

Swedish Societies'
Old People's
Home Association

ANNUAL

1924

798:11

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OF
45 YEARS**

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MEMBER FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM



FRONT VIEW OF HOME, FROM GRANT STREET

Swedish Societies' Old People's Home Association

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1924

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John P. Friedlund
Nels M. Hokanson

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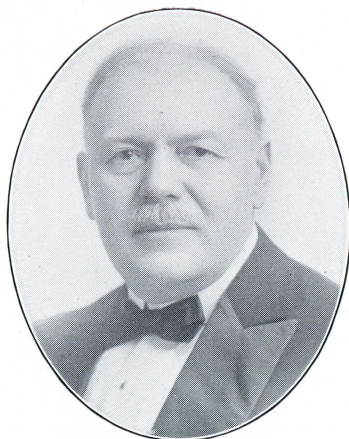
EDWARD L. JARL
President, 1924

THE HISTORY OF THE SWEDISH SOCIETIES' OLD PEOPLE'S HOME

The thought of providing a home for needy aged Swedes in Chicago was born at the time of the World's Fair, and the history of the Home is a story of 30 years of hard and incessant work.

Before there was an institution in Chicago to care for aged Swedish Americans, the Swedish Societies' Central Association of Chicago, organized in 1894, had acted as the dispenser of Charity among needy countrymen, the first President of the Association being George S. Oleson. One of the first institutions to benefit by the activities of that organization was the Old People's Home in Bowmanville, which from a concert in the Auditorium in 1894, netting about \$1,200, a rather considerable sum in those days, received as its share \$539. The need of an independent, non-sectarian institution in Chicago to provide a haven of rest to aged Swedish Americans became more and more apparent, however, and in 1896 the Association decided to create a building fund for that purpose by setting aside 45 per cent. of the earnings of all benefit performances, arranged by or through the organization.

In November, 1898, a committee was appointed to select a location for such a Home, and in March, 1899, the same committee recommended to the Association the purchase of an improved property in Park Ridge, Illinois, which recommendation was accepted and the purchase was consummated. The price of the property was \$4,500 of which \$2,000 was paid in cash and the balance secured by mortgage.



JOHN A. ANDERSON
President, 1923

The first board of trustees of that home, 12 members, was elected in May, 1900, and in October of the same year the institution was dedicated and ready for its guests after untold efforts incident to the repairing, remodelling and furnishing of the building. Although far from being palatial in appearance the institution was very attractive and comfortable and even in that day a genuine effort was made to create that homelike atmosphere, for which the present institution at Evanston has become noted.

The first person to be admitted was Peter Jonas Hult, born in Gärda, Småland, on January 2, 1820. He was admitted in December, 1900, and stayed there till his death, which occurred in 1907. The second application to receive favorable action was that of Johan Axel Hallgren, born September 20, 1840, in Östra Gräve, Skåne, Sweden, who entered the Home in November, 1901. Glancing over his application for admittance the eye is attracted to the following lines: "I assign to said home all that is in my possession, amounting to \$2.75, and do not know of any more money coming to me." One case, proving the need of the institution.

Many of those who entered the Park Ridge Home are still being cared for by the Association at the Home in Evanston and among them are Mrs. Bertha Christina Janson, born in Jönköping, Sweden, May 25, 1840, and admitted to the institution in July, 1906.

For several years the Park Ridge Home cared for nine old Swedes, but as the years went by additional applicants were accepted and finally it became evident that larger quarters must be provided. Just about that time the Association had been reorganized or rather reconstituted.

As the times gradually improved after the panicky days

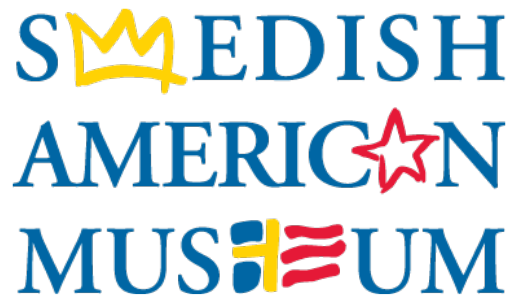


CHARLES S. PETERSON
President, 1922

of 1893, the Association found less occasion for charity in a general way among the Swedish Americans, for which purpose it had primarily been organized, and finally practically all its activities were centered on the Old People's Home at Park Ridge. Reconstruction came under discussion, was brought about and the name of the organization changed in 1907 to The Swedish Societies' Old People's Home Association, the membership being composed of delegates from various Swedish lodges and societies who make annual contributions, and by individuals, paying 5.00 for annual or \$50.00 for life membership. On April 14, 1905, the final payment was made on the mortgage and the Home was free of debt, but the capacity of the institution was now sorely taxed and in 1907 with 22 old folks being cared for, many applicants waiting for admittance and no immediate prospects of being able to grant their requests, the first step was taken to solve the problem. A banquet was held on June 15th of that year at the Grand Pacific Hotel, where the matter was presented to over one hundred representative Swedish people. Later the Association arranged a bazaar which was held in October, 1908, Albert Swanson serving as chairman. This bazaar netted nearly \$10,000, which brought the desired extension within the range of possibility and a committee of twenty-two was appointed to devise ways and means.

This Committee recommended selling the Park Ridge property and purchasing larger grounds, which recommendation was concurred in by the Association and a sale was accordingly made on February 2, 1909, for \$8,500.00. This together with the fund realized from the bazaar, made a sum of approximately \$18,000.00 wherewith to construct a new Home.

After much deliberation and investigation the com-



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