

The early days of SAHSWI by founder Harry H Anderson

1974

Honorary Consul of the Swedish Consulate **Anders Segerdahl** had an idea
“Swedish Americans should participate in the upcoming bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution planned for 1976”

Sept 24, 1974
First meeting

Bertil Winstrom, Grand Master of Vasa Order of America, **Richard Horngren**, Officer Linde Lodge, **Harry Anderson**, Milwaukee County Historical Society, and **Anders Segerdahl**. Decision was made that *“Effort should be developed to identify contributions made by Wisconsin’s Swedish Americans to the American Experience”*

Dec 2, 1974

After several meetings it was decided that activities should be expanded beyond Bicentennial observance to create a permanent organization.

1975

Meetings of the organizing committee held on monthly basis. Members added Professor **Ingrid Kamerini**, Scandinavian Studies UW Madison, **Art Staves** and **Stig Wiren** from Kenosha, (Stig helped Organize Swedish Pioneer Historical Society in Chicago in 1946) Pastor **Jim Magnuson** of Evangelical Covenant Church in Wauwatosa, and **Harold Swanson** of the Presbyterian congregation in Milwaukee.

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Early 1975

Others attending meetings, **Joe Sjoquist**, editorial board, Milwaukee Journal, **Eiler Hansen**, Linde Lodge, **Erik Walquist** from Mequon.
John Ebert, Chairman of Linde Lodge was added to the leadership team

May 6, 1975

2 important steps: (1) Election of initial slate of officers, and (2) Filing of incorporation papers with the Secretary of State in Madison. Officers: Harry Anderson, President, Dick Horngren Secretary, Anders Segerdahl, Treasurer. Officers and Bertil Winstrom and John Ebert contributed each \$5 for \$25 filing fee. The filing was approved

Aug 6, 1975

Federal Tax-Exempt status approved by IRS. Bylaws drafted and approved. Annual membership \$3 or \$15 (for generous people), 23 members signed up. Initial loan of \$800 provided by Linde Lodge to cover initial operating expenses. Loan repaid through a \$1000 grant from Trostel Tanning Company Foundation (Anders Segerdahl was their President). Year end Balance: \$410.90

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1975

Many ambitious activity proposals for the organization:

- Swedish Building at Old World Wisconsin
- The erection of Historical Markers at places of importance to Swedish Settlement
- Participation in a visit by the Swedish King during the Bicentennial
- Programming for both the general public and for own membership
- Sponsorship of a Midsommar Festival
- Contact with descendants of early Swedish settlers
- Some type of historic publication

The celebration of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution attracted widespread international attention in 1975-76. Enköping Folkdance Organization visited, hosted by the society and Linde Lodge.

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June 26, 1976

The Historical Society sponsored a visit to Wisconsin by descendants of the family of **Carl Friman**, the first Swedish Family to settle in Wisconsin in 1838. The meeting was held in the morning of **June 26, 1976 at the site of the original Friman pioneer homestead** located just off highway 50 two miles west of New Munster in Kenosha County. The visit was coordinated from Sweden by **Colonel Axel Friman**, great grandson of Carl, together with wife Greta, and daughter Viveka Larsen, and joined by 14 other descendants travelling from California, Washington and Minnesota.

Late 1976

To observe the Bicentennial the Historical Society arranged for a monthlong travelling exhibit "**The Dream of America – Swedish emigration to the United States**" prepared by the **Emigration Institute in Växjö, Sweden**, and presented at Milwaukee County Historical Society Museum. Fee of \$1000 partly paid by the Trostel Foundation grant and partly by support from Society members.

Nov 3 and 10, 1976

The films "**The emigrants**" and "**The New Land**", both Hollywood productions starring **Liv Ullman and Max von Sydow** were shown at Milwaukee County Historical Society.

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2010

This story was written by Harry Anderson based on a request at the Annual meeting at October 9, 2010, and this is his final statement at that time.

"It was against this background of two busy years of organizational activity and program sponsorship that the Swedish American Historical Society of Wisconsin began its existence. It has continued its operation for more than three decades, providing insights into the contributions of Swedish-Americans to the growth and development of Wisconsin and the ongoing relationships many of us have to the Swedish Homeland.

Two of my fellow incorporators who contributed so much (besides the \$5 each for the incorporation fee) towards the establishment of the Society now live in retirement in the south, Dick Horngren in Tennessee and John Ebert in Florida. Two others are deceased, Bertil Winstrom in 2001 and Andy Segerdahl just last summer, 2010. I am sure to speak for all these colleagues in observing that the continued participation from and support by other officers and members for these 35 years have made our first efforts most worthwhile!"

2007

Harry received Award of Merit from the Swedish Council of America in "recognition of outstanding contributions to Swedish America"

Harry H Anderson on the website

[Bits of Swedish-American History | Swedish American Historical Society of Wisconsin \(sahswi.org\)](https://sahswi.org/bits-of-swedish-american-history)

Historian **Harry H. Anderson** has written many short stories relating to the Swedish heritage adopted into the American society. Harry is a Milwaukee historian who served as Executive Director at the Milwaukee County Historical Society until 1998. He is the author of *Milwaukee, at the Gathering of the Waters* (American Portrait Series), a pictorial and entertaining commentary on the growth and development of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Harry, who is of Swedish descent, is also one of the founding fathers of Swedish American Historical Society of Wisconsin and served as the president from 1975 to 1980 and more recently from 2004 to 2008. He has written and presented many stories related to Swedish American immigration and traditions. Several of these stories are presented below: