 28, 1884, 4.

¹² "Crime," *Skandinaven*, December 15, 1891, 4.

being deemed suspect by the general public, the Scandinavian media nevertheless played an equally significant role in sensationalizing the actions of their own in connection to clandestine crimes reported by Chicago's newspapers as a means of defense.

Prior to the turn of the century, the Scandinavian community took additional action to defend the good-name of their young, female workers. As a large proportion of young Scandinavian women worked as domestic servants living apart from family, by the 1900s, some gained a fleeting notoriety for frivolous and irresponsible behaviors in connection with a number of unfortunate circumstances reported widely by Chicago's newspapers. The first public issue, addressed by a man named Kund Larigelando, played upon societal fears of young immigrant women living independently, when he wrote to the editor of *Skandinaven* charging Norwegians with vanity in wanting to dress like American girls. Larigelando warned that when they could not afford to do so, Norwegian girls simply "sold their virtue...that is why the houses of shame exist."¹³ In response to his claims, three "industrious shop girls" appealed to the editor of *Skandinaven* to publish their plea to the community to come to the defense of the reputation of Norwegian "girls" in Chicago. It was insinuations like his, the Norwegian girls claimed, that created lasting negative stereotypes that could have a major effect on future employment and public opinion: "We have come to the United States of America, where we get our good, honest pay either as servants or shop girls until we get better positions. But it is always enough to keep us dressed respectable, and we do not wish to have our reputation spoiled by a person like K.L...we have always been respected by the Americans and we intend to remain so."¹⁴ The following summer, a similar plea came in the form of a debate between

¹³ "Girls Resent Charges," *Skandinaven*, September 18, 1872, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

two Swedish newspapers after *Svenska Amerikaneren* published an article which cast doubt on their responsibilities in their positions; in the article, the editor took offense to the seeming frivolity of maids, who were described as “much finer ladies with clothing much more expensive than their mistresses,” which struck the editor as odd given the women earned only “four to five dollars a week.”¹⁵ The viewpoint of *Nya Verlden* was quite different, instead arguing in favor of Chicago’s Swedish maids, pointing out that the any position promised “steady employment, good pay, excellent treatment and lighter duties” and therefore, if women who worked as maids wanted to spend their hard-earned money on personal items, they had earned the right to do so.¹⁶

Just years after these simpler squabbles played out in the pages of Scandinavian newspapers, a much more serious piece of news reached Chicago’s newspapers. In August 1880, the *Chicago Tribune* reported the cautionary tale of Mrs. Peterson, an unmarried Norwegian woman “without money or friends” who suddenly took ill in the middle of North Des Plaines street. Upon being given temporary shelter in a nearby tenement house, the woman shortly thereafter delivered a baby. The newspaper reported that the attending physician refused to allow her to be moved due to her precarious condition, however the people living in the tenement house “insisted upon the unfortunate woman’s removal” and she was moved to the County Hospital.¹⁷ While Norwegians nevertheless acknowledged this very public embarrassment for their community, the attention of their leaders focused much more closely on creating a solution to the earlier problem of negative stereotypes in relation to their young women.

¹⁵ “*Nya Verlden*” och tjensteflickorna” (“*New World and the Maid*”), *Svenska Amerikanaren*, July 5, 1873, 3. (*Translations mine*) The entire exchange between the two newspapers was published in July 1873 as an ongoing debate over the position of the Swedish maid in Chicago’s society.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ “The City: General News,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 21, 1880, 8.

In 1903, the editor of *Svenska Nyheter* spoke out on these earlier depictions of the community, acknowledging the desire young Scandinavian women felt to go out and have fun with peers after work, but also placed the responsibility of whatever dangers they may encounter on the young working women:

“The time off may often work in the very opposite direction to that which is helpful. The desire to go out evenings is strong, nights awake follow, and may draw consequences far beyond the pale face and the weary body... Youth has not learned what sad consequences may ensue from that which as the moment seemed pleasant. The full responsibility for behavior and manner of living is placed upon the shoulders of the young woman; there being no thoughtful lady of the manor to place restraint on her activities, nobody to persuade her to abstain from the type of pastime which may have consequences detrimental to the girl mentally, morally, and physically as well.”¹⁸

Many young working women took this responsibility to heart, like Pauline Hegborn, who told of going to movies or theaters, visiting restaurants and coffee shops, and touring various city museums like the Art Institute. As she explained, “It was not unusual for a group to get together and go to a picnic on a Sunday and the girls would bring the lunch... It did not take much to have a good time those days.” However, she made a point to specify that their activities were always morally sound, and involved “clean sport... no taverns.”¹⁹ The agency illustrated by these Swedes and Norwegians in their struggle to be viewed as legitimate, hard-working immigrants by their peers was representative of a vital effort of Chicago’s Scandinavians to continue to be viewed as inherently good by their American neighbors. Nevertheless, the fear of corruption and sexual misconduct

¹⁸ “Maid or Factory Girl?” (Editorial), *Svenska Nyheter*, June 23, 1903, 2.

¹⁹ Pauline Hegborn (Nelson) memoirs, younger years – 1920s, Hegborn – Nelson Family Manuscript Collection, Manuscript Series #39, Box #2, F. M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University, Chicago, IL.

bred by the white slavery panic of the 1890s into the 20th century threatened to unravel the perfect image Scandinavians were in the process of creating for themselves.

The first report of a purported white slavery case involving Scandinavian women was published in *Skandinaven* in November 1889, signaling the beginning of a massive campaign to prevent other young women in the community from falling victim to such heinous crimes. The victim in question was not of Scandinavian descent, but instead, her story was told as a cautionary tale to the community's women to remind them of similar situations they may have also put themselves into. The article, intended to illicit shock from its readers, told of "a white slave being held at the Harrison Street [Police] Station" – a claim the author found unbelievable in the 19th century, "in the modern city of Chicago." Even in the Postbellum era, the author stated, "a white woman is bought, sold, and mortgaged so that when she escapes she is arrested and accused of robbery." The girl, Marie Dubhene, described by the author as "small and good-looking" and "hardly fourteen years old" was lured to Chicago by a woman named Fawn Kittie while working in Montreal. Marie told the police that she had no money to buy a ticket, but was promised a "good job" by Kittie; upon arrival in Chicago, Marie soon realized the situation she had fallen into as Kittie received money from another woman for her work procuring Marie into white slavery. Regardless of the brothel owner's warning that escape would result in her arrest, Marie fled the brothel and was arrested for robbery – the author warned that this was a common practice to ground white slaves in a perpetual system, where brothel owners give their "girls" clothing in return for their signature on a form that states it is their "mortgage" until they earned enough money through

prostitution to earn their clothes.²⁰ While Scandinavian newspapers took a similar approach to American newspapers and various white slavery narratives in expressing the dangers of the city to its citizens, further exposure of white slavery “rings” illustrated a much different approach taken in dealing with the community’s young women.

As Joanne Meyerowitz explained, the experiences of these young “women adrift” combined elements of independence from family, naïveté, low wages, and sexual service work, which sparked the imaginations of Victorian, and later, Progressive writers. During this era, the woman adrift became a symbol of the threats that industrialization and urbanization posed to womanhood and the family.²¹ While some viewed her as a threat, others depicted the independent wage earner as a poor, innocent victim whose virtue was the community’s responsibility to protect. Between 1889 and the turn of the century, the pages of *Skandinaven*, *Scandia*, and *Svenska Nyheter* splashed numerous tales of white slavery across their pages in an effort to warn young women, but also to place responsibility solely on their shoulders for putting themselves in knowingly dangerous situations. Likewise, the editors of these various newspapers reflected a similar viewpoint of the community when it came to women making wise decisions in the positions they chose to work in, with a significant emphasis on domestic service. After a certain point in looking for a safe place to work and live as domestics, many women eventually exhausted themselves pounding the pavements, and when their money ran out, they sometimes despaired. Often times, they would find themselves making a deal with the first person to approach them with a position, regardless of credentials or references, much like four girls “found” at one of Sadie Richards’ brothels – a notorious Chicago

²⁰ “White Slave Flees,” *Skandinaven*, November 12, 1889, 1.

²¹ Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, 41-2.

madam, who would hire young girls to work as maids in her private home on Washington Boulevard. The pages of *Scandinaven* exposed Richards' tactics, which were especially useful in procuring fair Scandinavian girls, to the rest of the community, making a point of splashing the victim's names across the headlines for all to see. Clara Larson, Alma Peterson, Frida Hussen, and Minna Borg were all hired by Richards to work as maids; the girls worked as proper maids for a period of time, until Richards would introduce them to some "nice" men who would "entertain" them. It was only a matter of time before the girls were "thoroughly broken in," according to the paper.²² Within that same year, a number of other articles in *Scandinaven* tracked additional stories of sexual vice, sometimes claiming that the young Scandinavian women were victims of kidnappings, including especially graphic details for the context of the time period. One such article focused on a Norwegian, Fannie Eckstrom, who was forced by a man to live in a room at his hotel on West Madison Street, where "he and his friends would visit her and force her to have intercourse against her will," as other articles told of the devastation experienced by young girls who were either "diseased or disabled" by several illegal abortions and a litany of venereal diseases.²³ And while some American and immigrant newspapers denied the presence of any of "their" girls' involvement in sexual vice, Scandinavian newspapers, by and large, took full responsibility in acknowledging that the community's young women were involved, and even sometimes to blame. In most of the brothels or "schools of vice," women were present because they were held against their will,

²² "Girls Who Leave Home," *Skandinaven*, January 30, 1889, 4.

²³ "Kidnapped," *Skandinaven*, March 7, 1889, 10; "Juvenile Delinquency," *Skandinaven*, September 24, 1889, 7.

however, as the article “Juvenile Delinquency” admitted, a few worked in brothels “because they liked [this kind of] life.”²⁴

One problem that was particularly unique to Swedish women was the preponderance of illegitimacy within the community amongst domestics; as Margareta Matovic argued, American employers, doctors, pastors, and social workers were well-aware that Swedish immigrant domestics frequently gave birth to illegitimate children.²⁵ In Sweden, pregnancy was traditionally the first step towards marriage in rural regions, often publicly considered as a formal engagement between two people who planned to marry upon the birth of their child. This practice was acknowledged by the authors of the *Swedish Catalogue of the World's Columbian Exposition*, who explained the number of births out of wedlock in Sweden was admittedly high at 10% of all births, while matrimonial frequency was relatively low; in 1880, 49.3% of all Western European men ages 25-30 were married, compared to 40% of Swedish men, while only 47.7% of

²⁴ “Juvenile Delinquency,” *Skandinaven*, September 24, 1889, 7.

²⁵ Margareta Matovic, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life: Swedish-American Women in Lake View,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 275-76; Matovic, “Illegitimacy and marriage in Stockholm in the nineteenth century,” in *Bastardy and its Comparative History*, 336. According to the editors of *Bastardy and its Comparative History*, illegitimacy has been called a social problem for the last two centuries and a moral problem from time immemorial, and therefore is a highly documented and vital historical problem. In defining bastardy in comparative terms within the European cultural tradition, the authors of the volume look at the procreation of children outside of marriage within the context of various societies from urban to peasant classes. In understanding the meanings of marriage, personal commitment, and childbirth within the context of Scandinavian societies, we can better understand the transmission of misunderstood deviant cultural traditions. For further discussion on illegitimacy within Western Europe, see Peter Laslett, “Introduction: Comparing illegitimacy over time and between cultures,” in *Bastardy and its Comparative History*, eds. Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen and Richard M. Smith (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1980): 1-68. Looking more specifically at Scandinavian cultures, the same study poses a lively discourse on the permissiveness of illegitimacy within the context of the 19th century; some commentators, especially those of Scandinavian descent, argue that in old peasant society, the arrival of a child seemed to have been the occasion for official marriage, otherwise a marriage would not have taken place, while others who have researched parish records in Sweden found that there were fines charged by the church for illegitimacy, but nothing devastating enough to stop illegitimate births from continuing to occur in subsequent generations. See R.F. Thomasson, “Premarital Permissiveness and Illegitimacy in the Nordic Countries,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, v. 8, n. 2 (April 1976): 252-70; Ann-Sofie Kälveborn, “Illegitimacy and marriage in three Swedish parishes in the nineteenth century,” in *Bastardy and its Comparative History*, 330.

Swedish women in the same age range were married, compared to 62.5% of all Western European women.²⁶ At the time, Swedish scholars exhibited a range of viewpoints on this cultural practice. E.H. Thörnberg, a social scientist sent to Chicago in 1913 to study Swedish immigrants, remarked that Swedish women were no more immoral than other immigrant women, but instead became pregnant out of wedlock more frequently because they considered conception as binding as marriage. Later community discussions would show that this ideology was, by and large, supported by Chicago's Scandinavian citizens, especially in relation to Castberg's Laws in Illinois, which granted children born out of wedlock comparable rights to legitimate children. Some Swedish women, however, were not as flexible in their moral viewpoints, such as Cecilia Millow who claimed that Swedish immigrant women had a "flagrant disregard for morals and were not ashamed of bearing illegitimate children" within American society.²⁷ Aside from these contrasting viewpoints, the question remains as to why illegitimacy typically is not considered as a historical problem in connection to the Scandinavian community, but is usually associated with other immigrant groups. Dorothy Puttee and Mary Ruth Colby's study, *The Illegitimate Child in Illinois*, illustrated a similar surprise as to the preponderance of

²⁶ *Swedish Catalogue of the World's Columbian Exposition*, 17-19.

²⁷ E.H. Thornberg was sent by the Swedish National Association against Emigration to give a darker portrayal of living conditions within the city; nevertheless, Thornberg found a "higher type of settlement" and was impressed with the living conditions, and therefore his study read much like other scholars who visited the Scandinavian settlements of America and looked favorably on the rich cultural expressions exhibited in the communities. In referring to the Castberg's Laws of Illinois, one editorial in *Skandinaven* from 1916 told of a "lively discussion" which took place at the Woman's City Club of Chicago in response to Catherine Anthony's study of women's and children's living conditions in Norway and Germany. The sociology student of the University of Chicago referred to the Castberg's Laws, which affected the rights of children born out of wedlock; according to the article, the consensus of opinion "was overwhelmingly for the adoption of these laws of Illinois," which would give children born out of wedlock the same rights with respect to parenthood, family name, and monetary contributions of the parents. For further discussion, see E.H. Thornberg, *Lefnadsstandard och Sparkraft med särskild hänsyn till den svenska befolkningen i Chicago* (Stockholm, 1915):42-3; "Castberg's Laws in Illinois," (Editorial) *Skandinaven*, December 4, 1916, 4; Cecilia Millow, "Till frågan om det moraliska tillståndet bland svenska tjänsteflickor i America," *Dagny*, Organ för Fredrika Bremer Förbundet (Stockholm, 1904): 293-94.

illegitimacy amongst Chicago's Scandinavians in comparison to other groups of women. The authors noted one reason for such an oversight was due to the typical association of poverty and illegitimacy; in doing so, their 1928 study recognized the continuation of a false stereotype that Chicago's Scandinavians were financially capable, and therefore would not produce illegitimate children. During that year, in Chicago alone there were 1,346 illegitimate births recorded which totaled 22.8 illegitimate births per 1,000 babies born. Of that number, the authors emphasize that the problem of illegitimacy was one of the "white race" – out of 1,346 illegitimate births, 73% of those were listed as "white."²⁸ To the authors' surprise, of the 144 foreign-born mothers registered as giving birth to illegitimate children, the majority were of the "old" immigrant classes: 26 were from Germany, 22 from Ireland, 20 from Poland, 17 from Scandinavia, 16 from Austria, and 10 from Canada, while they emphasized that there were "but 4 Italians, no Greeks, 5 Mexicans, and 3 Czecho-Slovakians [sic]."²⁹ Even today, their conclusions could elicit surprise when considering the historiography on representations of Scandinavian women, as well as women from Northern and Western Europe in the context of a larger narrative. Due mostly to ethnocentrism, historians of white slavery, prostitution, and sexuality in urban spaces focus more closely on those from the latter groups listed by Puttee and Colby in connection to unfortunate situations, but as the authors' study shows, it was actually those from the "old" immigrant groups who engaged in illegitimacy in much larger numbers.

Even more surprising, however, is the lack of analysis on a much larger and strategic plan that several domestic servants of Scandinavian descent knowingly engaged

²⁸ Dorothy Francis Puttee and Mary Ruth Colby, *The Illegitimate Child in Illinois* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1937): 82-3, 85-6.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 91-2.

in. According to Matovic and the findings of *The Illegitimate Child in Illinois*, a single marital status was a prerequisite for employment as a domestic, whereas marriage would normally mark the end of work for women. Yet, many Scandinavian women used the cultural tradition of illegitimacy as a means to earn more income prior to the birth of their children. According to Matovic, many women had stable relationships and even secret engagements, primarily with Scandinavian men, and postponed marriage to keep their employment.³⁰ In doing so, these women were able to incur more income from their employers, many of whom pitied their workers for their seemingly dire situations as illegitimate mothers. As Puttee and Colby noted of this apparent arrangement, “there has long existed the belief that to enter the ranks of those engaged in domestic service is to invite illicit love-making, extra-marital intercourse and subsequent unmarried motherhood,” which the high percentage of unmarried mothers who were also domestics suggested. Their statistics pointed to the “unorganized” nature of domestic service as employment, which they argued offered “insufficient education to get further training,” however, as discussed in chapter three, this was not the case with Scandinavian domestics who were by and large offered significant chances for education and upward social mobility through their positions.³¹ While public discourse on the nature of illegitimacy

³⁰ Matovic pointed out that while Scandinavian women received praise within American society for marrying within their own communities, while making a concerted effort to learn the ways of America, she also described the life of a married Scandinavian woman as rife with problems. She explained that even if the woman came into the marriage with a sizeable dowry, it was incredibly burdensome to pay rent and debts that homeownership incurred, and were often forced to take boarders or find other means of income that did not take them out of the home. Therefore, a solution for many domestics who understood the significance of their positions was to simply stay in their jobs until their employers asked them to leave (when their pregnancy got in the way of completing their work, or after the birth of their children). See Matovic, “Embracing a Middle-Class Life,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 277-78.

³¹ Puttee and Colby use their statistics (782 out of 2,381, or 32.84%) of the registered unmarried mothers who were also domestics to state their case that such positions put women in danger of such unfortunate situations, while also keeping them grounded in a never-ending cycle of manual labor. Margareta Matovic’s work has been the only recent argument to suggest otherwise, that Scandinavian women used pregnancy as an advantage in their positions. The prevalence of illegitimate pregnancy in Scandinavian

and unsavory behaviors in connection to Scandinavian domestics was not given adequate attention by the media, a number of crimes, both clandestine and dramatic, forced the media to take notice at the turn of a new century – a time when vice in Chicago was beginning to gain international notoriety.

One of the first published tales of clandestine crime involving Scandinavians in Chicago appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1884, which recounted the charge of Mrs. Sarah Tarskey, who had reason to believe her husband had been living “in adultery” with a Norwegian woman on Randolph street. The story, which read as a popular multi-part drama over the course of several weeks, followed the testimonies of the Tarskeys, as well as the accused adulteress, Mrs. Bergh, who the media painted as a conniving siren out to steal Mr. Tarskey away from his wife and effectively end their marriage.³² By the turn of the century, a series of murderous crimes gripped the Scandinavian community, effectively turning their attention away from comparatively inconsequential stories of adultery to much more heinous crimes that had the potential to shatter the positive image they cultivated. The first focused on Fred Hanson, who was found guilty of manslaughter in the shooting death of an Irishman, Edward O’Connor; while the Swedish-language newspapers admitted to the fact that Hanson was one of their own, the series of articles emphasized that Hanson was actually born in Iowa to Swedish immigrants in 1875 and had lived in Minneapolis for nineteen years prior to his move to Chicago just three months before committing the crime. The article went on to define the crime as one of

Chicago, as well as throughout America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries is a topic that is in need of much further analysis given the significant discourse the practice suggests in connection to meanings of motherhood and labor within an urban context. See Puttee and Colby, 98-9; Matovic, “Embracing a Middle Class Life,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women*, 275-76.

³² “Romance Ended; The Norwegian Woman’s Friend Arrested on Complaint of His Wife,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1884, 2.

passion motivated by jealousy – “both men were in love with the same girl,” explained the news, and the murder was committed in her room.³³ The most sensational crime was yet to come – one that would bring national attention to the dangerous position of single Scandinavian women within the city. On a cold January night in 1902, Carrie Larson, a Scandinavian woman, was strangled by a man named Louis Thomb aboard the steamer “Peerless;” upon realizing another man, Robert Keissig, witnessed the murder, Thomb proceeded to throw her body overboard into the Chicago River. The response of the media, both American and Scandinavian, overwhelmingly condemned Thomb for his heinous crime and blamed his numerous attempts for respite from hanging on the sympathies of “foolish women” and a flawed justice system. *Skandinaven* reported in August 1902, just days before Thomb was scheduled to be hanged, that the “deplorable state of affairs” that allowed for Thomb to receive respite twice before was due to the “sickly sentimentality of hysterical women who lionize criminals...to the delay and uncertainty of justice in our courts of law.”³⁴ As the case of Carrie Larson illustrates, Americans who would attempt to harm members of the Scandinavian community would receive no immunity for their crimes, regardless of the scenario.

Other murderous crimes that took place involving members of the community as the assassins would draw interesting parallels – in two specific cases, regardless of the details, the media stood by the accused, rather than the victims of the crimes. For instance, upon initial reports of the death of one Swedish man’s wife, Mrs. John A. Nordgren, writers for *Svenska Nyheter* and *Skandinaven* came to the unflinching support of Nordgren, who was depicted as a victim of the same corrupt court system that had

³³ “Fred Hanson Guilty,” *Svenska Tribunen*, April 3, 1901, 11.

³⁴ “The Case of Thombs,” *Skandinaven*, August 3, 1902, 4; Case of the Murder of Carrie Larson, Chicago Crime Database, Case number 1326.

worked in the community's favor in the conviction of Carrie Larson's killer. In November 1904, *Svenska Nyheter* reported that the Swedish National League came to the aid of Nordgren, "convinced of his innocence" and was able to "engage competent counsel and bring the case before the Illinois Supreme Court" where he was granted a new trial and later acquitted of all charges.³⁵ Another high-profile case involving a Scandinavian illustrated the community's support of the convicted, regardless of sex or extenuating circumstances. Helga C. Anderson, who was described by the *Chicago Tribune* as a "pretty Norwegian woman, 24 years of age" was accused in May of 1907 of attempting to kill Julius C. Darby, an elevated railway motorman, because "he jilted her after inducing her to obtain a divorce that she might marry him," according to the paper. In an effort to garner sympathy on Anderson's behalf, the newspaper told of the events that led to Darby's injury:

"After hearing through gossiping women of the neighborhood...that the man was paying attention to several other women, Miss Anderson forced an interview in the morning and when she heard from Darby's own lips that he intended to "turn her down," she unwrapped a revolver from a newspaper in her lap and shot him three times...she attempted to shoot herself after she saw what she had done to Darby, but the bullet imbedded itself in her heavy coat and she was not injured. "I love him yet, I can't help it," sobbed Miss Anderson as she left the hospital. The story told by the woman, who gave herself up without any trouble, won the sympathy of the police...Ex-husband approves of shooting: Late in the evening Waskow [Anderson's ex-husband] hearing of the shooting of Darby, went to the station and visited the cell of his former wife. He shook hands with her, and, after hearing her story, promised to give her "all the aid he could." "You did right in shooting him," he said as he left."³⁶

³⁵ "Announcement Regarding New Trial for John Nordgren," *Svenska Nyheter*, November 1, 1904, 2.

³⁶ "Avenge her own home and heart; Helga Anderson Shoots Thrice and dangerously wounds Julius C. Darby," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1907, 5.

Not at any time did accounts of the crime picture Anderson as a criminal or even an adulteress, but instead as a woman promised the commitment of marriage by a man who rescinded his promise – a crime depicted by the newspaper as much worse than the shooting. Instead, Anderson was almost viewed as a hero for her bold gesture, regardless of the fact that she was arrested and admittedly guilty of the crime.

Just days later, another crime of passion took center stage as the Reverend Alfred Dahlstrom, minister of three Evangelical churches in both Chicago and Rockford, was arrested for the attempted kidnapping of Marta Petersen, a seventeen-year-old Swedish girl from Chicago. The response from the community was not as supportive to that of Anderson's crime; not only was Reverend Dahlstrom a respected minister within the community, but he had also been living a secret life with Pedersen much to the dismay of his wife. Upon the report of Pedersen's mother that the minister had kidnapped her daughter, he denied knowing the whereabouts of Miss Petersen, but added that he intended to marry the young girl upon her eighteenth birthday, when she would reach legal marrying age.³⁷ Regardless of the litany of high-profile crimes involving Scandinavians in the early years of the 20th century, Chicago's media, nor did the majority of Chicago's citizens, begin to view Scandinavians in a negative light, associating them with the crimes committed by a select few. Nevertheless, Chicago's Scandinavians began the process in 1907 to combat the social evils which threatened their youth through their contributions to a larger movement – the establishment of settlement houses geared at placing immigrants on the right path. Through these establishments, the Scandinavian community was conscious of their public image, which

³⁷ "Minister Arrested," *Skandinaven*, May 23, 1907, 7.

was apparent in the outpouring of press releases to Chicago newspapers which brought attention to the settlement homes that were being built in 1907. While the committees behind these homes continually emphasized that they came to establish the homes to assist immigrant women of all backgrounds and nationalities in times of need, through representations in the media and recollections of the homes, the impetus was quite clear. Scandinavians looked to build settlement homes that outwardly appeared to acculturate patrons to the ways of America, but inside, maintained the traditions, and sometimes even languages, of home.

“At the Immanuel Home we were well taken care of...we loved the home”: Public Concern over Scandinavian Workers and Diverse Settlement Solutions

With the numbers of young, single Scandinavians on the rise in Chicago by the turn of the century, reformers and citizens alike grew wary over the potential ramifications of young immigrants living “adrift.” However, the differences in approach by groups who sought to help the newly-arrived pointed to distinctive gendered divisions in thought and practice. Such city reformers increasingly emphasized the need for homes intended for young women; at the turn of the century, reformers viewed young “women adrift” in Chicago as helpless victims under constant threat of the dangers of the city.³⁸

One of the best ways to keep young migrants on the correct moral path was to offer them

³⁸ Joy Lintelman briefly described the vast network of settlement homes geared towards helping young, Scandinavian “women adrift” in cities such as Chicago, Denver and New York, looking more specifically at Boston’s Swedish Home of Peace. Established in 1903, the home had a similar goal as the Chicago homes, to serve “girls who are out of employment or temporarily in need of rest and for girls from the Scandinavian Countries coming to Boston in search of employment and for girls who through sickness and other misfortunes have become destitute and are in need of temporary care and shelter.” See Joy Lintelman, *I Go to America*, 95-6.

safe housing options where they would be guaranteed a bed and a meal, but most importantly, the guidance of other women who operated the settlement houses. In support of their own, a number of settlement houses aimed towards newly emigrated Scandinavians opened their doors in Lake View, Lincoln Park, and on the south side under the guidance of several Lutheran organizations. As early as the 1890s, such organizations began to conceive of plans to build boarding houses for Scandinavian working women, but the implementation of such plans would require both collateral and significant voluntary help. Nevertheless, in the opening years of the 1900s, an impressive number of Lutheran settlement homes opened their doors out of need, including many that operated under the leadership of the Augustana synod such as the Augustana Central Home, Augustana Lutheran Mission Home and Augustana Women's Home; other homes like the Immanuel Women's Home, Swedish Covenant Home of Mercy, Susanna Wesley Home, Home of the Vikings, and the Young Ladies' Ebenezer Home of the Free Church functioned through the support of community church offerings or groups committed to maintaining the moral sanctity of the various enclaves.

Newly arrived immigrants learned of these homes through word of mouth or through the various advertisements in Chicago's Scandinavian newspapers, many of which carefully pointed out the intentions of their organizations. One advertisement for the Augustana Central Home and Inner Mission stressed that the home was intended as a hospice or mission hotel, but not as a rescue home, old people's home, or a home for invalids. Instead, the leadership stressed that Augustana Central Home was "a safe place, a Christian home for young people where they can stay at very reasonable expenses and be among friends that are willing and ready at all times to give information, advice and

help in every way possible.”³⁹ Following the lead of several other Progressive reform organizations in the city, homes like Augustana emphasized the potential dangers faced by newly arrived immigrants to the city, especially those who came to the city unaccompanied without knowledge of English. As the advertisement warned, “every year, thousands of young girls come to Chicago and go down to destruction just because of lack of these things...it prevents much evil and here it is true that “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.”⁴⁰ Similarly, the Susanna Wesley Home stressed in its advertisement that it was an institution that served a great need within the city for young women who were “sorely in need who find themselves homeless in a great city where so many grave dangers and temptations lurk.”⁴¹ For these new immigrants, settlement homes offered a temporary and safe retreat from the dank conditions and potential dangers of boarding houses or shoddy hotels, but also included a list of expectations of them during their stay in these religious organizations.

One of the largest and most successful Scandinavian-operated settlement organizations for female migrants in Chicago was the Chicago Immanuel Woman’s Home, which by 1911 would become the largest Lutheran hospice for girls in the United States. The idea of a Lutheran settlement home for young women living “adrift” was first brought to the attention of the pastor of the Immanuel Lutheran Church by young, mostly

³⁹ Much like the Eleanor Clubs of Chicago, which served as a “haven or way station between the security of family, home and traditional values” for mostly white-collar working women according to Lisa Fine, Scandinavian associations of women looked to establish houses of refuge for working women of all occupations which served as a home away from home. For further discussion, see Lisa Fine, “Between Two Worlds: Business Women in a Chicago Boarding House 1900-1930,” *Journal of Social History*, v. 19, n. 3 (Spring 1986): 511-19; Advertisement for the Augustana Central Home and Inner Mission, which was located at 1346 N. LaSalle Street, in *The Swedish Blue Book, A Swedish-American Directory and Yearbook for Chicago, 1927*, published annually by the Swedish-American publishing company, Chicago, 1927, 115.

⁴⁰ Advertisement for the Augustana Central Home and Inner Mission, *The Swedish Blue Book, A Swedish-American Directory and Yearbook for Chicago, 1927*, 115.

⁴¹ Advertisement for the Susanna Wesley Home of the Swedish M.E. Church on 3143 S. Michigan Avenue, *The Swedish Blue Book, 1927*, 120.

strangers to the city who would ask the pastor where they could find a safe home. The pastor later recalled that, “if [the visitors] were well and had sufficient money, their question was easily answered. They could be taken to the YWCA. But if they were ill or out of funds, the question was not so easily answered.”⁴² In considering viable options for a safe, yet inexpensive place of respite for young Scandinavian women, he called upon a group of prominent women of the church’s congregation to undertake the needed project. The Immanuel Woman’s Home Association organized in January 1907 to begin to locate a suitable location for a home where working women of the community could go when out of employment or in need of rest. The purpose of the association mirrored the fears of American Progressive reformers as they looked to provide a “Christian hospice with a homelike atmosphere for young women in Chicago, who are away from the protecting influence of their parental home and former friends.” The association pointed out that they “visualized the many dangers and temptations to which the friendless young woman in a metropolis like Chicago” was exposed on a daily basis.⁴³ According to the association, the need for a safe settlement home was in such dire need within the community that the thirty-three charter members, upon locating the property at 1505 La Salle Avenue, immediately footed the sum of \$7,500 for the three-story home and were able to open its doors to their patrons by August of the same year.⁴⁴ Following their goal to create a retreat that embodied a familial atmosphere, the house featured twelve light and airy bedrooms decorated with familiar adornments from home in an elegant

⁴² Booklet published by the Chicago Immanuel Woman’s Home, *Historical Sketch of the Immanuel Woman’s Home, Looking Back Twenty-five Years (1907-1932)*, p. 12. Chicago Immanuel Woman’s Home Microfilm, Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL (hereafter abbreviated as CIWHM).

⁴³ Ibid, 9; “Immanuel Women’s Home Observes Twenty-Fifth Anniversary,” *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*, Dec. 7, 1932.

⁴⁴ Constitution and By-Laws for Immanuel Woman’s Home Association, 1911 (CIWHM).

Scandinavian style, while the dining hall resembled a Swedish café with white linens, porcelain dishes, and potted flowers set on rustic tables. The association also carefully planned the location of the home as both convenient for its working patrons to travel to from the business section of the city and peaceful as a home set next to the sprawling gardens of Lincoln Park.

As was the practice of many settlement homes in Chicago during the Progressive era, the association expected its patrons to follow a number of strict rules and adhere to specific lifestyle choices before they would receive admission to the home. While the association was organized by Lutheran people and not owned by any one denomination according to the association, its management remained wholly Scandinavian and Lutheran. Similarly, the association continually emphasized that women of all nationalities and backgrounds were invited to stay at the home however the majority of its patrons were of Scandinavian descent. This outcome can be attributed to the insular nature of the Home, which carried no campaign of advertising aside from featuring a few paid advertisements in the yearly Swedish Almanac published by the Augustana Book Concern and in the “Lutheran Companion.” Patrons were also expected to pay the fee of \$3.50 to \$4.00 a week for room and board and the bylaws of the association stressed that the home was intended as a “Christian hospice,” and not as a rescue home, explaining the difference being that the majority of those who shared in the hospitality of the home were able to pay the full price according to the set rates of the home.⁴⁵ And while the association would later emphasize that no woman was ever turned away from the Immanuel Woman’s Home simply because she lacked funds, the association was also quick to mention that it enlisted the help of outside agencies, such as the Woman’s

⁴⁵ *Historical Sketch of the Immanuel Woman’s Home*, 9 (CIWHM)

Protectorate, Traveling Bureaus, and, in the worst-case scenarios, Police Matrons to “take charge” of those who arrived at the home destitute, friendless and homeless.⁴⁶ Regardless of the tendencies of the home to allow only a certain selection of working women through its doors, it was an incredibly successful endeavor; over the course of thirty years, the home hosted 18,435 patrons and would later encompass the surrounding properties to expand the space of the home.⁴⁷

The patrons who regularly visited the home in between jobs or on during time off from work reflected upon the home as a vital institution in a sometimes unforgiving city. The women who made use of the home held a variety of different occupations as office workers, dressmakers and tailoresses, clerks, teachers, social workers, and nurses however domestic servants and cooks were the most frequent patrons, according to the association records. As one charter member reflected, “looking back on a page from the past we find that the home also provided a blessing to many who came as immigrants from Europe and were employed as servants in private homes.” She went on to note that, for domestics who came to Immanuel Home, the institution became a “retreat during their vacations and time off periods. Here they found safe and enjoyable companionship, congenial friends and help and counsel when it was needed.”⁴⁸ Many newly arrived domestics and other working women felt a continuous devotion to their families still in Scandinavia to maintain their cultural traditions and devout religious practices, thereby choosing to spend their days off at morally upstanding places like the Immanuel Home. At night before bedtime, the house matron would lead devotions and the patrons would

⁴⁶ Ibid, 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 11, 14-19.

⁴⁸ Booklet published by the Chicago Immanuel Woman’s Home Association, *The Immanuel Woman’s Home, Brief Illustrated Review* (1937), 27 (CIWHM)

join in singing religious hymns in both English and Swedish; on religious holidays, Scandinavian women from all over the city were invited to participate in traditional celebrations that would remind them of home. One former domestic servant, Mrs. John G. Olsen, recounted one Christmas Eve celebration at the Immanuel Home as one of her most memorable and reminiscent of her family's celebrations in Sweden:

“As I think back so many sweet memories linger with me from time to time, there were the evening devotions, beautiful singing, certain evenings of the week led by the pastors...[On Christmas Eve] most of us were far from our homes but there at the table was the usual “lut-fisk,” “jul-gröt” and all the “goodies” pertaining to a traditional “jul-afton.” Girls who were not living permanently at the home were invited in to participate and enjoy Christmas Eve in a “Home” where Christ was the center. Following the meal were the devotions, with the beautiful Christmas text, Christmas songs, “Glada Julafton,” etc...Even in a large, strange city we could join our voices with the congregation in the beautiful “All Hail to Thee, O Blessed Morn.”⁴⁹

Other former patrons similarly recounted the spirit of enjoyment amongst women in the house, despite otherwise meager circumstances; one woman remembered parties of women in their adopted bedrooms where “sometimes there had to be some knocking at the doors for a little quiet and order.”⁵⁰ In a time when many Scandinavian immigrants who came to Chicago for job opportunities soon found that the salaries of Chicago's working women were quite meager, the thought of finding a suitable place to live within their means seemed altogether impossible. One Norwegian woman who came to the home when it first opened in 1907 remembered it as almost a mirage for her and her friends, but nevertheless found that the home was a small blessing in her otherwise

⁴⁹ Some of the Scandinavian fare mentioned by Olsen as included on a traditional “jul-afton” or Christmas Eve smörgåsbord included lutefisk, a traditional dish of the Nordic countries typically made from whitefish soaked in soda lye, and julgröt, a rice pudding with an almond hidden inside. Recollection of Mrs. John G. Olsen in a booklet published by the Immanuel Woman's Home, *The Immanuel Woman's Home, Brief Illustrated Review* (1937), 30 (CIWHM).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

unfortunate series of circumstances: “At the Immanuel Home we were taken care of in every way at a low cost. We loved the Home.”⁵¹

Similarly, homes opened at the turn of the century intended for Scandinavian working men under the auspices of settled members of the community to ease the process of settlement and provide a safe housing choice. In 1904, a group of Swedish newspaper men conceived of a Scandinavian “People’s House” modeled after those in many cities of Sweden which would serve as a meeting place and settlement home run by Scandinavian volunteers. From the beginnings of the process of planning, the group intended for the house to serve the needs of all Scandinavian newcomers to the city – Norwegians, Danes, and even Finns – in creating a brotherhood of Scandinavians, regardless of animosities from home towards other groups.⁵² In planning their home, the group lamented over the struggles of the new immigrant to Chicago, yet pointed out regional divisions within the city amongst Scandinavians:

“When the young Swede, the young Finn, the young Dane, and the young Norwegian set their feet on American soil they usually lose track of the friends and acquaintances which they have acquired during the voyage across the ocean; they scatter to the north, south, east, and west, and our immigrant finds himself alone. In some cases he has relatives and friends to go to, but most newcomers are

⁵¹ Booklet produced in the late 1950s to commemorate the Chicago Immanuel Woman’s Home and the work of its association; instead of building a new home for “working girls” in Chicago in 1959, the Association decided that, based on the comparatively even state of the economy, the collected funds would be put to better use in building a dormitory for young women on the campus of Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois – one of the largest Swedish-American colleges in the United States. The association noted that in the fifty years since the Chicago home first opened, women’s position in society changed greatly, providing them with immense opportunities in higher education and employment, and thereby their monies would be much more appropriately served through the dormitory, as well as a scholarship fund for young women attending Augustana College and preparing for social welfare work in the sum of \$25,000. See *The Closing Chapter of the History of Immanuel Woman’s Home Association (CIWHM)*.

⁵² “A Scandinavian People’s House in Chicago,” *Svenska Nyheter*, June 7, 1904. In an article published weeks later, the group stressed that Scandinavian unity was not a new idea at home, but was still in need of attention within America. Aware of the animosities grounded in the Kalmar Union when Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes were united under the Swedish monarchy, the group stressed the need for skeptics to attempt to ignore the class divisions created at home by this establishment and come together to form a workingman’s home. See “To the Scandinavians of Chicago,” *Svenska Nyheter*, June 28, 1904.

complete strangers. The Scandinavian immigrant then looks for an organization where he may find sympathy and strike up new friendships...so it would be a great boon to Scandinavian brotherhood and cooperation if this plan could become a reality, including at least the societies of the North and Northwest Side of the city; the south-siders are probably too far removed from the center of the Scandinavian population to take advantage of this opportunity.”⁵³

From the very beginning, the planning group made it very clear their intentions to build a home which adopted the same spirit of altruism as Jane Addam’s Hull House, yet was run by the community for the community – not by middle- to upper-class Chicagoans who the group felt were blind to the real needs of communities like the Scandinavians. In a full-page call to organize in *Svenska Nyheter* in June 1904, the planning committee pointed out this observation and set out the intentions of the home, stating that “the weak have to protect themselves against the abuses of the strong, and the lower, underprivileged classes are gradually becoming conscious of the fact that they are potentially many times as strong as the so-called upper classes...therefore, brother Scandinavians, imbued with that same spirit, let us also get together and build a great Scandinavian People’s House, here in Chicago, to serve as our social and political center.”⁵⁴ Over the next few years, as plans for the home came to fruition, the central idea of a general meeting place would transform into something much more vital to Scandinavian working men – a fraternal center that bred labor organization and socialist rhetoric.

The Scandinavian People’s Home, like other organizations aimed towards common workers, embraced education, socialist thought, and fraternity as the driving force behind “getting ahead” in Chicago society. Historian Pehr Nordahl stressed in his

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “To the Scandinavians of Chicago,” *Svenska Nyheter*, June 28, 1904.

study of social networks among Swedish-American radicals that organizations like the Scandinavian People's Home served as vehicles for socialist mobilization and working-class unity, thereby serving a much different purpose than clubs which catered to Scandinavian women.⁵⁵ Supported by many of Chicago's labor unions who came to the aid of Scandinavian workers during previous strikes and lockouts, such community organizations operated under the same goal of helping others rather than necessarily showing concern over the moral respectability of those they helped. While organizations such as the Scandinavian People's Home and Café Idrott in Lakeview maintained a strict policy that no alcoholic beverages be sold or consumed on premises, the reasons for such standards lay with Scandinavian policies and not necessarily out of religious tenets. In the article, "To the Scandinavians of Chicago," the planning committee pointed out the vital necessity of a settlement organization that could help those without ties to any church by emphasizing that, out of 150,000 Swedes who lived in Chicago in 1904, 40,000 did not belong to any church that would be able to offer support.⁵⁶ Nordahl examined this relationship as representative of a larger trend in Lake View that emphasized the growing importance of social and political organizations; between 1890 and 1919, approximately twenty fraternal lodges were established in the area, but only two churches, compared to the four erected during the 1880s alone. Nordahl saw this "mosaic of organizations" as instrumental in community building, but also in the formation of a strong campaign of labor organization grounded in the overlapping influence of trade unions, culture, and

⁵⁵ Pehr Nordahl, *Weaving the Ethnic Fabric: Social Networks Among Swedish-American Radicals in Chicago 1890-1940* (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994): 13, 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

politics.⁵⁷ Therefore, the church, which was the driving force behind community organization for first-generation Scandinavians, was now secondary to fraternal organizations for men looking to change their social positions and experiences at work.⁵⁸

Comparatively, this relationship greatly differed from that of women's organizations that continued to place religious tenets at the forefront of immigrant aid and assistance. While an emphasis on piety and moral public behavior continued to shape the experiences of women who sought the aid of Scandinavian women's homes, construction of the Scandinavian People's Home similarly blended elements of education and Scandinavian traditions; as the group planned, the home was to be centrally located and contain modern facilities for theatrical performances and concerts, lecture rooms, lodge halls, classrooms for night schools, and a library, and additionally contain a gymnasium, a Swedish massage establishment, and a restaurant offering Scandinavian fare.⁵⁹ To that end, both the Scandinavian People's Home and the Immanuel Woman's Home of Chicago took a similar approach to settlement – to offer aid to the newly arrived worker by surrounding them with the comforts of home. Regardless of sex, the settlement house movement driven by Progressive-minded individuals sought to keep their youth from

⁵⁷ Nordahl stresses the use of two guiding analytical concepts in his study of social networks amongst Swedish-American radicals in Chicago: that defined by Eric Hirsch as a "haven" to describe the strategies employed by Germans, Bohemians, Irish and Anglo-Americans in the Chicago labor movement, and the position that ethnicity is constructed over time formulated by Werner Sollars, Kathleen Neils Conzen, and Rudolph Vecoli. See Pehr Nordahl, *Weaving the Ethnic Fabric*: 23, 25; Eric Hirsch, *Urban Revolt: Ethnic Politics in the Nineteenth Century Chicago Labor Movement* (University of California Press, 1990); Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *The Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 3-41.

⁵⁸ In the 1870s, American fraternal orders founded Swedish lodges or grand lodges, such as the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythia or the Knights of Honor, and the International Order of Good Templars, as a measure of comradery amongst workers. By the late 1880s, however, Scandinavians began to organize independent orders on their own, such as the Independent Order of Svithiod, the Independent Order of Vikings and the Vasa Order of America. Within the fraternal organizations, membership was highest amongst first- and second-generation Scandinavians who did not attend any church within Chicago. See Nordahl, 61.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

falling into lives of deviant behaviors and bad choices. While settlement home programs stood as a testament to the strength of immigrant communities, vice continued to be an all too familiar problem on the minds of Chicagoans by the point of the 1910s. When the Vice Commission of Chicago was charged with the task of reporting on the problems of crime, white slavery and poverty within the city, their revelations published in 1911 and subsequent “closing” of the vice district shortly after drew continued attention to the connections of vice and immigrant youth. As Chicago’s Scandinavians renewed their commitments to combating vice within their neighborhoods, a new movement was underway focused on intellectual growth and socialist ideals – ideologies which involved a new generation of Scandinavian youth in a movement their Chicago neighbors did not always understand.

Conclusion: Revelations and Solutions to Combating Vice in Chicago

Prior to publication of the findings of the Vice Commission of Chicago encompassed in *The Social Evil in Chicago*, many Scandinavians directly involved in the settlement homes continued their work in an effort to combat vice which could potentially cast a poor light on the community. These Progressive-minded individuals worked with other groups of middle-class women within the city to fix the problems of urban sprawl, including sweat labor and illegal saloons, and used the power of major social programs such as the Swedish and Norwegian National Leagues to continue to prevent white slavers from encroaching on their neighborhoods. Through the pages of *Skandinaven*, *Svenska Tribunen*, *Svenska Nyheter*, and *Scandia*, numerous articles submitted by various social reformers emphasized the continued need of the community’s

involvement in combating such issues throughout Chicago; from a call that “the sweat shop must go” to an expose which specifically blamed immigrants from southern and eastern Europe for “working their children like slaves,” Scandinavians used their platform to become vocal and active participants in shaping the social future of their city.⁶⁰ Using the power of the press, Scandinavians turned the public’s attention on the dangers of “concert halls” and various saloons, which operated under the radar of an ignorant and corrupt police force. Community social reformers did not give leeway to members of their own community who committed similar crimes; in 1900, an article in *Scandia* identified T.M. Swanson’s Swedish “Concert Hall” at 226 Milwaukee Avenue as an illegal cabaret, where police found Scandinavian girls (“none of them over twelve years”) being forced to drink and dance with men, most of whom were “pimps...and crooks of every description.”⁶¹ By the time the vice district was closed in 1912, Chicago’s Scandinavians had become seasoned social reformers armed with a useful understanding of the problems of the city which held victims and criminals accountable for their actions.

Looking back at revelations on crime in Chicago, Walter Reckless revealed in his study of seventy-seven white slave cases in Chicago between 1910 and 1913 an accepted pattern of procuring or pandering as part of a larger system of patriarchal rule within modern urban society. As he remarked, “it seemed to be the customary thing in the underworld” for a man to have one or several women on his arm as his public exploits.⁶²

⁶⁰ A review of numerous articles from Scandinavian newspapers from this era illustrate an increasing emphasis on direct social action in the years prior to the publication of *The Social Evil in Chicago* including the following: “The Sweat Shop Must Go,” *Skandinaven*, March 29, 1896, 2; “Children Work Like Slaves in Chicago,” *Skandinaven*, September 12, 1907, 8.

⁶¹ “T.M. Swanson’s “Concert Hall” Exposed,” *Scandia*, May 5, 1900, 7.

⁶² Reckless, *Vice in Chicago*, 42-3.

Furthermore, Reckless corrected several misconceptions about white slavery according to the selected cases; one of the most important to this study, that while only six of the sixty-three girls were reported as immigrants, three of those six were from Scandinavia. Conversely, none of the men reported as procurers or pimps in the cases were of Scandinavian descent, or even of Northern or Western Europe, but instead largely represented by Italians, Poles, and Greeks.⁶³ Reckless was also explicit to stress that women involved in the white slave cases under investigation were considered “wayward” rather than “virtuous” victims; in the sixty-three cases (with the girls telling their own stories with lawyers and officers helping them), only four instances were reported where the procurer was actually responsible for violating the girl’s chastity. The findings of both Reckless and the Vice Commission of Chicago marked an ideological shift in Chicago’s society, where crimes committed against seemingly “virtuous” women in Chicago were given a second glance; however, Scandinavians functioned with this understanding for years prior to the revelations of Chicagoans. These new understandings would continue to shape the experiences of Scandinavians into the Great War as the community was forced to come to terms with new questions about their loyalties to America and their commitment to “becoming” American.

At the same time, the existence of the residence homes such as the Immanuel Woman’s Home and the Scandinavian People’s Home served as powerful examples of the resistance of ethnic identity into the 20th century amongst a group otherwise noted for their seamless inclusion in American society. Out of these organizations grew a

⁶³ Ibid, 44. See also the Vice Commission of Chicago, *The Social Evil in Chicago: A Study of Existing Conditions with Recommendations by the Vice Commission of Chicago* (Chicago: The Vice Commission of Chicago, 1911).

significant movement of Scandinavians who desired intellectual, social, and political enlightenment within their own community, grounded in the socialist traditions of home. One of these social clubs, the Swedish Educational League, formed in an effort to both espouse the ideologies of their ancestors who believed work and society needed to be kept “free and unhampered from all forces that might cause it to stagnate.”⁶⁴ The group, which was quite forward in its thinking and social practices, often made public declarations throughout community advertisements that Scandinavians needed to demand both freedom of thought and absence of fear in thinking and expression in order to achieve personal and professional success. As a large segment of the community, especially second-generation youth, came to embrace the tenets of the Swedish Educational League for its grandiose gestures towards modern ways of thinking, more conservative-minded individuals did not view the actions of the group with such excitement.

Swedish writer Edith Janson would later comment in her recollections of Chicago during the 1920s that such groups were often comprised of “self-imposed exiles” who had somehow “found” their way to the United States. When such “agitators and young radicals,” who Janson recalled as members of the intelligentsia, found themselves to be “misfits” and far-too forward in their thinking, they either returned to Scandinavia or retreated from public life.⁶⁵ At the same time, intellectuals within groups like the Swedish Educational League scoffed at such classifications which deemed their activities to be radical and explained that the group was radical “only in a constructive sense” – it

⁶⁴ Booklet produced by the Swedish Educational League, “Swedish Educational League: An Adult Education Experiment in Scandinavian Tradition,” Swedish Educational League Records, 1916-1966, Manuscript Series 3, Box #1, NPU.

⁶⁵ Janson, *The Background of the Immigration from Sweden* (1931), 18.

advocated no political or religious creed but never hesitated to bring into discussion “progressive and even extreme viewpoints in order to acquaint its audience with the problems of the day and their possible solutions.”⁶⁶ The interactions between these two groups – conservative and more liberal-minded – would culminate in a much larger ideological discussion upon the onset of World War I, when the loyalties of Scandinavians would be challenged in light of insinuations that some involved themselves in radical organizations prior to the war. For a brief period of time, the positive image Scandinavians cultivated for themselves within their adopted home of Chicago seemed as if it was on the brink of collapse amongst tension and panic over loyalties to the American flag.

⁶⁶ Booklet produced by the Swedish Educational League, “Swedish Educational League: An Adult Education Experiment in Scandinavian Tradition,” Swedish Educational League Records, 1916-1966, Manuscript Series 3, Box #1, NPU.



1515 1511 1509 1505
THE IMMANUEL WOMAN'S HOME, 1505-15 N. La Salle Street, Chicago, Ill.

(Fig. 6: The Immanuel Woman's Home circa 1927. Source: *The Swedish Blue Book, A Swedish-American Directory and Yearbook for Chicago, 1927*, published annually by the Swedish-American publishing company, Chicago, 1927, 115.)



RECEPTION PARLOR

(Fig. 7: The reception parlor of the Immanuel Woman's Home. Source: Booklet published by the Chicago Immanuel Woman's Home, *Historical Sketch of the Immanuel Woman's Home, Looking Back Twenty-five Years (1907-1932)*, 12. Chicago Immanuel Woman's Home Microfilm, Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL.)



DINING ROOM

(**Fig. 8:** Dining Room of the Immanuel Woman's Home. Source: Booklet published by the Chicago Immanuel Woman's Home, *Historical Sketch of the Immanuel Woman's Home, Looking Back Twenty-five Years (1907-1932)*, 12. Chicago Immanuel Woman's Home Microfilm, Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL.)



PART OF THE FAMILY AT THE HOME.

(**Fig. 9:** Portrait of some of the working women who lived at the Immanuel Woman's Home, circa 1910s. Source: Booklet published by the Chicago Immanuel Woman's Home, *Historical Sketch of the Immanuel Woman's Home, Looking Back Twenty-five Years (1907-1932)*, 12. Chicago Immanuel Woman's Home Microfilm, Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL.)



SMALL LIVING ROOM.



CORNER IN PRIVATE BEDROOM.



FREDRIKA BREMER ROOM
One of the six dormitories.

(Fig. 10: Photographs of the interior of selected rooms in the Immanuel Woman's Home. Source: Booklet published by the Chicago Immanuel Woman's Home, *Historical Sketch of the Immanuel Woman's Home, Looking Back Twenty-five Years (1907-1932)*, 21. Chicago Immanuel Woman's Home Microfilm, Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL.)

Chapter Five

“The Scandinavian people are good citizens now as ever”: The Construction of Social Success from WWI to the Great Depression

Over the course of 1917, the citizens of Chicago witnessed an international conflict continuously unfold, seemingly progressing out of control. As the growing conflict within Europe played out on the world stage, groups of Chicagoans began to look upon the foreignness of their European neighbors with speculation and even fear. In the city they shared in such close proximity with their foreign neighbors, many looked upon their difference as a threat to the way of life they were so desperate to hold onto as entrance into the war became increasingly possible. And as recent and former immigrants and their children struggled to defend their desires to maintain the traditions of their national cultures, native Chicagoans were insistent that they break their ties to the homeland for good and become “100% American.” Chicago’s Scandinavians felt the effects of this struggle, especially in the wake of allegations that various members of their own community publicly expressed their homeland loyalties to their German neighbors. Upon the realization that such allegations threatened to divide the community and place upon it a set of negative characteristics, the editors of *Skandinaven* reassured its readers that the positive cultural image built over the course of seventy years in Chicago would not be tarnished:

“We of Nordic blood are proud of our splendid record as good American citizens, obedient to law, and loyal to our country. But of late our name has been shadowed by a dark cloud. Doubt has been cast as to our compliance to law, and our loyalty. The opinion that is becoming more current lately is to the effect that in the great war of today, the Scandinavians are among those who stand back, that in our ranks there are even those who favor the enemy and opposed our own country; who are, in other words, traitors at heart if not in action...The Scandinavian

people are good citizens now as ever. Exceptions there are, unfortunately, within our nationality as within other groups, but taken as a whole, the Scandinavians are surely as loyal citizens as are to be found in the country...”¹

The reaffirmation of their social position proved to be successful upon the onset of American involvement in World War I; many native-born Chicagoans exempted Scandinavians from suspicions of disloyalty to the allied effort. According to both American and Scandinavian newspaper reporters, immigrants from the Nordic countries proved their patriotism on behalf of the United States. American citizenship, after all, was a badge of honor and the American media looked upon Scandinavians as deserving of such high regard as some of the most loyal immigrant groups to their adopted home. Nevertheless, World War I posed significant challenges to the emerging Nordic identity Scandinavians sought to uphold. During the war, it seemed that for Scandinavians in Chicago, maintaining cultural heritage and demonstrating loyalty to the United States were not mutually exclusive. However, in 1921, an editorial in *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter* spoke of a later advantage for Scandinavian immigrants, who could “preserve the best of his native qualities.” The article stressed that while a Scandinavian immigrants to the United States would be required to learn English, they were also “richer if they preserve the language and the best of the tradition which they brought with them from the old fatherland.”² By the 1920s, it became clear that Scandinavians could benefit from the positive social image engineered in wartime to emerge as a truly privileged immigrant group, both socially and professionally.

The historiography of Scandinavians in America from World War I to the Great Depression, like that of many other immigrant groups, is focused almost entirely on the

¹ “A Word in Earnest to Scandinavians,” *Skandinaven*, August 23, 1917.

² “The Immigrant,” Editorial, *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*, September 28, 1921. (*Translations mine*)

experiences of the working class and often segmented into three stories: the wartime effort, the exuberant excesses of 1920s, and the hardships felt during the Great Depression.³ However, in following this segmented chronology of events, one could dismiss the carefully constructed effort of Scandinavians to achieve social and professional success from World War I through the 1920s. Using a wider scope, this effort comes to light, exhibiting a significant shift. As this chapter argues, the public image constructed by Scandinavian-Americans in World War I Chicago was one built upon the acceptance of an American way of life, which entailed patriotism, participation in the war effort, and an embrace of American culture and ideals. After the war, however, Scandinavian-Americans exhibited the ability to maintain their positive public image and enjoy the benefits of subsequent social success while practicing a truly multicultural way of life. Grounded in a separation of public and private personas, this dualistic identity meant that Scandinavians could “act” American in public by speaking English and embracing American markers of success such as education, business acumen, and suburban life, but could keep another foot in the traditions of the homeland through

³ Many of the major works on Scandinavians in American history follow this pattern, segmenting the series of events into three separate categories by decade. H. Arnold Barton acknowledges the connections between events of 1917 through 1940, but nevertheless divides his chapters between the three time periods in *A Folk Divided*. Another vital omission made in recent histories of Scandinavians is the common methodology which creates an endpoint at 1920; both Anita R. Olsen and Joy Lintelman end their historical accounts of Swedes in Chicago at 1920, offering only the explanation that by this point, Swedes and their Scandinavian neighbors were becoming more Americanized (which I contend was not necessarily the case). April Schultz likewise offers a similar position in relation to the narrative of the Norwegian American experience, which is often capped at 1925 due to assimilation after that point. Instead, this chapter shows that the narrative did not end with the 1920s, but instead grew more complex with the onset of the Great Depression as Scandinavians were forced to once again reconsider their sense of ethnic identity in the face of economic turmoil. For further discussion, see Anita Olsen, “Swedish Chicago: The Extension and Transformation of an Urban Immigrant Community, 1880-1920,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1990; Joy Lintelman, “More Freedom, Better Pay: Single Swedish Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1991; H. Arnold Barton, *A Folk Divided: Homeland Swedes and Swedish Americans, 1840-1940* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994); April Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American through Celebration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994): 49.

private personas.⁴ After work and on weekends, Chicago's Scandinavian-Americans enjoyed participation in popular social clubs as a marker of social success within the community, culminating in a suburban organization that blended markers of success in both cultures – the Nordic Country Club.⁵ Newspapers and a series of documents from Scandinavian leisure clubs can help illuminate Scandinavians' own markers of success; instead of focusing entirely on social class as a vital marker of success, this discussion instead looks to a negotiation of public image leading to social success over time.⁶ After the initial fear of subversion subsided during World War I, Scandinavians went to work on a mission to cultivate an image that would illustrate their outward loyalties to the

⁴ For further discussions of the distinctions between the public and private spheres for immigrant groups, see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986). Furthermore, this was a practice that was common to a number of other immigrant groups in Chicago and other American cities. Quite possibly, the greatest attention to the dynamics of this intriguing hyphenated ethnic identity lie in works dedicated to the shifting prosperity of Jewish-Americans during the same era. Some examples include Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Beth Wegner, *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999); Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁵ Anita Olson, whose work focuses on the religious and ethnic affiliations of Chicago's Swedish citizens, agreed that while Swedes had the means and ambition to move their families into the suburbs, the process of suburbanization did not equal assimilation or loss of a Swedish ethnic identity. Instead, Olson likewise found that "their adaptation to life in Chicago was a synthetic development which combined the old with the new, creating a different kind of culture which was neither completely Swedish nor American." However, as this chapter further illustrates, the Swedish community and their Scandinavian neighbors had the capability to express their ethnic identities in unique ways that did not erode under the force of modernization, using social clubs and affiliations to benefit the group as a whole. See Olson, "Swedish Chicago," pg. 11.

⁶ Historians who explore the 1920s often look for certain markers in defining class mobility during this historical moment; often times, the achievement of education, professional qualifications, and an embrace of bourgeois values are practices used as markers in defining class status and the desire to move up the social ladder. One common marker that is often used to distinguish the entrance of immigrant groups into the middle to upper classes is their sense of cultural identification, or the degree to which they are willing to accept American standards over those of the homeland. However, as this chapter argues, this final marker of class distinction was negotiable for Scandinavians in Chicago, and in most cases, did not apply. For further discussion, see Helen M. Lynd and Robert S. Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1929); Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears eds., *The Culture of Consumption* (New York, 1983); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

American cause; after the war ended, this process transformed into a new image-making process focused on the most celebrated of American values of the 1920s – prosperity. Regardless of the extent to which their hyphenated American identity was a conscious choice, by walking a fine line between appearing “American” and embracing “Scandinavian,” Scandinavian-Americans in Chicago created a process vital to “getting ahead” as an immigrant group in America.

The Scandinavian Struggle for Credibility and the Establishment of a Positive Public Persona in World War I Chicago

Leading up to the beginning of America’s involvement in World War I in 1917, Chicago’s Scandinavian population reached its peak. In 1914, a census report showed that the population of first-generation Scandinavians living in Chicago consisted of 116,740 Swedes, 47,235 Norwegians, and 20,772 Danes, while the second-generation was rapidly growing to include 62,239 of Swedish descent, 24,748 of Norwegian descent, and 11,277 of Danish descent.⁷ The population of Scandinavians in America was also at an all-time high; according to the census of 1910, the country’s Swedish-born population peaked at around 665,000 which together with nearly 700,000 of their American-born children comprised a total Swedish-American population of nearly 1,363,554, or 1.48 percent of the population of the United States.⁸ Abroad, the beginning of World War I in August 1914 would soon foreshadow the end of the great transatlantic migration to the United States. As immigration statistics illustrate, immigration from Sweden, which in

⁷ *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1910); “Scandinavian Census,” *Skandinaven*, September 17, 1914; Ernest Burgess, *Census Data for the city of Chicago, 1920*, table 6, pg. 19.

⁸ *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1910); Barton, *A Folk Divided*, 210.

1913 totaled 16,329 persons, declined to 9,589 in 1914 and was down to 4,538 by 1915, despite Sweden's neutral stance in the conflict. By 1918, after America entered the war, Sweden's immigrants numbered a mere 1,416 – the lowest figure since the Civil War era.⁹ As discussed in chapter three, the demographics of the newest class of Scandinavian migrants to arrive in Chicago varied from that of earlier waves in significant ways mostly connected to their age. Those who came to Chicago between the turn of the century and World War I were young by comparison to the earlier generation of immigrants. “New” immigrants from Scandinavia left urban and industrial employment at home for similar positions in America while harsh conditions in America's heartland forced many young Scandinavian migrants to leave their families' farms for urban opportunities.

Initially, the Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish communities of Chicago welcomed young newcomers with open arms; at the turn of the century, the notion of intense ethnic life was sustained largely by commercial endeavors focused on retaining the traditions of the homeland. For the Scandinavian newcomer, looking through the pages of the press of their native language, one could easily find any service desired: doctors, lawyers, land agents, building contractors, and employment agencies that appealed to loyalty of the group. Within the neighborhood, one could find a number of banks, home-loan associations and insurance agencies for professional business or, on a commercial level, bookstores and newspaper offices that carried materials in the native language and gift items from home. And as a legacy from the very origins of the community, the grocers, bakeries, butcher shops, fish markets, and general stores once transplanted from the

⁹ Barton, *A Folk Divided*, 241.

earlier neighborhood of the 19th century remained untouched by time.¹⁰ An editorial featured in *Scandia* declared that many businesses within Chicago's insular communities catered to all Scandinavians like "the Tavern" and "the Perfecto" – two Norwegian restaurants that advertised that "men and women from all parts of the Scandinavian countries, yesterday's arrivals or the old pioneers" could meet and partake in old Norwegian, Swedish and Danish delicacies. Of these meeting places, the editor expressed that "only he who has loved the mother country can truly learn to love the new home of his choice, [and apply] the inherited love of home and the urge to build in the new environment."¹¹ For Chicago's Scandinavians, the traditions of insular community life focused on homeland traditions and ethnic prevalence would result in upward economic mobility in the upcoming decades. However, the key to social success within American society would be much more difficult to come by, as Scandinavians would realize at the onset of the most significant foreign conflict to date.

By the 1910s, Scandinavian scholars and the press had begun to mirror a larger debate within American public discourse that depicted the "old" classes of immigrants as inherently "American" and "new" immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Asia as "foreign," and therefore "evil." Prior to the foreign conflict that would escalate into the war in Europe, Kendrick Charles Babcock of the University of Illinois reinforced the ideology of the strength of Scandinavians as an ethnic group distinct from those who were not fit to become American: "As related to the progress of civilization in America, all immigrants fall into three classes: those who powerfully re-enforce the

¹⁰ For further discussion of the importance of ethnic prevalence for Swedish Americans in particular during the 1900s and 1910s, see H. Arnold Barton, *A Folk Divided*, 212.

¹¹ "Editorial," *Scandia*, October 7, 1911, 4.

strength and virtue of the nation, those who supplement its defects with desirable elements, and those who lower its standards and retard its advancement.” He went onto specifically blame the “Chinese in California, the Hungarians in the mines, [and] the Hebrews in the sweatshops” for the problems America faced in uniting its population as American citizens rather than a society segmented by cultural difference.¹² For many ethnic groups like Scandinavians, the wartime era would solidify a new tactic of “getting ahead” in society: using nativism and the push for 100% Americanism as a means of social survival in a tumultuous time. In doing so, Scandinavians more than ever harnessed the power of the press, both foreign and English language, in promoting an all-important wartime message: Scandinavians were good American citizens, and those who acted out of character were not accepted. At the same time, America’s participation in the European conflict unleashed a bevy of anti-foreign sentiments aimed at those immigrant classes that remained loyal to the ways of the homeland. For many of these pluralized groups, the price of tradition and familiarity in the old was too high as Germans and other groups from the “new” immigrant classes faced severe public scrutiny at the hands of nativists.

In the years preceding the war in Europe, several Scandinavians in Chicago vocalized an initial stance in support of Germany through articles in foreign language newspapers and magazines, despite Scandinavian neutrality. In August 1914, *Hemlandet* expressed the hope that a “higher power” would assist Germany and its Kaiser, “for in this war they battle for everything that a civilized people holds sacred.” The Swedish newspaper’s editor went on to further express that, in the event that Sweden was forced to

¹² Kendrick Charles Babcock, *The Scandinavian Element in the United States* (Urbana, IL, 1914), 9-11; see also Babcock, “The Scandinavian Element in the American Population,” *American Historical Review* 16 (1911): 300-310.

rescind its wartime neutrality, he hoped that his country of origin would join the Central Powers.¹³ Others mirrored the general sentiments of *Hemlandet* but none to the extent of the editor of *Svenska Amerikanaren*; on New Year's Eve of 1914, he went as far as to declare Swedish-Americans to be "the most pro-German of all nationalities in the United States."¹⁴ Chicago's Scandinavians would soon find themselves at the center of a heated debate posed by nativists; John Higham asserted that Germans were the first obvious target of war nativism when they openly rallied for U.S. neutrality early in the conflict much like many Scandinavians. In what Higham referred to as a "spectacular reversal of judgment," the largest and previously one of the most respected groups in America was now despised for their untrustworthy stance.¹⁵ As a reactionary measure, early pro-German sentiment expressed in the pages of Scandinavian newspapers would sour as early as February 1915 as backlash published within American newspapers effectively turned public opinion against Germans abroad and in America.

In response to a series of articles published in Chicago's newspapers on Scandinavia's trade agreements, the editors of *Skandinaven* announced their protest over the insinuation that American goods sent to Holland and the Scandinavian countries were "passed along" to Germany: "Yes, we protest. The above statements are false as far as the Scandinavian countries are concerned...The supposition that Scandinavia supplies Germany with food is founded entirely upon the figures showing the increase in American exports during the war, but obviously the only fair estimate must be based on a

¹³ "Wartime Alignments," *Hemlandet*, August 6, 1914 (*Translations mine*).

¹⁴ Barton, 246; see also Cf. Carl H. Chrislock, *Ethnicity Challenged: The Upper Midwest Norwegian-American Experience in World War I* (Northfield, MN, 1981).

¹⁵ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 195-205.

comparison of Scandinavia's total imports from all sources."¹⁶ That April, *Skandinaven* took a strident pacifist stance as it published a full-page article translated into English and signed by 373 foreign-language editors in Chicago. The article, which expressed the consensus of the undersigned editors for an end to the war, was written in response to an outpouring of telegrams from Scandinavian citizens who agreed that war would bring nothing but pain and suffering to their neighbors who remained in the homeland:

“We appeal to the American nation and its people, to the noble and fearless American press, and to the manufacturers of powder, shrapnel, and bullets; we appeal to the workers of ammunition plants to immediately stop work, to resolve not to help manufacture gun powder, shrapnel, and bullets to murder our brothers, to make our mothers and sisters widows and their children fatherless...take up this issue in your churches, in your fraternal organization, in your local press, and demand of the legislature laws to outlaw the manufacture of munitions.”¹⁷

While the editors' call was genuine and expressed a significance sense of desire to end the war, the article written as an appeal to the American press held a dual importance as a vital piece to support a positive public opinion of Scandinavians in America. However, this article would not initially be enough to sway the American public to consider Scandinavians to be loyal to the allied cause.

In the aftermath of the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915 by a German submarine torpedo, any lingering sentiment held by Scandinavians towards the German campaign cooled, thereby solidifying Scandinavian loyalty to the side of the allied forces. Even so, isolated incidents, such as the arrest of Theodore H. Lunde for wartime espionage caused concern among Chicago's citizens regarding Scandinavian loyalty to the American cause.

¹⁶ “We Protest!” *Skandinaven*, February 16, 1915, WPA Foreign Press Survey, Norwegian Press.

¹⁷ April Schultz pointed out that, in addition to opposition to the war, Norwegian-Americans were vulnerable to attacks by anti-hyphenists because of their continued use of the Norwegian language, their strong immigrant press, and their thriving ethnic organization. See Schultz, 41; “An Appeal to the American People,” *Skandinaven*, April 7, 1915.

In November 1917, Lunde, a Norwegian manufacturer of piano metal parts in Chicago, was arrested for breach of spy regulations; *Skandinaven* admitted that Lunde may have been guilty of pledging support to Germany within a society that came to abhor such sentiments, but nevertheless claimed that Lunde would be cleared of any crime by the authorities. In one letter claimed by the authorities, Lunde declared his admiration of Germany's Kaiser and blamed England for encouraging the beginning of the war, admitting that he considered the Kaiser to be the "greatest social politician" of the day, "a Socialist on a large scale."¹⁸ In a time when socialism as an ideology was equated with anarchy and social upheaval by American nativists, Lunde's private musings on the successes of the Kaiser as a social politician were interpreted as subversive, thereby creating further suspicion about Scandinavian-Americans as "true" citizens loyal to the American cause. From the Scandinavian perspective, many within the community faced a highly uncomfortable situation which caused many to overreact – or to become vehemently silent regarding any position on the war.

As discussions regarding the "new Americanism" reached an apex, some outlets would take the path of overreaction to express indignation over the supposition that Scandinavians were not entirely loyal citizens of the United States. The concept of "new Americanism," first preached by Theodore Roosevelt as a differentiating criticism of those immigrant groups who were "desirable" and those who were not, was at the forefront of growing nativist rhetoric during the mid-1910s. An editorial in *Svenska Kuriren* spoke out against the concept, which was conveniently readdressed during an election year, as a blatant attack on "hyphenated citizens" who were otherwise fully loyal

¹⁸ "Norwegian Arrested, Charged with Espionage," *Skandinaven*, November 8, 1917, WPA Foreign Press Survey, Norwegian Press.

to their adopted country. Agitated with the constant reaffirmations of loyalty to the American flag, the editor urged his readers to overlook “all this foolishness” and reminded them: “We cannot be deprived of our rights as citizens, unless it [is] through our own shortcomings. When the time comes, we will bring our rights into play, as heretofore, for the benefit of our adopted land. For us to go forth talking about and emphasizing our patriotism is both unnecessary and improper.”¹⁹ As an additional response to the editor’s plea, he asked the Swedes of Chicago to decline an invitation to attend a meeting by the Committee for the Promotion of Loyalty to the United States extended by a group the editor was eager to point out, included names “similar to Bohemian and Polish names.” Of the invitation, the editor wrote, “with those nationalities as represented by these gentlemen, we recognize no solidarity or common ties. We don’t need to unite them...nor do we need their moral support to maintain our loyalty, which has never been found lacking.”²⁰ In this indignant expression, the editor, knowingly or not, posed a position that many citizens within the Scandinavian community agreed with – quietly or not – that the need for excessive reaffirmations of loyalty were unnecessary and somewhat beneath the level of their position within Chicago’s society.

At the center of the debate of nativism and “new Americanism” stood a racial discourse based on the assumption of the superiority of the Northern European peoples. The viewpoint of the time received its most influential expression in Madison Grant’s work of scientific racism, *The Passing of the Great Race* in 1916, which connected race to the inner dynamics of history. The “Great Race,” wrote Grant posed the racial superiority of Nordic peoples in intelligence, enterprise, and daring; according to Grant,

¹⁹ “The New Americanism,” editorial, *Svenska Kuriren*, June 22, 1916 (*Translations Mine*).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

the American nation forfeited its “birthright of Nordic racial purity by opening its doors to unrestricted immigration to gain cheap labor,” but nevertheless recognized Scandinavians as “splendid human material” and recognized Sweden as the home to the “purest Nordic type.”²¹ Grant would solidify “the Nordic” as “the white man par excellence,” who was characterized by certain unique physical specializations: “Blondness, wavy hair, blue eyes, fair skin, [and] a high, narrow and straight nose, which are associated with great stature.”²² Much like earlier discussions associated with Social Darwinism, Grant equated physicality with an aptness or ability to “succeed” within society by nature of historically proven capabilities. One of the most unfortunate results of Grant’s racist connotations about those who were “fit” for American society was the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915, which agitated for not only “white” but for “Nordic” supremacy. Despite the fact that Grant’s theories created a beneficial racial position for Scandinavians, his ideas and the increasingly xenophobic drive for Americanization created severe tensions amongst ethnic groups within Chicago.

One of the most contested issues surrounding Scandinavian loyalty to the American war effort hinged on the discussion of citizenship – a tangible concept that was negotiated by those who had built new homes in Chicago but had not necessarily taken the more symbolic steps in becoming citizens of the United States. According the Census of 1910, the majority of Scandinavians in Chicago had begun the process of gaining American citizenship, as illustrated in the following table:

²¹ Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (4th edition, New York, 1922): 10-12, 18, 69, 90, 124, 168-9, 177, 193, 206-11, 228, 236; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955): 155-57, chs. 10, 11.

²² Grant, 79.

Table 5.1: Citizenship of Foreign-born white males 21 years of age and over, by country of birth, for Chicago, 1910 (*Females not naturalized until 1920*)

	Total	Naturalized	Have 1 st papers	Alien	Citizens (no record)
Norway	11,193	6,924	1,319	2,059	891
Sweden	29,436	19,441	3,294	4,408	2,293
Denmark	6,126	3,870	797	1,002	457

(Source: Adapted from Burgess, *Census Data for the City of Chicago, 1920*, table 10, 26)

In October 1918, the Swedish newspaper *Ungdomsvännen* expressed outward indignation towards those Swedes who were eligible for citizenship but had not gone through the process of claiming it. “They are not Americans,” the newspaper declared, though arguing that “they are scarcely Swedes either, for then they ought to stay where they belong.”²³ The author then took a radical position that Swedes who had not claimed citizenship as American citizens should be given the choice of forced citizenship by the United States government or deportation to the land “where they are entitled to live.”²⁴ Other outlets spoke of American citizenship as a symbolic badge of honor held by Scandinavians who were deserving of high regard as some of the most loyal immigrant groups to their adopted home. One article in *Skandinaven* argued in 1917 that Scandinavians were ranked among the best citizens in America, as they were “loyal, hard working people, obedient to law,” and took great pride in their “willing patriotism” to the country and its flag.²⁵ The newspaper used the article as a means of defending its citizens after nativist rhetoric had begun to cast its gaze on the Lutheran Church as an “object of

²³ “Metropolitan Council, The John Ericsson League of Patriotic Service,” *Ungdomsvännen*, October 7, 1918. See also Barton, 247.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “A Word in Earnest to Scandinavians,” *Skandinaven*, August 23, 1917, WPA Foreign Press Survey, Norwegian Press.

suspicion.”²⁶ While the article acknowledged the fact that outsiders could potentially view the institution and its foreign nature as suspicious and anti-American, it also sought to negate such claims with a plea of support to the American cause.

With pressure mounting from both sides on the issue of “becoming” American and pledging loyalty to the allies, the Scandinavian community pushed forward with its campaign to assist in the war effort. The campaign, which reached its apex in 1918, was assiduously focused on the raising of funds through liberty loan drives – an effort which gave the community’s men and women alike a new chance to attain positions of leadership and extend their influence amongst Scandinavians. One such drive reported in *Skandinaven* in May 1918 illustrated the extent to which Norwegian women were able to raise funds through liberty loans through their efforts. The newspaper reported that the Daughters of Norway, along with other Norwegian women in the community gathered together at the Chicago Norwegian Club on April 9th for a fundraising drive and were subsequently able to raise \$43,300 within the span of only a couple of weeks.²⁷

As the overall push for liberty loans slowed by the fall, Norwegians continued to show their support by continuing with the drive; in October 1918, the Norwegian Club reported in *Skandinaven* that the members of the club purchased over \$20,000 in less than a week, pushing the overall amount of loans purchased by Norwegians in the third liberty loan drive to over \$5 million.²⁸ In the spirit of competition between ethnic groups, that fall *Svenska Kuriren* published a list of the amounts subscribed by the different nationalities for the Third Liberty Loan. Germans were by far the most apt contributors to

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “The Third Liberty Loan,” *Skandinaven*, May 12, 1918, WPA Foreign Press Survey, Norwegian Press.

²⁸ “The Norwegian Club,” *Skandinaven*, October 20, 1918; “The Foreign Born and the Third Liberty Loan,” Editorial, *Svenska Kuriren*, September 19, 1918 (*Translations mine*).

the cause with \$87 million in loans purchased, while Swedes contributed \$6 million, Norwegians \$5 million and Danes bought almost \$3 million.²⁹ It is important to note that the editor listed only Scandinavian and German subscriptions, and noted that over 55% of subscriptions were made by people who omitted their nationalities on their subscriptions. Thereby, there was no way of truly knowing how much more money Scandinavians donated to the war effort, but it can be assumed that the numbers were far greater than calculated. In response to this issue, the Swedish Committee for the Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign published a plea to the community which asked for each citizen to record their nationality when subscribing to loans.³⁰ In doing so, Swedes and other Scandinavians illustrated the importance of recognition in the charitable campaign, as a positive public image during wartime was just as vital as the drive itself. Throughout each of the campaigns for the Liberty Loans in support of the war effort, each group was careful to express to the community the symbolic importance of contribution through subscription to loans as both patriotic, as well a vital outward expression of one's citizenship as a Scandinavian-American.

As the war drew to a close, an intriguing celebration took place which illustrated the outward expression of Scandinavian-Americanism as a carefully blended sense of national identity; in a parade which combined the celebration of Foreign-Language Day in Chicago and the drive for the Liberty Loan, Scandinavians came together on April 24, 1919 to display the combination of old and new. The pages of *Skandinaven* would

²⁹ "The Foreign Born and the Third Liberty Loan," Editorial, *Svenska Kuriren*, September 19, 1918 (*Translations mine*).

³⁰ The author of the article expressed an urgency to give credit where credit was due, stating that, "after considerable deliberation by leaders from the many Swedish societies, it was decided to urge our countrymen who subscribe to mark each subscription black with the words "Swedish Division," in order that the Swedish purchases can be properly credited and correctly accounted." See "The Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign," *Svenska Kuriren*, October 3, 1918. (*Translations mine*)

proudly recall: “A chorus of two thousand voices, consisting of foreign-language singing societies, participated in the foreign-language parade yesterday. There were no pedestrians in the parade; everybody rode on floats.”³¹ The featured float of the parade, a sixty-foot long Viking Ship with a costumed Leif Ericson at the helm, stood as the constant symbol of Norwegian heritage driving down the streets of the adopted homeland – a sight that, for many, served as a proud reminder of the persistence of Scandinavian cultural heritage, even decades after migration. Yet, as wartime came to a close and international migration reconvened, a new battle against the foreign would begin in the 1920s, forcing many Scandinavians to reconsider their loyalties to the notion of cultural persistence.

Nativism, Immigration Quotas, and Outrage in the Scandinavian Community

In the aftermath of World War I, Chicago’s citizens delighted in the return of America’s soldiers and the return to peacetime, yet in the midst of this period of postwar euphoria raged growing concerns addressed in wartime by nativist groups. As the debate in response to the position of immigrants within American society grew to a frenzy by the mid-1920s, Scandinavians responded in a somewhat surprising manner; instead of retreating to a thoroughly American way of life, Scandinavians witnessed a cultural revival, albeit one that worked to combine the two national identities into one palpable sense of self. Nevertheless, this combined national identity was one that was built under the guise of approval by American citizens and carefully constructed in connection to the growing discussion of the “importance of being Nordic” as raised by authors and nativists

³¹ “Foreign-Language Day; Liberty Loan Parade,” *Skandinaven*, April 24, 1919, WPA Foreign Language Press Survey, Norwegian Press.

alike. This notion was illustrated in several popular pieces of commentary and fiction during the 1920s, including Aldous Huxley's essay of the same title, "The Importance of Being Nordic." In his essay, Huxley blamed journalists for creating the discussion on the importance of being Nordic in the aftermath of WWI, as American men found themselves in a position of world domination after coming out on the winning side of the war. Huxley retorted that he found it absurd that the "compatriots of Dante, Michelangelo and Galileo" were only allowed to send a small portion of their population to America due to the immigration quotas, which now painted those from southern and eastern Europe as "an inferior race."³²

Prior to the end of the war, Scandinavians continued to reevaluate their position within America in relation to the ability to express national heritage as their time wore on in America. One of the continued arguments that Scandinavians pressed well into the wartime years was the notion that Leif Erikson was the first to discover America 3000 years before Columbus, thereby solidifying the position of Scandinavians in the social fabric of America. In 1917, Norwegians began to shift this argument to one that emphasized the racial grounding of Americans as Anglo-Saxon; as the editor of *Skandinaven* wrote in October 1917, "we cannot allow it to be forgotten that our continent was discovered by the Norwegians, and that our country is Anglo-Saxon, *not* Latin."³³ Conversely, Scandinavians were also quick to express a desire to maintain the traditions of the homeland in Chicago, especially in relation to the maintenance of foreign language within the community. That same year, the Chicago Norwegian Club by a

³² Aldous Huxley, "The Importance of Being Nordic," in *Essays New and Old* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926): 199, 200.

³³ "Anglo-Saxon, Not Latin," Editorial, *Skandinaven*, October 24, 1917, WPA Foreign Language Press Survey, Norwegian Press.

significant majority vote moved to use Norwegian instead of English within the confines of the club after a period of English-usage only.³⁴ Surprisingly, at war's end, the push for the maintenance of foreign language remained strong amongst Scandinavians despite growing nativist sentiment. In a bold call to the Norwegian community, the editor of *Skandinaven* spoke out in August 1920 against the intolerant "two-hundred-percenters," who, during the war, moved to convert Norwegians to full Americans: "The time has come to restore real Americanism at home...some of [the "two-hundred-percenters"] took the position and said they wanted a law to forbid the use of any other language than English in the church, the school, and the newspaper. That is ridiculous and absurd. Can't a man fight equally well regardless of what language he uses?" The editor went on to argue that the "forefathers" of the Norwegian community deserved the right to speak their native language and practice the corresponding cultural habits. As he adamantly sputtered, "does Americanism demand that we turn our hearts into stone and say to father and mother and to our grandparents: "We are smarter than you now; we want a law to forbid you to use the language you like to use!" That is not Americanism. It is intolerance."³⁵ Yet, as the number of immigrants in Chicago rose in the postwar years to an all-time high, many Scandinavians began to shift their gaze to newcomers who would serve as the perfect scapegoat for ethnic tension in the midst of a tumultuous era.

According to the 1920 census, there were approximately 130,000 Swedes, 72,000 Norwegians and 29,000 Danes who called Chicago their new home – the staggering numbers, which did not include the second generation, came close to outnumbering some

³⁴ "Chicago Norwegian Club Is strong for the Norwegian Language," *Skandinaven*, December 21, 1917, WPA Foreign Language Press Survey, Norwegian Press.

³⁵ "The Foreign Languages," Editorial, *Skandinaven*, August 25, 1920, WPA Foreign Language Press Survey, Norwegian Press.

of the major Scandinavian cities by comparison.³⁶ The new influx of immigrants sparked the discussion of American citizenship once again, especially in 1920 when women received the right to become naturalized as citizens. As the following table illustrates, a majority of Chicago's Scandinavians were naturalized as citizens, those who did not take the necessary steps were publicly ostracized by nativists:

Table 5.2: Number and Percent naturalized among foreign born white males and females 21 years of age and over, for Chicago, 1920 (Denmark not listed)

	<u>Male Total</u>	<u>Naturalized</u>	<u>Female Total</u>	<u>Naturalized</u>
Sweden	28,040	20,366 (72.6%)	28,833	19,774 (68.6%)
Norway	9,473	6,886 (72.7%)	10,102	6,893 (68.2%)

(Source: Adapted from Burgess, *Census Data of the City of Chicago, 1920*, table 12, 27)

As an influx of immigrants renewed the swell of newcomers to Chicago, nativistic discussions regarding citizenship and the “desired” and “undesired” immigrant classes grew to a frenzied pace across the country. Growing nativist sentiments, exacerbated by World War I, led Congress to set the first of many restrictive immigration quotas for each nationality on May 19, 1921 through the Emergency Quota Act. The act limited the annual number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 3% of the number of persons from that country living in the United States in 1910 according to the United States Census, in turn, favoring potential immigrants from Northern and Western Europe. Scholars have long criticized the American Quota Laws which established the concept of “national origin” as discriminatory; as both John Higham and Mae Ngai have

³⁶ *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1920); “Census,” *Skandinaven*, March 27, 1920.

pointed out, the central theme of the quota process was a race-based nativism, which favored the “Nordics” of northern and western Europe over the “undesirable races,” thereby ranking Europeans in a hierarchy of desirability long discussed but not formalized in legislation.³⁷ Therefore, the initial quotas put into place actually worked to benefit Scandinavian immigration, which reached the peak of its final wave in 1923; for Sweden alone, the first law of 1921 gave the country a quota of 20,042 – a number far larger than waves in previous years. The final surge of Scandinavian immigrants represented the release of accumulated demand; those who had planned to emigrate prior to the war were now given the opportunity at war’s end.³⁸ However, in 1922, only 43.8% of the quota asked for admission and while the following year saw a surge with 24,948 admitted into the United States, the subsequent quota law of 1924 reduced the quota to 2% instead of 3%, limiting Sweden’s portion to only 9,561.³⁹ After 1924, the number of return migrants to the Scandinavian countries was greater than those coming to America. Following the final adjustment of immigration quotas by the National Origins Act of 1927 which drastically reduced the quotas for Germany, the Irish Free State, and the Scandinavian countries, the number of immigrants from the Nordic countries continued to drastically shrink.

³⁷ John Higham wrote that, although intended as a temporary legislation, the act “proved in the long run the most important turning-point in American immigration policy” because it imposed numerical limits on European immigration for the first time and established a nationality quota system. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 311; Mae M. Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” *The Journal of American History*, vol. 86, no. 1 (June 1999): 69-70.

³⁸ Barton, 251.

³⁹ In 1923, no less than 24,948 Swedes came to the United States, however during the next year, that number witnessed a drastic plummet to average slightly fewer than 8,400 immigrants a year between 1924 and 1929. During the course of the Great Depression, the number of annual immigrants from Sweden dropped to only 900 a year – far below the quota set for Sweden and far below return migration to Sweden. See U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1922*, p. 101, table 74; *Statistisk årsbok för Sverige, 1930*, p. 65; Barton, 241.

The Scandinavian newspapers of Chicago illustrated an overwhelming public response to the regulation of immigration by Congress, beginning with a more positive response in relation to the beneficial notion of Scandinavians as a “desired” group in America. One notable reaction emerged after the publication of the November 18th, 1922 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* which posed a proposal to increase the “more desirable” immigration stock and decrease the “less adaptable.” To the delight of its Scandinavian readers, the subsequent editorial ranked Scandinavians among the most desirable immigrants, and declared that “such a law would be based on fairness and consideration to all concerned, and would, in addition, signify a deserved tribute to those past generations of immigrants to which this country is so greatly indebted. It would express our appreciation of the excellent qualities of the Scandinavian peoples, who have contributed so much to the development of the Northwest.”⁴⁰ Much of the favorable response to Scandinavian immigration came from the perspective of industrialists who viewed them as a group of diligent and specialized workers; upon publication of the annual report of the Bureau of Immigration in Washington, a particularly favorable section titled “Trades and Occupations of Immigrants of Various Countries” came to the attention of the editors of *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*. As the editors shared with their readers, national figures showed that the Scandinavian population contained a higher percentage of individuals with special occupational training than any of the other immigrant groups in America.⁴¹ However, many of Chicago’s established Scandinavians did not view immigration quotas that favored further immigration from Scandinavia as a

⁴⁰ Kenneth Roberts, “Editorial,” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 18, 1922; “The Regulation of Immigration,” Editorial, *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*, November 22, 1922 (*Translations mine*).

⁴¹ “The Immigrants from the North,” *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*, January 31, 1923; “The Immigration Bill,” Editorial, *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*, February 14, 1923 (*Translations mine*).

positive measure. Instead, the older generation viewed the new class of immigrants in the 1920s as a menace to the established status quo – young people who would have to endure the arduous tasks of learning English and become somewhat Americanized. One editorial retorted that such newcomers often attracted unfortunate public attention and stood to give the community a bad name: “These exceptions seem to represent a certain hoodlum element, which glories in making passes at ladies on the street and indulges in similar ungentlemanly conduct. Perhaps they got away with that sort of thing in Sweden, but they need not think that it will go unpunished here. The sooner they get their fingers burned, the better it will be for them...it will teach them manners.”⁴² Upon the passage of the National Origins Act of 1927, many of the community’s outlets that once complained about the qualities of its new immigrants would change their direction.

The National Origins Act of 1927, which effectively reduced the quota granted to the Nordic countries, caused many of Chicago’s Scandinavians to express their outrage, sometimes to the point of blatant racism towards other European groups. Some chose to place the blame on the disparate groups previously outraged by their own low quotas; one such reaction came from Carl L. Bengston who indignantly inquired within the pages of *The Lutheran Companion*: “Can anyone calculate wherein the United States will be benefited by the immigration of more Italians, Poles and Irish, Belgians and Dutch, and by reducing the quota of Germans and Scandinavians?”⁴³ A later, more hostile editorial in *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter* pushed the argument that the revised quotas were not only inconvenient but also impractical in building a country of “desirables.” The editor sternly

⁴² “Swedish Newcomers,” Editorial, *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*, November 28, 1923.

⁴³ Carl J. Bengston, “Opinion,” *The Lutheran Companion*, October 26, 1929; Finis Herbert Capps, *From Isolationism to Involvement: The Swedish Immigrant Press in America, 1914-1945* (Chicago: Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1966): 112-13; Barton, 252.

posed: “For a long time the immigrants from Northern Europe have been hailed as forming the backbone of our nation. Are these highly valued Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes now going to be thrown aside to make room for Lithuanians and long-bearded, half-wild newcomers from Soviet Russia?”⁴⁴ Other outlets expressed more of a fearful concern for the potential loss of cultural practices and heritage; one newspaper warned that, if the 1924 quota were not relinquished, “all our socially constructive Swedish-American institutions, including the press, societies, fraternal orders, churches, old people’s homes and orphanages – in a word, all that the Swedish Americans from the earliest times down to the present have with such great sacrifices built up, will slowly but surely wither and die.”⁴⁵ As the potential threat of the loss of cultural identity gained recognition, the community responded in a somewhat astonishing manner – in the shadow of nativist rhetoric regarding immigrant “backwardness,” Chicago’s Scandinavians witnessed a cultural revival which built upon the ideal of a truly dualistic sense of citizenship in America.

In the years that followed the persecution of ethnic diversity in America by nativists, Scandinavian-American cultural life revived to a surprising degree. Representations of homeland culture were once again celebrated within the neighborhoods of Lakeview and Andersonville in Chicago and membership in Scandinavian churches and societies steadily grew throughout the 1920s.⁴⁶ The Norwegian community used the 1925 Centennial of its establishment in America to reflect upon its own hyphenated American identity; the Centennial was what scholar April Schultz found to be a “specific site of contestation” that could not be understood

⁴⁴ “Why the About Face?” Editorial, *Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*, March 20, 1929.

⁴⁵ Barton, 252-53, 379.

⁴⁶ Barton, 242.

outside of the context of American nativism and the immediate tensions surrounding communities of foreigners.⁴⁷ Celebrations such as the 1925 Norwegian Centennial became commonplace in this period, while the actual practices of the homeland fell off, especially the use of Scandinavian languages in the public sphere. Yet, while the earlier public emphasis on foreign language publications and literary culture fell off in the postwar years, those who still had knowledge of the language of home continued to privately educate their American-born children in it. However, the second generation held a divergent image of America from that of their parents in the 1920s. Entertainer Lydia Hedberg, who toured America from 1920 to 1923 as a Swedish folk singer and storyteller recalled the vision of second generation Swedish Americans as a confused space in between cultures. Most of them, she wrote, behaved in a manner unbecoming to public spaces; the young women quickly adopted every Americanism, bobbing their hair and sporting horn-rimmed glasses while speaking a “mish-mash slang” that combined English and the language of their parents. Hegberg was most disturbed in her travels by the “panicky anxiety” she encountered amongst the children of “well-to-do” Scandinavian immigrants who sought to conceal their Swedish origins and avoid any identification with newcomers from the homeland.⁴⁸ Despite her encounters with such insecure youth, Hegberg noted her failed perception that the process of becoming “well-to-do” would require full Americanization in moving into the upper classes of Chicago society; instead, she found successful Scandinavians who mapped out a new direction in America – one that did not require the loss of ethnic identity and cultural heritage.

⁴⁷ Schultz’s full length study explores the meanings of community and ethnic identity through the cultural celebrations of Norwegian Americans. See April Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, 38.

⁴⁸ Lydia Hedberg (Bergslagsmor), *Reseminnen från U.S.A.* (Skövde, 1925): 29, 81

By the 1920s, the last of the new arrivals from Scandinavia made their way into a complex ethnic community that was quite different from the segmented communities of the 1880s. The once centralized enclaves that Scandinavians shared had now grown to accommodate diverse groups of citizens and the community that was once desperate to hold onto ties to the homeland had found other ways to express cultural heritage. As Anita Olsen found in her study of North Park, the newly developing suburban regions of Chicago allowed Scandinavians to exert social power over their environment and recreate their community affiliations outside of the city. In doing so, these former immigrants were able to strengthen ethnic consciousness in areas removed from central Chicago and assert Scandinavian presence within the city as well as outside of it.⁴⁹ The importance of this inner-migration to suburban regions of Chicago would prove to be vital in continuing the traditions of the homeland in a uniquely American way, emphasizing the benefits of the potential in America to become “well-to-do.” Many Scandinavian-Americans joined others in the early flight to the suburbs; the urban ethnic neighborhoods, once sites of substantial ethnic businesses and institutions, gave rise to an ethnic elite who “dominated the public life of the koloni [neighborhood] and claimed to represent the group in its dealings outside the neighborhood,” according to April Schultz and John Jenswold. Suburbanization, they found, proved to be a paradox for such ethnic elites; on one hand, flight from the centralized urban community had the potential to weaken their hold on the community, but on the other, they could express a truly Scandinavian-American pluralistic identity in suburban regions through participation in the new lifestyle of

⁴⁹ Anita Olsen, “The Community Created: Chicago Swedes 1880-1920,” in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, 57.

American consumer culture.⁵⁰ As Liz Cohen questioned the standard view of the 1920s as a decade where mass consumer culture worked to assimilate ethnic Americans, she also discovered that Chicago's ethnic citizens interpreted consumer behavior differently than their American neighbors.⁵¹ Therefore, as suburban flight for Americans would largely symbolize class mobility, Scandinavians grounded their move to the suburbs in rural traditions of the homeland where home ownership had very different meanings.

For many of these former immigrants, upward mobility entailed the possibilities to enjoy the finer things that the booming consumerism of the 1920s now had to offer; during this era of opulence, members of Chicago's Scandinavian elite took the steps to separate themselves from the city and their neighbors in forming their own insular community, even in the wake of nativist calls to "become American." For members of this group, the opportunity to take advantage of the celebratory culture of the 1920s was far too tempting – they would soon set out to create a private space where high-class leisure and social interaction would offer the chance for new beginnings, however nostalgic of the homeland.

"It is a privilege to belong to the Nordic": Leisure, Ethnic Identity, and the Nordic Country Club

On May 10, 1925, in the spirit of America's celebratory affluence, a group of prominent Scandinavians prepared to break ground on a wooded site in the northwest Chicago suburb of Itasca, Illinois. Just over a year later on Memorial Day 1926, the

⁵⁰ Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, 57; John R. Jenswold, "Becoming American, Becoming Suburban: Norwegians in the 1920s," *Norwegian-American Studies* 33 (1992): 5-6.

⁵¹ Liz Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 182; Jenswold, "Becoming American, Becoming Suburban," 16-17.

founders would celebrate the opening of the Nordic Country Club – a bucolic establishment set upon sprawling one-hundred-and-twenty acres of golf courses and park land. The Nordic Country Club was conceived of by what was considered to be Chicago’s Scandinavian elite – a successful group of doctors, lawyers, and businessmen who desired a weekend retreat from the rigors of city life. Their ideal “home away from home” would become a vital cultural institution that developed out of two larger social movements in American cities during the 1920s: the great suburban migration and the growth and popularity of country clubs for America’s upper classes. Yet, the construction of the Nordic Country Club was unlike any other affluent suburban escape of the day. The Club, built almost exclusively by first- and second-generation Scandinavian-Americans, symbolized the acceptance of an immigrant group into Chicago’s elite. However, the appearance of the club, the activities and traditions practiced, and the people who gained membership to the club were, in every sense of the word, Scandinavian.

The notion of separation from the rigors of city life had become popular since the earliest years of the population boom in Chicago, especially for groups like Scandinavians who had both the means and the desire to become suburban. As early as the 1880s, those Scandinavians who could afford to do so retreated to the new suburban areas outlying the city limits including Lakeview and what would later become Andersonville. Historian Anita Olson Gustafson explained that as Scandinavians moved outside the city, they “brought” their community affiliations with them, including churches, secular clubs, labor unions, temperance societies, and professional associations. Thereby, rather than losing their ethnic affiliations and Americanizing, the process of

suburbanization gave them a window of opportunity in the city's development to create the ethnic communities they so desired.⁵² In 1893, a real estate company called the Swedish University Association (SUA) purchased land in the newly-established neighborhood of North Park with the intention to transform the land acquisition into "an entire Swedish Covenant colony" within Chicago – a plan Gustafson attributed to the process of taking an American institution, the urban-style subdivision, to "shape the needs of an ethnic sectarian community." While the suburb and the educational institution of North Park would eventually flourish into one of the most successful endeavors of the insular Swedish group, the notion of creating a completely homogeneous community within a growing urban area (that incidentally was incorporated into the Chicago city limits by the turn of the century) created immense internal conflicts complicated by economic and demographic forces.⁵³ The early social experiment of the North Park group would nevertheless create a model for Scandinavians who also wished to temporarily escape from Chicago's city limits, either through home ownership or through membership in an association like the Nordic Country Club.

From the initial stages of planning, the would-be founders of the Nordic Country Club publicly acknowledged a "genuine need" for such a foundation. For many prominent Scandinavian Chicagoans, the once exciting culture of the city neighborhoods and streets transformed over time into a nuisance, especially for those who expressed nostalgia for the simple life of the homeland. In the planning stages of the project, Nordic's investors looked to other prominent Chicago clubs of private membership for

⁵² In her article, "North Park: Building a Swedish Community in Chicago," Olson uses the Swedish community to show the prevalence of ethnic ties even within the outlying suburban communities surrounding Chicago. See Anita Olson Gustafson, "North Park: Building a Swedish Community in Chicago," *The Journal of American Ethnic History* v. 22/2 (Winter 2003): 31-49.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 32.

cues in execution and maintenance such as the Evanston Golf Club and others on the North Shore. In looking to these clubs, the most important component of a country club was its distance from the city coupled with an aesthetically pleasing surrounding area. One of the first public announcements published by the investors stressed this component and even went as far as to encourage its prospective members to relocate to the northwest suburb of Itasca. In one of the early promotional maps of the Nordic Country Club and the surrounding housing developments, the authors stressed that potential investors move to Itasca because it was not plagued with the dirt and smoke of suburbs surrounding Chicago, was only a short commute to the city, but most importantly, it was “an American community of substantial, prosperous people, who live modestly but well.”⁵⁴ Another announcement similarly promised a “very attractive location, close to the city,” easily accessible by train from the city and plans that would make the club “one of the most attractive and complete clubs in the country.” Investors in the club also expressed a new emphasis on transportation by automobile, noting that the club was “far enough away to lose the noise and dirt and din of the city, yet near enough to be within an hour’s easy drive.”⁵⁵ Most importantly, the investors expressed the discourse of prominent Scandinavians of the city who “appreciated for some time the need of a club of this kind.”⁵⁶ To such affluent Scandinavians, the need for a beautiful retreat from the city was

⁵⁴ Publicity map of Itasca and the proposed Nordic Country Club, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #8 – Maps, blueprints (n.d.), F. M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections at North Park University, Chicago, IL (hereafter denoted as NPU).

⁵⁵ Commemorative booklet printed for the Nordic Country Club (mid-1920s), Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #7 – Scrapbook, NPU.

⁵⁶ Within the announcement, the investors encouraged prospective members to purchase property in the subdivision of 1200 acres near the potential club, promising that it was “property which will greatly increase in value.” Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #2 – Contracts. NPU.

just as important as the proposed features of the club, which markedly embraced both American and Scandinavian culture.

In the earliest years of planning, the Nordic Country Club was, first and foremost, proposed as an organization conceived of by Scandinavian men for Scandinavian men. Touted as “a place where the busy man of today and his family can get the recreation, the play, the fun, the pure air and sunshine, and the social atmosphere of a summer or winter resort within easy reach of home,” the club was advertised as one built by a group of men “with vision and foresight” to “provide an ideal outdoor playground” for the successful Nordic man.⁵⁷ In doing so, the club would become an escape for Scandinavian men of a particular social and economic standing who sought an outlet for the sporting pastime of their adopted class and of the homeland; at the club, members and their families could partake in golf, tennis, “saddle and kindred” sports embraced by the upper classes as appropriate leisure activities. By the 1920s according to the club’s publicity, “places of wholesome and public playgrounds had been taxed beyond their limits” within Chicago, and therefore the club’s investors proposed a new opportunity for sophisticated leisure that combined class and a renewed sense of cultural heritage.⁵⁸

In 1925, Carl Collier, Campaign and Publicity director for the proposed club put out an eager rallying call to the charter members in a push to sign up the 375 social members of the club needed for its opening. Aside from various dramatic and humorous asides in his speech, Collier reiterated the “genuine need” for a Nordic Country Club in revitalizing body and mind for Scandinavian Americans plagued by the rigors of city life:

⁵⁷ Commemorative booklet printed for the Nordic Country Club.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

“This conference has been called to encourage [Scandinavian] Americans to make more of their opportunities and appropriate more of the advantages of America. For a long time one of the ideals of perfection has been that of a sound mind in a sound body. When most of our original educational institutions were founded they at first served a race of pioneers. They were attended by those whose very existence depended on an active outdoor life in the open country. The most universal custom among all the people was bodily exercise...too much emphasis cannot be placed on the effort to get the people off the streets into spacious open places where there is good sunlight and plenty of fresh air...it restores the natural balance of life and nourishes the moral fiber of mankind.”⁵⁹

Collier and the founding members viewed citizenship as a tangible concept, not a given, and leisure as a practice that could actually strengthen the quality of citizenship for Scandinavian Americans. Furthermore, leisure and sport were both embraced by the founding members as a piece of cultural heritage to be given to Americans; as Collier wrote, “we can go a long way in that direction by getting [Americans] out of doors and really interested in nature. We can make still further progress by engaging them in sports.”⁶⁰ Thereby in establishing a cultural leisure establishment focused on the importance of the natural world, Scandinavian Americans could embrace their heritage and express to their American neighbors the benefits of maintaining Scandinavian culture in America.

The Nordic Country Club, which was first publicly advertised in Chicago’s newspapers as “the first 100 percent Swedish country club in the country,” was actually intended as a private club for Chicago’s Scandinavians of a certain social standing.⁶¹

Collier specifically expressed that neither he, nor the charter members, would accept just any “Tom, Dick, or Harry” as a member of their club: “We would have no difficulty in

⁵⁹ Membership (potential members) list 1925, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #4, NPU.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “New Nordic Country Club; Nordic Club purchases 200 acres,” *Herald-Examiner*, April 19, 1925; “Country Club for Chicago Scandinavians,” *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, April 19, 1925.

enrolling the first hundred in the loop district alone, if we just went right out and told our story, as there is hardly an intelligent man in the entire loop district that would not grab it. But we don't want that. We want to build this organization for your friends and our friends."⁶² According to both Collier and the bylaws of the club, "friends" were of a particular standing in the Scandinavian community. The bylaws of the club indicated that any individual over the age of 21 was eligible for membership however the "small print" of the bylaws noted that the potential members were required to endure a lengthy process which included a vote by the board of directors, with three negative votes resulting in the denial of membership. The reasons for such staunch eligibility requirements for charter membership were clear: charter members of the club would actually hold a stake of the land that the club occupied for \$1,000 in eight installments at the beginnings of the building process – a wise investment for the time, but also a hefty price to pay for membership to a social club.⁶³ Regular social memberships (without a stake of the club) to the club were additionally costly – the price of membership in the initial years of the club increased with every 100 people who joined beginning at \$350 going up to \$550 for the last to commit to annual membership. The investors in the club were aware of the fact that creating an affluent country club grounded in the cultural heritage of the homeland would require a significant amount of collateral in order to guarantee long-term success.

Initial membership in the Nordic Country Club was also limited to men with visiting rights extended to "ladies of the immediate family." In doing so, the Nordic Country Club would later maintain a family atmosphere on the surface, but was managed

⁶² Membership (potential members) list 1925, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #4, NPU.

⁶³ Nordic Country Club By-Laws (Adopted April 13, 1925), Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #1, NPU.

and viewed as somewhat of a fraternal organization. In campaigning for social members, the investors (who were all men) produced membership recommendation cards which expressed their desire for a “congenial, social atmosphere where the business and professional man and his family may have all the advantages of an ideal Country Club away from the din of the usual crowds.”⁶⁴ The bylaws of the club made it clear that women and children of members were more than welcome to enjoy the privileges of the club without membership, but would be subject to additional rules and regulations that actual members were not. Such exclusions included golf tournaments and various weekend activities where the presence of women and children was not desired by the male members of the club. The bylaws were also very specific about the extent to which the club’s forefathers desired to maintain a morally upstanding façade; in 1930, an amendment was added to the bylaws which specified that “ladies of the immediate family shall be construed to mean the wife and daughters of a member residing with him.”⁶⁵ Whether or not the amendment was added in response to an uncomfortable situation is unknown, however it was clear that, even in the modern era, the members of the Nordic Country Club continued to hold onto their moral beliefs despite the introduction of modern social mores.

In addition to the fraternal undertones of the goals of the club, it was clear that the charter members looked to fill its ranks with athletically and culturally minded citizens of the Scandinavian community in Chicago. In a letter of correspondence between director Carl Hjalmar Lundquist and the rest of the charter members written in July 1925, Lundquist urged his “red army” to instill pride within their recruitments for being

⁶⁴ Membership Recommendation Card, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #4, NPU.

⁶⁵ Nordic Country Club Bylaws, Sections 14 and 15.

selected, as he wrote that “it is a privilege to belong to the Nordic, a privilege you have already seen, and we would like to see more of your friends join so as to keep up the quality of our members on the same high plane as it is now.”⁶⁶ In doing so, there was a specific demographic that the charter members were especially eager to recruit within Chicago; while socioeconomic status was crucial, recruiters targeted groups such as the United Swedish Singers of Chicago and the Swedish-American Athletic Association comprised of Scandinavian men of important social standing in the community. After the club opened in 1926, an article in the club’s newsletter, “The Nordic Fairway,” discussed the pride of the club in having members that represented virtually every business and industry due to the keen maneuvering of early recruiters. The most important outcome of their tactics, according to the newsletter, was the caliber of “gentlemen” they located to fill their ranks:

“You know many of them yourselves. Bankers and bakers, manufacturers and merchants, lawyers and brokers, instructors and sales managers, as well as salesmen. But go ahead, finish the list yourself. In the final analysis we all agree that, whatever the business or profession of our fellow members may be, the secret of success for Nordic lies in the fact that they are real men; real friends, good companions and gentlemen. And that, after all, will make any enterprise successful.”⁶⁷

Despite the façade of rational planning and execution of the club’s goals in the early stages of recruitment, the charter members did not escape the occasional squabbles, often times sparked by egotism and jealousy over rank in the hierarchy of the club. One such disagreement arose in June 1925 between Carl Hjalmar Lundquist and Chas Fellowes

⁶⁶ Letter from Carl Hjalmar Lundquist to the Nordic Country Club charter members, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #4, NPU.

⁶⁷ Article from the club’s newsletter, “The Nordic Fairway”, October 1929, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #6 (Periodicals 1925-29), NPU.

when Lundquist, who was both a director and major investor in the club, discovered that Fellowes printed his name on every piece of letterhead and publicity for the club. The simple acknowledgement outraged Lundquist, who wished to be more of a silent partner in the dealings of the club, prompting him to scribble a terse letter to his once close friend. In the letter, Lundquist referenced a confidential talk between the two men where Fellowes suggested that Lundquist not take such an active part in the organization work after Lundquist equally lamented over his rise to leadership in the somewhat risky enterprise. Lundquist explained to Fellowes that he would be obliged to “lay low so as to give those a chance who wanted to be in the limelight,” therefore becoming appalled when the Board of Directors approved a listing of the entire Board on all correspondence of the Nordic Country Club – a move Lundquist accused of “smell[ing] something akin to egotism.” In a bold move, Lundquist ended his letter with a word of advice to Fellowes and more broadly, to the other directors: “Let’s do business like businessmen – not kids.”⁶⁸ This early animosity expressed between Lundquist and Fellowes would transform into a much larger issue in upcoming years, when the club and its members faced a tumultuous climate of maintaining an affluent social club in the midst of the country’s greatest economic depression. In the years leading up to the stock market crash however, the Nordic Country Club prospered under the guidance of its charter members, eager to transform the club into an oasis dedicated to Scandinavian heritage away from the confines of city life.

In a push to mark the inaugural season of the Nordic Country Club, the charter members published and distributed a commemorative booklet to each new member of the

⁶⁸ Letter written by Carl Hjalmar Lundquist to Chas H. Fellowes on June 19, 1925, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #4, NPU.

club separated into features for men and women. In the booklet, the members could view the architectural sketches of the new clubhouse – a palatial Nordic chalet reminiscent of structures in the homeland with classic Tudor lines. The booklet touted the many possibilities for leisure and relaxation that the club had to offer to its members; for those who wished to stay indoors, the club provided a spacious lounge complete with billiard and card rooms for rainy days or evening play. Catering to members' wives, the booklet described the opulent ball room to be used for dinner dances and other social affairs; down the hall from the ball room, the club's female patrons could find a library, reading and writing rooms advertised as a cozy respite complete with wide, open fireplaces. The central most part of the club for all its patrons would be the main dining room, where husbands and their families could come together to reconnect after a long day of leisure. As the booklet advertised, the dining room was one that catered "to the inner man" with the finest foods, comfort and cuisine – it was a place "to chat and smoke and while away a pleasant hour."⁶⁹ Sketches accompanied the booklet's description of the club's amenities, alternating between scenes of men in full dinner dress smoking pipes in the lounge and elegant couples dancing in the grand ballroom. From the booklet, the directors' message was clear to the club's newly anointed members that their investment would be one to celebrate in the months leading up to its opening.

Beginning in 1925 and continuing through the 1930s, the club published a monthly newsletter for its members, which combined ethnic humor, current events, and regular features of prominent club members. Over time, the newsletter would shift from a simple retelling of events to become a vital reflection of the changes the affluent

⁶⁹ Commemorative booklet published for the members of the Nordic Country Club (1926), Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #6 – Periodicals 1925-29, NPU.

Scandinavian members faced in the economic downfall of the country. In the first edition of the newsletter, the newly recruited members of the club were introduced to the “who’s who” of the organization, including E.F.T. Lundquist (club’s first vice president), Ernest G. Dahl (club’s second vice president), C. Hilding Anderson (club treasurer), and Nils J. Lindskoog (club director). The bios of each prominent man told a similar story of emigration to America during the 1880s with their families, with a strong emphasis on the point that each considered Chicago to be their permanent home. Additionally, each sketch attributed their success to their integration into American society, which thereby rewarded them with fine homes and healthy, happy families. Yet, each biographical sketch told the story of a Scandinavian man who became highly industrious and successful through their acculturation into American life as businessmen, lawyers, and doctors, while also pointing out the duality of their own identities as Scandinavian-Americans.

The *Swedish Blue Book*, a widely-read community directory which featured prominent Swedish-American leaders and businesses, mirrored the descriptions of this network of businessmen who created a vital “old boys club” inside and outside of the community. The biographical sketches on the Scandinavian-American “society set” of the city followed a pattern in achieving social success; the descriptions of mostly men in Chicago and its surrounding suburban regions painted a picture of business success in American society and social success in Scandinavian fraternal groups. In turn, many of the descriptions told a similar tale: education at Ivy League institutions or those revered by the Scandinavian community, such as North Park and Augustana Colleges; active participation in the political realm; building a business from the ground up, or working as

a number of positions that signaled success in the American workforce including law, business, or economics; and participation in any of the fraternal groups, especially the Scandinavian male choirs.⁷⁰ Not only was it clear that the charter members of the Nordic Country Club and other Scandinavians sought an outlet to separate themselves from Chicago's society, but it was also apparent that their outlet was chosen as a deliberate celebration of Scandinavian culture as they remembered it. Almost all of the men belonged to prominent Swedish clubs within the city including the Vikings, the Svithiods, the Svithiod Singing Club, the Odd Fellows, and the Fish Fans Club and some like C. Hilding Anderson were not even born in Scandinavia, but nevertheless desired a place that embraced it. Even from the "who's who" section of "the Nordic Fairway," the members of the Nordic Country Club illustrated the capability of Scandinavians to walk a very fine line in American society between appearing "American" and embracing "Scandinavian."

Another prominent feature of "the Nordic Fairway" illustrated a collection of jokes entitled "in the rough" that embraced a Scandinavian-American discourse on navigating within American society. One such joke played on the common stereotype that painted Scandinavians as taller than the average person:

“Conductor – “How old is your little boy?
Fond Mother – “Four”
Conductor – “How old are you, my little man?”
Boy – “Four”
Conductor – “Well, I’ll ride him free this time, but when he grows up he’ll be either a liar or a giant.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ See *The Swedish Blue Book, A Swedish-American Directory and Year Book for Chicago, 1927*, published annually by the Swedish-American Publishing Co., Chicago, 1927.

⁷¹ "The Nordic Fairway," October 1929, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #6 – Periodicals 1925-29, NPU.

Other jokes featured in the newsletter poked fun at a more unfortunate stereotype – that of the rural, and therefore not fully acculturated, Scandinavian:

“Ole Oleson came into a drug store in a Minnesota village and inquired if they had any “squirrel” whiskey. “No,” said the clerk, “but I can slip you a little Old Crow.” “Aye don’t want to fly,” said Ole. “Aye yust want to yump around a little.”⁷²

In the waning years of the 1920s, the jokes appeared to point towards the club’s male contingency, despite the fact that women associated with the club also read the newsletters. The September 1926 edition was an example of this shift, when several, more colorful jokes that addressed sexuality and alcohol consumption during prohibition were scattered throughout the newsletter. Many of the jokes appeared to drift away from cultural stereotypes to focus more on American discourse and mores in society, including a view of youth culture:

“The first thing a freshman learns in college is how to judge good whisky. This is how it’s done: One drops a hammer in the whisky, if it floats it’s fair whisky; if it sinks, the whisky is poor; but of the hammer dissolves – that’s whisky.”⁷³

This particular brand of humor was reminiscent of a process that took place over the course of the 1910s and 1920s whereas Scandinavians became more accepting of the practice of alcohol consumption by members of their group. Scandinavians (especially Swedes) who were once known for their strict temperance now seemed to embrace American social customs, especially the most popular references of sneaking alcohol during prohibition, according to the pages of “the Nordic Fairway.” Several jokes also

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “The Nordic Fairway,” September 1926, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #6 – Periodicals 1925-29, NPU.

featured a more open interpretation of sexuality than illustrated in previous years by Scandinavians, including ones that addressed premarital relations and flirtatious public encounters. One featured a father asking his daughter's suitor his explanation for his daughter sitting on the young man's lap. To the father's question, the man replied, "I got here early, sir, before the others."⁷⁴ Another appeared as a serious letter to the editor of the newsletter of a young member looking for answers to his personal dilemma:

"Dear Editor – I cannot get over being sleepy about two o'clock in the morning. What do you suggest?"

Answer – "Marry the girl and then you can stay at home nights."⁷⁵

The pages of "the Nordic Fairway" offer an invaluable glimpse into the social discourse of an ethnic group in the process of blending two dominant national identities – humor that focused on common jokes from the homeland seamlessly blended with new jokes about Scandinavians in genuinely American situations. Historian Joy Lintelman explained that ethnic humor was a tool used to bring the community together into a common discourse about those outside of the margins, yet, for this group of privileged Scandinavians, the humor was now focused back on their own. In doing so, the two identities would combine into one negotiated persona.⁷⁶ However, this did not necessarily mean that everyone was in on the joke.

Despite the pretense that the Nordic Country Club was a place for both men and their families, the pages of "the Nordic Fairway" maintained the appearance of a fraternal organization with chauvinistic discourse centered upon its female contingent. In one

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ See Joy Lintelman, "Our Serving Sisters": Swedish-American Domestic Servants and Their Ethnic Community," *Social Science History*, v. 15, n. 3 (Fall 1991): 384-86; W.R. Linneman, "Immigration Stereotypes: 1880-1900," *Studies in American Humor I* (1974): 28-39.

article, one member joked about the possibility of an annual ladies' "stag" where the members' wives could play the men for a day: "Turn the club over to the ladies for the day. Give them the whole lay-out and tell them to go to it. We wonder how many of them would be speaking to each other by evening."⁷⁷ In another article from the same issue, the editor talked about the chance for "the boys" to become reacquainted with their homes as winter was on the horizon, cancelling the opportunity for golf. The editor lamented that winter would mean that the members would be required to "become the head of a household once more, and to get on speaking terms with the wife. So, taking it all in all, perhaps it is just as well to have a bit of winter for a change."⁷⁸ While the majority of the newsletters focused almost exclusively of merits on the golf course and personal briefs on its members (including weddings and birth announcements), the newsletters also featured cultural events that celebrated Scandinavian traditions. The club held an annual crawfish dinner as a way to bring together members and their families for a traditional midsommar celebration outside of the city. "The Nordic Fairway" boasted about the extensive amount of money the club set aside to specially import crawfish from Sweden and Norway for the occasion, but truly embraced the opportunity to gather with fellow Scandinavians. The spirit of celebration during the 1920s could not, however, be maintained forever. As the effects of the stock market crash and the Great Depression took effect in Chicago and throughout its suburban regions, Scandinavians would find themselves in complicated financial situations – and some, in great need.

⁷⁷ "The Nordic Fairway," September 1929, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #6 – Periodicals 1925-29, NPU

⁷⁸ Ibid.

The Curtain Falls: The Great Depression and the Scandinavian Community in Chicago

Upon entering into major financial investments, many of Chicago's most successful businessmen encountered some degree of hesitation about the age of opulence that encapsulated 1920s financial decisions. Even before entering into one of his most successful social and professional endeavors, Carl Hjalmar Lundquist, one of the founders of the Nordic Country Club and a prominent leader within the Scandinavian community, hesitated before entering into such a significant investment. In a document prepared by his lawyer and good friend, Chas Fellowes, it was clear that the Nordic Country Club had the potential to be viable but this was only contingent on the cooperation of Lundquist and his colleagues; Fellowes reminded him and the other investors of their social standing by pointing out that, "there are several members of the Organization committee of the Nordic Country Club who are widely known and stand very prominently among the Swedish population of Chicago...the cooperation of these officials with a subdivision company in connection with the sale of properties adjacent to or near the property of the Nordic Country club would be very valuable, depending upon the manner in which their cooperation and influence were capitalized or used."⁷⁹ Along with their investment, the charter members agreed to receive a physical claim to the club in the form of 50 by 150 foot property lots in addition to their share in equity, yet for shrewd businessmen like Lundquist, the right to property meant that there was the vile potential to have their homes rescinded by the bank if the deal fell through. Being a shrewd lawyer and political figure, Lundquist was a dynamic thinker when it came to

⁷⁹ Legal document prepared by Chas Fellowes of Fellowes, Lawrence & Fellowes LLP, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder # 9 – Miscellaneous, n.d., NPU.

anything that involved the potential for failure in business. Following Fellowes' document in his files, Lundquist attached a hand-written note which read as somewhat of a nervous stream of consciousness as to the consequences of this business endeavor:

"I am organizing this thing. Getting my friend into it. Assuming the responsibility of having them put \$7,000 into it with a chance of loss \$700 I stand to lose. May have to do \$700 of work to save it. Put up \$25.00 each [month] and will have to put up more for committee work. I am attending banquets and meetings 3 nights a week to put it on. I am obligating myself to Hilding [Anderson] and others on behalf of this and making enemies out of some people I would rather be friends with."⁸⁰

Despite his skepticism, Lundquist would eventually enter into the business deal, and as previously discussed, would unwillingly become a major leader within the enterprise. In hindsight, however, Lundquist would later regret his early decision when the dismal years of the Great Depression would quietly diminish his portfolio thereby wrecking havoc on his relationships with his business associates.

Lundquist's rise to professional and political success read very much like a page of the "who's who" section of "the Nordic Fairway"; a distinguished Swedish-American journalist, author, engineer, and later lawyer, Lundquist was highly educated and well respected. Lundquist's professional career was indicative of the extent to which Scandinavians had the potential to navigate between their own culture and that of Chicago. After working as the city editor of *Svenska Tribunen*, *Fosterlandet*, and *Svenska Posten* of Rockford in the early 1900s, Lundquist made the bold decision to put himself through Chicago Law School; for years, Lundquist labored through school during the day

⁸⁰ Hand-written note by Carl Hjalmar Lundquist in response to the tactics laid out by Chas Fellowes in getting Scandinavians (mostly Swedes) to commit to purchasing land and joining the club ranks. Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder # 9 – Miscellaneous, n.d., NPU.

and worked as a tool and die maker at night. Even upon admittance to the bar in 1922 and working as an assistant corporation counsel for the City of Chicago in 1923, Lundquist prioritized his identity as a Swedish-American in his free time, becoming an active member of the Svithiod Singing Club, chairman of Verdandi Lodge #3 and Värmlands Nation, and organizing the Chicago branch of the Swedish Cultural Society in 1923.⁸¹ Through his participation in these groups and his work as city counsel, Lundquist was able to make a number of vital professional connections, which would later inform his participation in the investment deal surrounding the Nordic Country Club. Like many of his colleagues and Scandinavian neighbors, by the late 1920s Lundquist had the means and desire to live outside of the city in the comfortable suburb of Rockford with his family. Yet, his move to Rockford would become both a physical and metaphorical separation from his colleagues at the Nordic Country Club as his participation weakened and he visited the club only on rare occasions. And in 1930, as many others at the club began to feel the early effects of the Great Depression, Lundquist was no exception – for him, the devastating effects would come in the form of public humiliation by his colleagues.

For many of Nordic's members, the significant economic hardship and social upheaval of the depression would transform the group, who was once a carefree community dedicated to combining customs from the homeland with benefits of American consumerism into one situated in economic survival. During the early years of the 1930s, many of Nordic's members were forced to withdraw their social membership or face the consequences of delinquency from failure to pay club dues – both measures

⁸¹ The biographical information regarding Carl Hjalmar Lundquist is derived from the information sheet prepared by archivist Anne Jenner. The description and biographic information accompanies the Carl Hjalmar Lundquist manuscript collection and the archives of North Park University.

holding a high cost in the public sphere. Like other members, Lundquist encountered similar financial woes which were not abetted by his distance from the club and its board of directors. On May 28, 1930, the board of directors charged Lundquist with the first of several notices of debt to the club over the course of the 1930s; in the terse letter, Lundquist was informed of the board's resolution that unless his indebtedness to April 1, which amounted to a staggering \$462.95, was paid within ten days, he would be suspended from "all the rights and privileges of the Club."⁸² As a bold response to the board's notice, instead of appearing in person at a board meeting to refute the issue, Lundquist sent a letter of resignation as a member of the board of directors and furthermore requested that his membership be transferred to a "non-resident member" of the club. Upon his request, the board agreed to reinstate him a few months later as a "non-resident member" of the club, yet by January 1931, Lundquist was once again delinquent with payments that now amounted to \$546.70, resulting in his denial of membership. After years of this back and forth financial struggle between Lundquist and the board of directors, Lundquist finally filed legal papers in August 1941 to be released from his monetary commitment to the club, promising his son, Donald, a membership transferal and thereby releasing Lundquist from further payments to the club.⁸³ While the private financial dealings of the club were never made public in written form to its

⁸² The papers of the Nordic Country Club are indicative of both the financial climate and contrast of the 1920s and the 1930s; while the majority of the papers illustrate the club as an opulent and successful financial endeavor, the inclusion of Lundquist's personal financial woes stands out within the manuscript collection. And while Lundquist's struggles with the club to release him from debt would fortunately not haunt him later in his political career, the papers nevertheless illustrate a time when personal financial crisis could come to outweigh friendships and business relationships. See notice of debt issued by the Board of Directors of the Nordic Country Club in response to a failure of payment by Carl Hjalmar Lundquist on April 1, 1930, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #4 – Membership, NPU.

⁸³ Ibid; Legal papers filed by Carl Hjalmar Lundquist v. the board of directors, Nordic Country Club, Nordic Country Club Records, 1924-1931, Manuscript Collection #6, Box #1, Folder #7 - Scrapbook, NPU.

members, the tell-tale signs of public embarrassment were nevertheless present in simple omission. The pages of “the Nordic Fairway,” once sprinkled with regular accolades of the successes of Lundquist – such as his invitation to meet the Crown Prince of Sweden in June 1926 – were now devoid of any mention of Lundquist or his family, even as most suffered the effects of the depression in one way or another.

Publicity from the Nordic Country Club delivered to Chicago’s newspapers attempted to similarly not discuss the financial problems the club or its members faced in rational terms; in one *Herald Examiner* article, the club even expressed the ways in which the club, built in the “boom days” by Scandinavian contractors had become somewhat of a “melting pot” that welcomed other ethnic groups with open arms: “Irishmen rubbed elbows with Swedes, Germans fraternized with the Irish, and everybody was happy until depression caught up with Nordic. New and substantial refinancing was accomplished among the members and Nordic Hills now is in full bloom.”⁸⁴ Yet, within the pages of “the Nordic Fairway,” the story was very different; around the same time, the editor of the newsletter declared that Scandinavian membership of the club was still holding strong without mention of other ethnic groups welcomed into the club. Furthermore, the club’s directory was almost entirely comprised of Scandinavian names; even in the grips of the Great Depression, the Nordic Country Club remained selective in its membership by ethnicity and social standing in the community. The economic problems that the Nordic Country Club faced were representative of a much larger issue that was unfolding back in the city.

At the same time, a much different story was taking place in Chicago, where a final surge of Scandinavian immigrants were beginning to navigate the neighborhoods

⁸⁴ “Nordic Golfers Begin Season,” *Herald Examiner*, April 25, 1933.

much like the first settlers had done. One of these new immigrants was Bror Johansson, a Smålander who emigrated to Chicago in 1926 and would later tell the story of the shift he witnessed from prosperity to the “starving years” of the depression. His interviewers described Johansson in 1985 as “a big and tall man with clear-cut features, a blond Viking with blue eyes and a warm and friendly smile that definitely contradicts the roughneck vision one can get from hearing his story.”⁸⁵ While Johansson took pride in the fact that he was not a “typical Swedish-American” - he did not attend church, was a lifelong Democrat, and chose to remain in Chicago after “almost all other Swedes” had moved to the suburbs – he nevertheless encountered similar experiences as those who also came to Chicago as “greenhorns” during the 1920s.⁸⁶ Johansson came to Chicago with a marked advantage over other immigrants from Scandinavia by way of his knowledge of English, as well as his strong determination to succeed in the big city. Upon arrival by train from New York in August 1926, a former neighbor met Johansson and took him immediately to Lake View in preparation of a card party later that evening. As he got ready to go to the party, Bror mistakenly put on a hat he brought from Sweden; to that, his brother warned: “You can’t wear it. It doesn’t look American.”⁸⁷ Going out that night, Johansson described the neighborhood, where “Swedes could find anything they needed”:

“The Dalkullan store was just a few blocks north of Belmont on Clark Street. It has the very best snuff, imported from Sweden. The Vic Theatre was located one block south of Belmont on Sheffield, opposite Mary Garden Dancing Place, which was a nice place with good music. East of Clark, on Belmont, was the whore house. The famous cooperative Café Idrott was located at 3204 Sheffield. Many a Swede picked up his mail there until he had an address of his own. It has

⁸⁵ Lilly and Lennart Setterdahl, *Bror Johansson's Chicago; with poems by Bror Johansson* (Moline, IL: Lilly and Lennart Setterdahl, 1985); in Swedish and English, 11.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 16.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 71.

a good library and there was always a crowds of people reading the newspapers, both America, Swedish-American and Swedish papers. Café Idrott was clean and approved by the church people. No dancing or whiskey in that place. Everything was orderly...the Educational League in Chicago arranged lectures and other programs at Café Idrott...Among the larger eating establishments, were Gästis' Smörgåsbord, Gufstafson's and Mrs. Swanson's. There were 17 Swedish restaurants within walking distance."⁸⁸

Upon settlement, Bror found work after only one weekend and moved to 3221 Sheffield Avenue in the heart of Lake View, where he shared a first floor "bachelor" apartment with four other men from Sweden. During the late 1920s, Johansson recalled his experiences in the apartment on Sheffield as ones of perpetual mischief, whereas his work experiences were not as enjoyable.

Beginning in a construction job, which Johansson labeled "slave work," he was able to hold his job until he received his first paycheck, when he was also fired. In the late 1920s, well-paying, union supported positions in manual labor were difficult to attain in Lake View; as discussed in chapter three, Johansson was finally able to come into a good position by lying about his ethnicity to a potential employer, who was German, by speaking German to him.⁸⁹ Upon onset of the financial woes of the Great Depression, Johansson refused to leave his new home as others had done, despite the fact that he was only working temporarily for a printing company for three to four months a year. Johansson, like many other Scandinavians, remained vehemently stubborn in accepting handouts, and in his words, "never stooped to the level of standing in a soup line."⁹⁰ Johansson was, however, forced to swallow his pride in finding employment when he

⁸⁸ Ibid, 75.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 77, 91.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 83.

hesitantly took a job working at a laundry, where he made only 12 ½ cents an hour washing clothes and working as the foreman. At his job, Johansson endured constant theft from laundresses employed at the laundry. Upon one instance, the laundresses had rolled blankets and sheets around their bodies and underneath their skirts, and upon the end of their shifts, casually “walked away with the loot.” Rather than accusing the women who Johansson admitted “probably had to steal” in such dire times, he instead defended himself to his boss by explaining that he thought the women were pregnant, exclaiming to his boss, “You can’t expect me to look under their skirts, can you?”⁹¹ Upon his inevitable dismissal from the laundry, Johansson also resented to theft when he and another Swede, Swan Donell, became partners in the business of buying and selling gold and silver. Between 1933 and 1934, the two admittedly “swindled their way through the Depression,” going door to door in suburban regions of the city and taking advantage of people who “made the most money,” but were also most afraid of losing their homes if they did not meet their mortgage payments. Johansson and his partner would “appraise” jewelry for their customers who were desperate to make ends meet: “If it was worth \$35, we paid \$5 and sold it to a jeweler for \$35.”⁹² Johansson expressed no remorse for his underhanded business tactics, but also realized the potential for arrest and admitted to never patronizing the streets of Chicago.

When times grew incredibly dire, Johansson and the four men who lived in the “bachelor apartment” retreated to a more primitive way of life when they purchased five piglets from a farmer in Wisconsin; over the next year, they kept the five pigs in the

⁹¹ Ibid, 85.

⁹² Ibid, 88-9.

basement of the house, fed them scraps from the food they brought home, and one by one, the pigs were eventually slaughtered to provide food for the table. Johansson later defended the actions of his roommates and himself in such times of need by explaining that “times were hard, but all of us survived...except the pigs.”⁹³ The story of survival Johansson told of his experiences as a Swede in Chicago during the Great Depression stand as a testament to the marked contrast between established and “greenhorn” Scandinavians as two different classes of immigrants. While all groups suffered to a certain extent, the diversity of their experiences and the ways they chose to cope with economic loss illustrate vital issues pertaining to identity, image, and social class in the midst of the Great Depression.

Conclusion

H. Arnold Barton put it best when he referred to the era that encompassed the Great Depression as “the afterglow” for Scandinavian Americans; as the Great Depression slowly fell across the city of Chicago and reeked havoc upon the Scandinavian community, many citizens came to reflect upon the migrations before and reconsidered their relationship with the homeland. For many, the grip of the Great Depression was far too immense to come to terms with, as improving economic conditions in the homeland called many to return home. For those who refused to give up on their adopted homes, the strong support system established in the earliest years of the financially dire epoch helped many to cope with economic and social issues that would soon follow. Within the city, the sole remnants of the once thriving Scandinavian

⁹³ Ibid, 92-3.

communities appeared dismal as time went on; in 1930, the remains in Lake View included the Swedish Club on North LaSalle Street, a few rooming houses on North Clark Street and several small businesses while the majority of Scandinavian businesses were reestablished in Andersonville during the 1920s. Those who had not migrated to the suburbs moved their homes and businesses north to Andersonville and Lakeview, south to Englewood, and west to Irving Park and Albany Park.⁹⁴ Bror Johansson, who survived the depression by becoming a pawn broker, noted that not every Scandinavian was so lucky. Some were forced to sell their handcrafted homes and recalled instances where up to five men shared a single room in local boarding houses to get by; other more unfortunate souls drowned themselves in Belmont Harbor rather than be perceived as a failure within their community.⁹⁵ And while community missions like Fyrbåke distributed basics such as food and clothing, many Scandinavians stuck to their cultural tendencies towards stubborn pride, often refusing to ask for charity of any kind. To historians who study Scandinavians in Chicago during the Great Depression, this stubbornness creates difficulty in comparing the experiences of former immigrant groups in the midst of economic and social struggle – on the surface, it appears that few needed aid, but in looking deeper, it becomes more apparent that many simply did not ask for it until their ultimate survival hinged upon it.

The practice of re-migration was a common tactic of avoidance; while Barton argued that the majority of those who re-migrated during the 1930s were “new” immigrants, who migrated as early as the 1920s, others fell into the most loyal of

⁹⁴ Kerstin b. Land with Carl Isaacson, *Andersonville: A Swedish-American Landmark Neighborhood*, booklet published by the Swedish American Museum Center, 2003, pg. 17.

⁹⁵ Lilly and Lennart Setterdahl, *Bror Johansson's Chicago; with poems by Bror Johansson* (Moline, IL: Lilly and Lennart Setterdahl, 1985); in Swedish and English, 81, 91.


Scandinavian-American groups that simply chose to return to the homeland before times became unbearably difficult. Advertisements in the pages of the *Swedish Blue Book* from 1926 and 1927 stood as a testament to a simpler and more prosperous time; the practice of summer excursions and periodic visits back home had grown incredibly popular amongst Scandinavians as early as 1914, when grandiose passenger liners like the Skandinavien-Amerika Linien attracted customers to take “an ideal vacation trip this summer... enjoy the healthy, invigorating climate of the North Lands!”⁹⁶ While simple summer excursions were now out of reach for the majority of Scandinavians, a number put together all of their funds in an effort to escape the economic depression with every intention of returning when the financial climate improved. Yet, for a small group of dedicated loyalists in the homeland and in America, as Barton explained, the emigration became a “kind of modern morality play,” a “collective tragedy of the hapless masses who escaped capitalist oppression in their native land only to be swallowed up by the insatiable American Moloch.”⁹⁷ However, for most, the grand movement of people became transmuted into a story of dreams fulfilled in a vast city – these dreams would be revisited at a time when the community needed them most during the city’s centennial celebration, *A Century of Progress* 1933.

⁹⁶ Advertisement for the Skandinavien-Amerika Linien (Swedish America Line), printed in the *Swedish Blue Book* and the Yearbook of the American Daughters of Sweden, Manuscript Series #11, Box #11, Folder – Yearbooks, NPU.

⁹⁷ Barton, 243.

MUSIK PROGRAM.
Frå Kl. 8. 0.

Paul Linde Schottmann-Marsch
Karlson Utöf af „Liberthas“
Kjær Vælle Brøst
Singer There's a Fiat in Havana. Two-Step
Oh, Ball Nærværelsen Søsting
C. Møller Min Sine Concert Polka
Singer The Stars and Stripes Forever. Two-Step



S. S. „Frederik VIII“
Samlag den 19. April 1914.

MENU

2den Kahyt

Aften

Haschis m. Æg
Kødt Bord
Roget Laks Salat à la Rachel
Tomater m. Gørmysalat
Sardiner Laks
Corned beef Skinkespicke
Spørgspøise Roget Svinke Salamispøise
Strøg Cervelatpøise Tonge Rullepøise
Leverpostej Roget Filet
Tungespøise Anchovis
Agurker Pickles Worcester Ketchup
— O.S.T. —
Schwitzer Gørgonzola Halstenik
The Kl. 0
Kiks Cracker
Smør Ost Jam Marmelade

MENU

Second Cabin

Supper

Haschis w. eggs
Cold Dishes
Smoked salmon Salat à la Rachel
Tomatoes w. vegetable salad
Sardines Salmon
Ham sausage Corned beef
Selami sausage Smoked ham
Steak Bologna sausage Tongue Danish sausage
Liver patties Smoked fillet Swiss sausage
Tongue sausage Anchovis
Cucumber Pickles Worcester Ketchup
— CHEESE —
Swiss Gørgonzola Halstein
Ica 9 o'clock
Cr. am crak. r. Biscuits
Butter Cheese Jam Marmelade

(Fig. 11: Program and Menu from the Skandinavien-Amerika Linien, a passenger liner which set sail from Copenhagen to New York on April 19, 1914. Image and program courtesy of the Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL.)



(Fig. 12: Program and Menu from the Skandinavien-Amerika Linien, a passenger liner which set sail from Copenhagen to New York on April 23, 1914. Note the representation of the Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian flags alongside the American flag. Image and program courtesy of the Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL.)

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA



WOVEN IN SILK.

R.M.S. CELTIC.

(Fig. 13: Postcard from the R.M.S. Celtic, a passenger liner that connected Sweden and America, both figuratively and symbolically, as noted in the woven silk illustration. Image and postcard courtesy of the Swenson Immigration Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL.)

Conclusion: “In spite of all its faults, we love our city”: Cultural Celebration in the midst of Depression

Like the majority of Chicago’s citizens, Scandinavians found themselves struggling with the effects of the Great Depression in 1932. Bror Johansson recalled Lakeview during this time as a community of destitute men and women forced to swallow their pride and take advantage of public assistance, such as the Salvation Army, whose line of patrons regularly spanned two city blocks. When asked to remember this time, Johansson shuddered at the sheer suffering he witnessed; as the Salvationists sang out to the crowd awaiting food and shelter that God would “open the pearly gates” and eventually offer them salvation, Johansson snidely commented, “I hope that the pearly gates opened for my colleagues at American Color Company – they had no roof over their heads.”¹ Johansson expressed further disdain over the lack of help from the church, which received his fervent support in foundational years, as one of his friends was turned away and was told “you are supposed to help the church and not visa versa.”² For many like Johansson, there seemed to be little respite from constant financial constraints. Therefore, it came as no surprise to community leaders that word of initial plans for the community’s participation in the Century of Progress Exposition of 1933 was met with a mixture of confusion and skepticism. Nevertheless, Scandinavian Day at the Century of Progress would prove to be the push Chicago’s Scandinavians would need to create change through a renewed embrace of traditions from home.

In the year prior to the Century of Progress, community leaders like Carl Lundquist emphasized the importance of revisiting many of the community’s basic ideas

¹ Lilly and Lennart, *Bror Johansson’s Chicago*, 81.

² *Ibid*, 83.

on the meanings of Nordic identity within American culture, which he continued to view as a careful mixture of the traditions of their old and new homes. Scandinavians, he argued, should not “foolishly sacrifice [their] mother tongue entirely to be all-American” or anglicize their names beyond recognition, because “the Scandinavian is a cosmopolitan” capable of blending into and accepting many different cultural ideals.³ Lundquist went on in his speech to emphasize the importance of community strength in such dire times, even when it was easier to place fault on the city for economic problems of the Great Depression, explaining that “in spite of all its faults, we love our city, and are content to live here in preference to any place on earth, with the reservation, of course that since we can’t get what we life, we have learned to like what we can get.”⁴ Just months earlier, Lundquist and other leaders portrayed the mixed heritage of Scandinavian-Americans in the form of a pageant widely acknowledged as both successful and important in community building. The pageant, which took place at Wrigley Field and was attended by 15,000 people from all over the city, symbolically paid tribute to the founders of America and Sweden, commemorating the tri-centennial of the death of the founder of the Swedish Empire, King Gustavus Adolphus, and the bicentennial of the birth of George Washington. On a two-hundred foot stage, a thousand members of the Scandinavian community depicted in fourteen scenes the “advance of the Nordic race during the last ten centuries,” which connected the departure of Leif Erickson for Iceland with the role of Swedish heroes in the American Revolution and the

³ Selection from a speech given by Carl Lundquist to the United Nordic Folk Dancers of America on December 11, 1932. See Carl Hjalmar Lundquist Papers, 1899-1966, Manuscript Collection #30, Box #3, Folder 14 – 1932 Program and speech give to the United Nordic Folk Dancers, NPU.

⁴ Ibid.

foundation of America.⁵ Lundquist and other community leaders would come to view the pageant of September 1932 as a dress-rehearsal for festivities of Scandinavian Day, an event with two major goals: to illustrate the important duality of Scandinavian-American identity in Chicago and the effort to bring Scandinavians together in celebration and give them the impetus to succeed in the face of the Great Depression.

Over the course of the following year, Carl Lundquist tirelessly labored over the details for Scandinavian Day, putting all of his efforts into ensuring that the events of the day would portray Chicago's Scandinavians as one of the strongest ethnic groups in the city. A letter from H.R. Hedman, president of the Hedman Manufacturing Company to Lundquist detailed his desire to join efforts with other groups to use Scandinavian Day as a means to earn much-needed money for the community in the aftermath of the celebration, and suggested to Lundquist the need to court the American press in order to swell the celebration's attendance. As he explained to Lundquist of the importance of the American press:

"A large number of our people will come from out of town and they should be told beforehand what to expect. Not all of these people read the papers of their own language...they should be told repeatedly in the press and over the radio about the programs for the respective days. Whether we know it or not, we are in the show business; we are presenting a spectacle and must use every means available to get our message across before our respective days."⁶

⁵ In two separate articles from the *Herald Examiner*, the events of the pageant were recalled with great success by the Chicago paper, which went into further detail as to the extensive importance of this singular event to the symbolic role of Scandinavian-Americans in Chicago as the pageant included all of the major Scandinavian national organizations including the Independent Order of Svithiod, the Independent order of Vikings, I.O.G.T. Scandinavian Fraternity of America, the Independent Order of Ladies of Vikings, the Independent Order Ladies of Svithiod, the United Swedish Singers of Chicago, and 100 individual clubs and societies of Chicago. See "Swedes to Pay Two Tributes," *Herald Examiner*, September 5, 1932, 2; "Nordic Race Progress is told in Show," *Herald Examiner*, September 12, 1932, 3.

⁶ Throughout their correspondence, it was decided that Scandinavian Day on June 23, 1933 would be the culmination of a week of national celebration days, which would include Swedish-American Day on June 19, Norwegian-American Day on June 20, Danish-American Day on June 21, and Finnish- American Day on June 22. See letter sent from H.R. Hedman to Carl Lundquist on April 18, 1933, Carl Hjalmar Lundquist

Shortly after their correspondence suggested the desire to court the American press in support of Scandinavian Day, Lundquist sent a press release on May 23rd to all Chicago newspapers, in which he expressed the “excitement and urgency to get as many Scandinavians to the city” as possible for the celebration: “special trains have been chartered in Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver, Minneapolis and other centers, and every passenger will have two “red letter days” in mind, his own national day and Scandinavian Day.”⁷ Within the same press release, Lundquist included an anecdotal story intended for publication on the reaction of Captain Magnus Andersen, who had become famous amongst the Scandinavian community for the mini replica of Leif Eriksen’s Viking ship he displayed at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. When Lundquist asked Andersen of his intentions to visit Scandinavian Day, he explained that he and his wife eagerly awaited the grand exposition and expected that it would “be very different from the Columbian Exposition” due to the now strong presence of Scandinavians in Chicago.⁸ When the day of celebration arrived, Lundquist would incorporate his noted excitement into a speech which would be remembered for years as the story of Scandinavian success in America.

As the master of ceremonies of Scandinavian Day, Lundquist would give his famous speech before an audience of thousands at Soldier Field to commemorate the

Papers, 1899-1966, Manuscript Collection #30, Box #3, Folder #5 – Documents on Lundquist’s work as a member of the Swedish-American Committee for the 1933 World’s Fair, NPU.

⁷ Press release authored by Carl Lundquist sent Monday, May 22, 1933, Manuscript Collection #30, Box #3, Folder #5 – Documents on Lundquist’s work as a member of the Swedish-American Committee for the 1933 World’s Fair, NPU. An example of the press release was published the same day in *Chicago Daily Tribune*; see “Notes on the World’s Fair,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1933, pg. 4.

⁷ Ibid.

importance of the individual celebrations of the various Scandinavian nations and mark the opening of Scandinavian Day. Throughout his speech, Lundquist took the opportunity to encourage Scandinavians to remain strong through such dire times, recollecting the early days of settlement in America as similarly discouraging: “We Scandinavians are of a hard-headed but creative race which has never admitted defeat and never will...our culture is not of a superficial character, nor is our civilization, but they have stood lasting and solidly for centuries as a bulwark of strength among the nations of the earth.”⁹

Lundquist concluded his speech to a subsequent standing ovation by emphasizing the perseverance of Scandinavian-Americans in publicly embracing the traditions of home, even in the midst of nativists’ continued calls for all ethnic groups to Americanize once and for all:

“There is in us an inheritance of courage, of manliness, of imperishable love of liberty, of undying adherence to principle. From a purely American standpoint there is, as I see it, a grave danger in discarding the solid teachings and beliefs that have contributed to the strength and progress of the Scandinavian peoples throughout these many centuries, and it is entirely proper for us to glory in the accomplishments and contributions which our race and its great men have made to the common progress of humanity.”¹⁰

Lundquist’s speech at Scandinavian Day illustrated a significant shift that took place in the forty years that spanned the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the Century of Progress in 1933, where a community once divided along national lines had come to

⁹ In reviewing Lundquist’s documents, there appeared to be two different versions of the same speech – one which was given in the planning stages of Scandinavian Day in 1932 and a final version of the speech which included more details on the current state of Scandinavian pride and cultural strength given on June 23, 1933 at Soldier Field. See “Scandinavian Day at the Century of Progress,” speech written and given by Carl Lundquist, Carl Hjalmar Lundquist Papers, 1899-1966, Manuscript Collection #30, Box #3, Folder #5 – Documents on Lundquist’s work as a member of the Swedish-American Committee for the 1933 World’s Fair, NPU.

¹⁰ Ibid. See also later correspondence from Lundquist, where he recalled the favorable reception of his speech to a standing ovation at Soldier Field; Carl Hjalmar Lundquist Papers, 1899-1966, Manuscript Collection #30, Box #3, Folder #6 – Correspondence and Clippings: Swedish Day, 1935, NPU.

realize the benefits of joining together as one group under the united identity of Scandinavian-Americans.

Over the decades which followed the celebration of Scandinavian Day at the Century of Progress in 1933, people within the community continued to persevere in the face of adversity, through another World War, as well as a tumultuous era in Chicago's history, when Lakeview went through a period of transition during the 1960s and 1970s into an area of the city where crime was rampant. During this period, many community members stubbornly stayed within the neighborhood, refusing to give up their homes even when several of Chicago's media outlets declared that Lakeview was becoming ghettoized. Other Scandinavian-Americans, however, chose to migrate north up Clark Street to a neighborhood claimed by other Scandinavians upon annexation as the community of Andersonville. Today, this vibrant area is known across the city for its embrace of mostly Swedish culture, with a mixture of businesses such as grocery stores, delicatessens, restaurants, and the Swedish-American Museum and Center serving as the center of the neighborhood. And while the neighborhood in recent years has transitioned into one which caters to both young professionals and the gay and lesbian community, the Scandinavian element is still very much alive – looking north, one can see the water tower painted with the Swedish flag for miles as a testament to the survival of one of Chicago's largest and most influential immigrant groups.

In the historical study of Scandinavians within American cities, there remains much to be explored. There continues to be a significant divide between historians of Scandinavian America and migration historians – while Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American historians have begun to touch upon the importance of racial and ethnic

preference in American culture, the perspective of most narratives continues to focus almost entirely on Scandinavians (or divided along national lines) without regard to the influence of the American perspective on the lives of immigrants within history. Furthermore, while historians like Joy Lintelman and Margareta Matovic brought an individual focus to the role of the female Scandinavian immigrant within America, the historiography on Scandinavians in America continues to lack studies focused on the gendered dynamics of community formation and ethnic identity within both an urban, as well as a rural context.¹¹ In researching for the topic of this dissertation, I was struck by the wealth of available archival sources on various Scandinavian athletic associations, fraternal organizations, and socialist and intellectual clubs which were highly popular with the second-generation of Scandinavian youth within Chicago; the materials available on these groups provide ample opportunities for analysis on themes such as the historical study of masculinity, the history of sport and athleticism, and the gendered meanings behind public community engagement.

In building a gendered history of Scandinavians in America, the study of the historical connections between Scandinavians and sexuality, as discussed in chapter four, is largely omitted from the narrative. This omission is not, by any means, due to a lack of resources touching upon these connections; rather, in my opinion, this omission is mainly due to the habits of an older generation of historians who do not view such studies as historically relevant, nor appropriate, to the study of their own. However, such studies could further the study of such vital topics as the racial connotations of white slavery with Nordic ethnic identity; at the turn of the century, in a society where the whiter the

¹¹ See Joy Lintelman's most recent work, *I Go to America*, as well as the Margareta Matovic's work on the experiences of the female Swedish immigrant within Chicago in her chapter, "Embracing a Middle-Class Life" in *Peasant Maids – City Women*.

skin, the more attractive the immigrant, more is left to be interrogated on the lengths to which procurers actively sought female Scandinavian immigrants for the value of their racial features. Numerous sources pertaining to the connections of the modern era, the idea of cosmopolitanism which Carl Lundquist frequently acknowledged in his speeches, and the influence of Swedish intellectuals and artists could also shed light on a group of Scandinavians who functioned outside of the margins of the communities. While Christine Stansell touched upon such an underground, intellectual society in her book, *American Moderns*, a study of the influence of clubs like the Swedish Educational League and various socialist groups on the intellectual growth of individuals could lead to intriguing conclusions when considering previous stereotypes associated with Scandinavians.¹²

Furthermore, while a wealth of useful materials on Chicago's diverse immigrants contribute to the historiography of the social history of Chicago, there is a significant lack of monographs which focus on the experiences of either Norwegian or Danish immigrants. Historians of the Swedish immigrant experience continue to dominate the standard narrative on Scandinavian immigrants in Chicago, which most likely contributes to the problematic association of "Swedish" with "Scandinavian." While neither group brought the immense numbers of immigrants that Sweden claimed, their numbers were nevertheless vital to the unified community of Nordic immigrants. With continued study into the experiences of Scandinavians in both urban and rural spaces, across America and

¹² Within both Stansell and Nordahl's works, the two authors touched upon a unique group of "bohemians" within Chicago comprised of individuals of Scandinavian descent (most notably Carl Sandburg) who both lived and convened in minimalist spaces on Chicago's south side during the 1910s. See Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000); Pehr Nordahl, *Weaving the Ethnic Fabric: Social Networks Among Swedish-American Radicals in Chicago 1890-1940* (New York: Coronet Books, 1994).

throughout the world, the history of such a unique group of people will contribute vital scholarly connections which bridge the gaps in major historical themes.

The topic of this dissertation will undoubtedly make a vital contribution to the historiography of Scandinavians, ethnic and racial identity, the process of immigration, the study of gender and sexuality, and the experience of work. Historical discourse on the issue of preference in relation to European immigrant groups is one that is far-reaching, yet vastly unexplored in relation to communities like Scandinavians who did not witness the same types of struggles other immigrant communities were forced to face. Because of these vast differences, the standard narrative on American immigration garnered a tendency to focus on the most disparate groups, while ignoring the significance of social preference, class status, and racialized identities built upon American ideals. The topic of my work begins to bring these issues into focus, exploring the community building efforts of three different, yet united groups of European immigrants in one of the most historically-important cities in the United States. Furthermore, in connection with the historiography of Scandinavian Americans, my work redirects the focus of previous studies away from the filiopietism of past narratives to take into consideration the larger importance of American people, culture, and ideals in defining racial and ethnic categories of European immigrants. By incorporating the two perspectives, this project will make an important contribution to emerging research on similar studies that explore the living patterns and interactions of immigrants and their urban neighbors within their adopted homes.

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