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1890 --- Sveas Söner Singing Society --- 1980

Sveas Söner was organized in January of 1890 with Alfred Larson as its first president. He continued his leadership for many years and it was fitting that he was chosen later as the builder for the Sveas Söner Music Hall in Rockford, Ill. The society at first rented a hall on East State Street and soon after, one on Seventh Street. In 1894 a suite of rooms was rented in the Syndicate Block on Seventh Street but in January of 1895 a fire destroyed everything with no insurance to cover the loss. History tells us that the singers never missed a rehearsal for they immediately rented quarters on Kiswaukee Street.

In 1892 Sveas Söner members purchased our present site on Seventh Street for \$10,000 and prepared plans for their new headquarters. The foundation and walls were built for this \$54,000 project. Then came the great "crash" of 1893 and the society was forced to declare bankruptcy. The building stood with just foundation and walls for two years. (History seems to have repeated itself in 1980). Fortunately a Mr. Woodruff bought up the claims and completed the building as we know it. In 1896 he rented the second floor to our society and singers. Some years later he sold it to the Sveas Söner Society for \$28,000 — his cost to complete the building.

Yes, it seems like ancient history but it brings us to 1980 and our disastrous fire. Much singing and hard work by dedicated people has transpired through the many years we have been in existence. Following the purchase of the Seventh Street building Sveas Söner Society became one of the finest Swedish Clubs in Rockford and among its members were prominent industrialists who made Rockford known for its furniture and machine tools, such as Levin Faust, P. A. Peterson, J. A. Landstrom, Hugo Olson, and the Ekstrom Brothers, just to name a few.

In the beginning there has always been a chorus, the first one being directed by C. H. Oberg. Next a professor from Sweden, Wm. Swenson, was hired, he



DR. BERNHARDT WESTLUND
Director, Sveas Söner

also served as organist for Zion Lutheran Church. While he was the director the chorus joined AUSS. Following prof. Swenson, for a two year period, was A. B. Ohman. When he resigned the chorus was without a director for several years and during this period the chorus almost "died." But good fortune came in the person of John Örtengren of Chicago who directed the singers for sixteen years, making it into one of the best choruses in the country. In fact, four singers were members of an elite chorus who toured Sweden in concert in 1910.

About 1941 Gustaf Ohlson from the chorus ranks took the baton and directed the singers for the next thirty years. The years under his leadership put Sveas Söner over the top. Harry T. Carlson succeeded Mr. Ohlson and remained as director until about 1950. Last, but not least, we come to our present director, Dr. Bernhardt Westlund, who has served as our inspiring leader for thirty years.

Our chorus still has three members who sang in the '40's: Joe Carlson, LaVerne Johnson and LaVerne Bargren. The Sveas Söner Chorus has given many successful concerts to enthusiastic Rockford area audiences, many times featur-

ing along with the chorus well known musical artists.

One of the highlights in the history of Sveas Söner was their 75th anniversary in 1965. An anniversary that culminated in a concert tour of Sweden with trips to Copenhagen, Oslo, Paris, London, and Dublin. Concerts were given in many cities in Sweden, with very favorable critique from the press everywhere. A visit was made at King Gustav Adolf VI's summerpalace in Skåne and the King was presented a miniature statue of Abraham Lincoln from the Governor of Illinois. The presentation was made by Bernie Bishop, tour leader, Dr. Bernhardt Westlund, chorus director, and Robert Barrick, chorus president. On the graves of Hugo Alfvén and Dag Hammarskjöld a tribute of flowers were made.

Sveas Söner is now at another crossroad. It is no longer a totally ethnic chorus of singers with Swedish roots — but a great group of men who love to sing not only songs with Scandinavian origins but also music from our own American heritage and that of many other countries. Wish us well as we continue our membership with the American Union of Swedish Singers.

For the Sveas Söner Board,

Jim Lightcap.

• Reacting to nuclear safety

Some 700 scientists and decision-makers from 43 countries attended a five-day conference on nuclear power safety issues held by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Stockholm. Swedish Energy Minister Carl Axel Petri called for an international nuclear safety agreement which would stipulate minimum reactor levels.

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FROM THE AUSS FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Last year's membership in our 26 choruses totaled 669, compared with 685 members in 1979. Ten years ago in 1970, the year of the San Francisco Convention, the membership stood at 782, divided on 31 choruses. Since then six of them have ceased to exist. However, we gained one chorus, The Swedish Women's Chorus in Seattle.

As of January 21, we have received payments for 1981 dues from the following choruses (the numbers in parenthesis represent last year's membership):

- Eastern Division:**
 Viking Male Chorus, Jamestown, NY 25 (30)

- Central Division:**
 Norden Singers, Des Moines, IA 10 (13)
 Rockford Veteran Singers, Rockford, IL 12 (12)
 St. Paul Swedish Male Chorus, St. Paul, MN.. 49 (51)
 Sveas Söner Singing Society, Rockford, IL 45 (46)
 Swedish Glee Club, Waukegan, IL 60 (58)

- Western Division:**
 Bellman Male Chorus, Vancouver, BC 10 (11)
 Norwegian Singing Society, San Francisco, CA 9 (9)
 Swedish Singing Society, San Francisco, CA .. 4 (5)

Keep next year's National Convention in Seattle in mind. It's going to be a humdinger. "See you, in eighty-two."
 Gunnar Nordstrom.

Svea Male Chorus

Seattle, Wash.

Our chorus has received much praise and congratulations on our fine response to our series of Christmas concerts. By maintaining high attendance for all of our appearances, in spite of other demands we have at that time of the year, we earned many warm and favorable comments from our audiences. Many thanks for a job so well done.

The new year is a good time to begin recruiting new members for the chorus. Remember all members of the Swedish Club, regardless of their ethnic origin, who have a desire to sing and take part in chorus work are welcome prospects. Adding new members is always a necessity in maintaining the continuity of our chorus.

At the meeting of the Board of Directors the date for our Spring Concert was set for Tuesday, April 28. Ernie Anderson has plans to incorporate as many convention songs as possible. We need to be very familiar with all the proposed convention songs by the convention date in July, 1982. As of now we have no public appearance commitments. This will give us time to select and rehearse a new song repertoire.

Arvid Naas is presently taking daily therapy treatments at Group Health Hospital in Seattle. His doctor is very encouraged with the response Arvid has shown.

Mrs. Allen Carlson writes that Allen is home at P.O. Box 1511, Hemet, CA 92343, since his operation and would enjoy hearing from any of his friends.

All officers for this year are functioning and looking forward to the new year. After our recent success let's maintain our momentum for a banner year in 1981 — with all your help we can realize it.

Gott Nytt År!
 Mel Erickson.

A John Hanson stamp?

For more than a year many interested in Americans of Swedish descent, headed by Dr. Erik Törnquist and the Swedish Colonial Society of Delaware, have been working to have a stamp in honor of John Hanson. Since Hanson was the first real

executive officer of the young United States, the President of the United States under the Articles of Confederation, it should be most fitting to have him thus honored. His term was from 1781-82, before the constitution had been adopted and long before George Washington became president.

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Sveas Söner Singing Society

Rockford, Illinois



1890-1980


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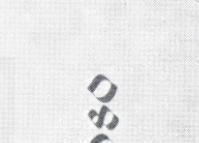

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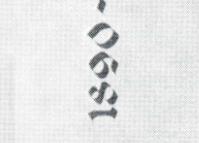

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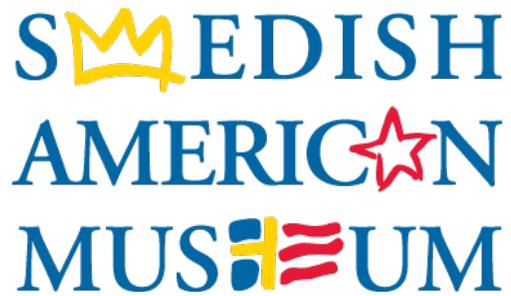

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