

Cultural Homogeneity and Population Stability Among Swedish Immigrants in Chisago County

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DURING THE latter half of the nineteenth century, a fundamental characteristic of the settlement process in America was the spatial concentration of ethnic groups. There seems to have been a conscious effort on the part of the newly arrived immigrant to take up land adjacent to the property of his fellow countrymen. He did this primarily for security. The strangeness of his new environment brought forth a "consciousness of kind," a need to be among people who shared the same language and culture, which was acted upon whenever possible.

At times such sentiments went deeper. The European peasant often felt a stronger cultural identification with a certain region or local district than he did with his nation as a whole. Thus, the immigrant often sought out not only his own countrymen but people hailing from his own or neighboring districts in his home country. In this way ethnic or cultural segregation was achieved even within national groups.

This behavior was common among Swedish immigrants. The isolated nature of settlement in Sweden

stimulated and preserved cultural differentiation. A prominent feature of spatial organization was the *bygd*, a small territory occupied by a group of people who shared common customs, a common dialect, and a sense of common historical experience. They perceived themselves to be members of an exclusive community, which they understood and identified with more than with Sweden as a whole. Such local feeling was not abandoned in the process of emigrating from Sweden to America.

Scholars of Swedish immigration and settlement in America have referred frequently to the tendency among some Swedish immigrants to form settlements that have a distinctive local or regional flavor.¹ It has been well established that their development was based on information flows. The famous "America letters," sent to friends and relatives at home by those who had already migrated, informed potential emigrants where their neighbors and kinsfolk had settled and encouraged joining them. Indeed, Helge Nelson, in his exhaustive study of Swedish settlement in North America, has referred to such settlements as "kinsfolk colonies."²

In many ways, such settlements really were an extension of an old community in Sweden. Despite moving over many thousands of miles, immigrants preserved customs, dialects, and even social patterns. The population was culturally homogeneous in that it shared an unbroken cultural and historical heritage. There was every reason for the group to perceive itself — and behave — as a close-knit community.

It should be emphasized, however, that not all Swedish settlements were populated by Swedes with such homogeneous roots. Some were very diverse in their

¹Good treatments can be found in Helge Nelson, *The Swedes and the Swedish Settlements in North America*, 63-65 (Lund, Sweden, 1943), and John S. Lindberg, *The Background of Swedish Emigration to the United States*, 49-50 (Minneapolis, 1930).

²Nelson, *The Swedes and the Swedish Settlements*, 64.

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origins, and, consequently, the population did not share such close cultural bonds. Others fell somewhere between such extremes, having, for instance, two or more homogeneous groups in the same community. There was considerable variation among Swedish communities in regard to their cultural homogeneity.

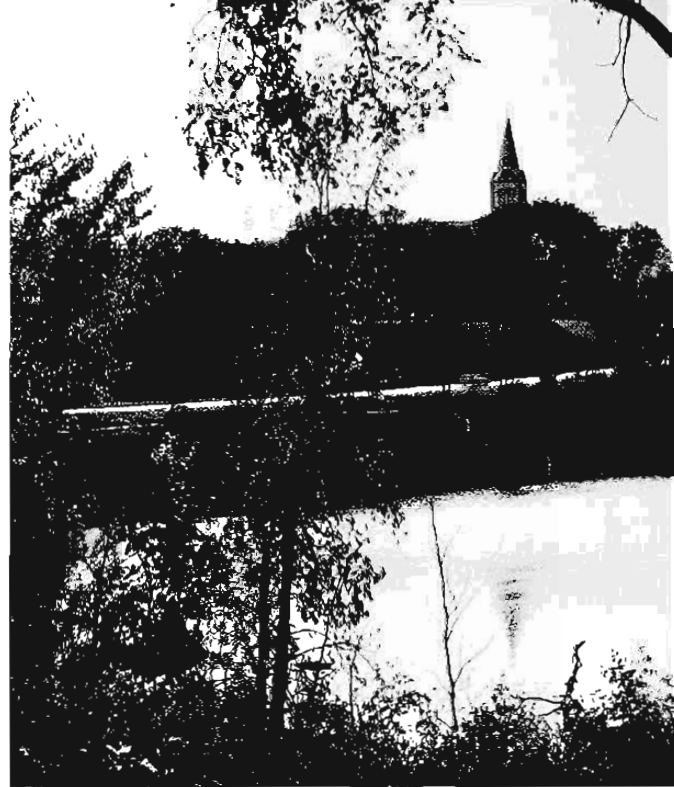
ANOTHER IMPORTANT THEME in the history of American settlement has been the spatial mobility of the population. Scholars and others have characterized America as a land of restless, uncommonly mobile people. George M. Pierson has argued that mobility was a hallmark of American society that was embraced by immigrant peoples. He attributes the mingling and assimilation of peoples in this country to the high propensity for movement in the population.³

There seems to be a conflict between the notion of people settling in homogeneous communities and the notion of people moving about and mingling with others. The act of settling together is often interpreted as an initial reaction to an unfamiliar environment. Presumably, the adoption of the mobile, individualistic behavior of American society is a later development.

The underlying aim of this study is to examine the notions of ethnic concentration and population mobility in rural Swedish immigrant communities of a Minnesota county during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The study will endeavor to test the hypothesis that the degree to which a community population was stable is positively related to its degree of cultural homogeneity. One must be aware that there were other phenomena, social and economic, that might have influenced the spatial behavior of the immigrants. Such factors as agricultural failures, natural disasters, and the attraction of a nearby high-order urban center could have played such a role. They must, of course, be kept in mind when explaining the results obtained, but the study will focus on cultural homogeneity as an explanatory factor.

The hypothesis is to be tested using the Swedish population of Chisago County, Minnesota, during the period from 1885 through 1905. The choice of Chisago County was the result of two considerations. The first is the fact that the county is the center of a rather large Swedish settlement area. This means that a variety of almost wholly Swedish communities are present in a relatively small area. Equally important is the fact that source materials necessary to such a study are readily available for this county. The limitation of the study to a county does not imply that such an arbitrarily devised political division is an ideal unit to use. It merely is the unit for which comparable data are available.

The years 1885–1905 have been selected because of the data requirements for measuring population stability, a process accomplished by determining the degree to which individuals remain residents of a com-



CHISAGO LAKE Evangelical Lutheran Church is a lovely old landmark at Center City.

munity over a period of time. The measurer must learn the residence of each individual in the county for two different dates. This can be done by using manuscript census rolls and land ownership maps found in county platbooks. The federal and state manuscripts census rolls are available for the years 1860, 1865, 1870, 1875, 1880, 1885, 1895, and 1905. County platbooks published in 1888 and 1914 are also available. Because platbooks generally depict a period in time prior to their publication dates, the 1888 platbook can be used in conjunction with the 1885 census and the 1914 platbook with the 1905 census — the last one available in manuscript form. The year 1905 is also a fortunate terminal date because the 1905 census has a unique feature: It records the length of time an individual lived in a census tract. A great aid in measuring population stability, this feature enables one to record the number of people remaining from any previous date without referring to previous census rolls.

CHISAGO COUNTY, located in east-central Minnesota, comprises a territory of 444 square miles. It is divided politically into twelve townships, only four of which are a standard thirty-six square miles. The others are of irregular size because of the influence of a great bend in the St. Croix River which bounds the county on the east and separates it from Burnett and Polk

³George M. Pierson, "The M Factor in American History," in *American Quarterly*, 14:275–89 (Summer, 1962).

counties of Wisconsin. Located on the north, west, and south sides of Chisago County are the Minnesota counties of Pine, Isanti, and Washington, respectively.

Prior to European settlement, the county could be divided, in terms of its physical geography, into three zones. The southeastern third was a lake-studded glacial moraine. The soils consisted of a fairly rich combination of black clay and loam which supported a thick deciduous forest. The central third of the county was composed of a wide strip of glacial outwash running along the Sunrise River. The broad river valley was a sandy wasteland covered with brush and scrub forest. The northwestern third of the county was a poorly drained till plain of clayey soils. Pine forests began along the St. Croix in the vicinity of Taylors Falls and followed the river northward in an ever widening belt which covered most of the northern portion of the county.

Before the arrival of the white man, Chippewa and Sioux Indians sporadically contested what is now Chisago County up until 1825 when the United States government mediated a truce. This agreement left the Chisago area in the hands of the Chippewa until they formally ceded it in 1837. The following year saw the first influx of whites into the territory. They were primarily native-born Americans of New England and middle-Atlantic seaboard backgrounds. They were interested both in lumbering and subsistence farming and soon had the pineries of the St. Croix Valley under attack. The first sawmill on the St. Croix was built at Marine, just south of Chisago County, in 1839, and others followed at various sites up and down the valley. The area also drew a liberal sprinkling of squatters who carved out small homesites in the forests and subsisted on hunting and what they could get from the soil.

Under the Pre-emption Act of 1841 legal claims could not be made until the government officially surveyed the land. Then settlers could legalize ownership by going to a land office and paying the official price—generally a minimum of \$1.25 an acre. Surveying was not begun in the Chisago area until 1847, nearly ten years after it was first opened, and even then it progressed very slowly, thereby delaying any serious taking of the land. Large-scale land sales were not possible until 1854 when Congress yielded to popular pressure and extended to Minnesota the pre-emption privilege to unsurveyed land.⁴

⁴James Taylor Dunn, *The St. Croix: Midwest Border River*, 50–53 (New York, 1965).

⁵Records of the original public land sales are in the Minnesota State Archives in St. Paul.

⁶Carl H. Sommer, *Looking Back Over One Hundred Years in Northern Chisago County*, 9 (Rush City, Minnesota, 1958).

⁷The author has estimated the number of new arrivals from census data and arrival dates found in church registers.

The 1854 land boom resulted in the sale of much of the land in Chisago County. Native-born Americans made most of the original land purchases, hoping to profit by reselling the land to immigrant settlers. The immigrants, who would eventually dominate the county, arrived too late to take advantage of the public land sales. Only in an early settlement area around Chisago Lake does one find land that was pre-empted by Swedes.⁵

Another form of speculation was town platting. Townsites were enthusiastically surveyed and promoted all over the county, although many of them never got beyond the planning stage. Anticipation of a railroad line connecting St. Paul and Duluth spurred many such projects. One example is the city of Sunrise which in 1857 was platted into 144 blocks covering 240 acres. The railroad company, however, chose a route to the west of the site, thus preventing Sunrise from becoming the future "big town" of the county.⁶ Other projected towns were victims of the panic of 1857 which ruined many of the Chisago speculators. After the panic, property began to be sold at more realistic prices, and the settlement of the county commenced in earnest.

Until this time the only serious agricultural settlement had been in the area around Chisago Lake, where a few Swedish immigrants had begun to build homes in 1851. The fledgling community was connected by a forest track to the river town of Taylors Falls, which was the head of navigation on the St. Croix and became the principal landing for boatloads of settlers traveling upriver from the railhead on the Mississippi at Rock Island, Illinois. Immigrants, mostly Swedes, began to pour into the county. Approximately 450 Swedish immigrants arrived during the short boom period of 1852–56. The peak year, with about 200 new arrivals, was 1854. The influx was abruptly cut off during the depression year of 1857.⁷

Confidence was restored, however, during the period from 1858 through 1867, and settlers moved into the county in a more or less steady stream of about 100 new arrivals a year on the average. The flow of Swedish immigrants was augmented by a number of German and Irish families. Settlement spread westward from Taylors Falls and Franconia village and eastward from the Chisago Lake area, bridging the gap between the lakes and the river landings. There was relatively little settlement to the west and northwest of Chisago Lake because the outwash along the Sunrise River formed a barrier of undesirable land. Chisago Lake township was organized in 1855. The neighboring townships of Sunrise, Amador, Shafer, Franconia, and Wyoming were all organized in the years following the panic of 1857, although Shafer and Franconia were the only two that received large numbers of settlers during this period. On the northwest side of the Sunrise Valley some settlement was going on in the mid-1860s, particularly in Fish

Lake township. Rushseba township also had a sizable population, much of it engaged in lumbering.

The flow of settlers into the county swelled greatly from 1868 to 1872. This was due largely to a considerable upsurge in Swedish immigration resulting from agricultural failures in Sweden during 1868 and 1869. The remaining land in Chisago County's southeastern townships was quickly taken up, and the overflow spilled across the frontier fringes in Amador, Sunrise, and Wyoming townships. The western and northern portions of the county also began to fill up during these years as the Swedish settlement in the Rum River Valley in neighboring Isanti County outflanked the undesirable lands in the Sunrise Valley.

Even more instrumental in opening up these areas was the construction of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad along the west side of the county at the end of the 1860s. Railroad lands were sold to Swedish immigrants in Fish Lake township and neighboring areas, and an immigrant receiving house was built in Rush City.⁸ After its completion in 1871 the rail line provided not only easy transportation into the sparsely settled northern portion of the county but also the basis for an important string of market towns.⁹

The great influx of 1868–72 was followed by six years of relative stability. Then, from 1880 until about 1883, the county was inundated by a second great surge of newly arrived Swedish immigrants which was equal to, if not greater than, its predecessor. The phenomenon was once again related to an agricultural crisis in Sweden, this time during 1881 and 1882. The majority of the immigrants settled in the western and northern portions of the county. Many of them moved on to the heretofore unwanted lands of the Sunrise Valley and the cutover pinelands along Goose and Rush creeks. Others bought up what land was available in the southeastern townships or moved into the towns.

This was the last sizable surge of settlement in the county. Except for a very small peak in the early 1890s, the stream of fresh immigrants entering the county gradually dwindled to a trickle during the years from 1884 to 1905. By 1885 the population of the county had reached 9,765, approximately two-thirds of its peak population in 1920. Some settlement was still taking place in the Sunrise Valley and along the St. Croix in the north, but the most important movement was to the towns and villages.

The county's largest centers in 1885 were Taylors Falls and Rush City, with populations of 711 and 618, respectively. The villages of Franconia, Center City, Lindstrom, Chisago City, North Branch, and Harris each had populations of about 200. In addition, the hamlets of Shafer, Wyoming, Lent, Almelund, Sunrise, and Stark had populations of from 25 to 100. Twenty years later there were three fairly large centers: Rush City,

North Branch, and Lindstrom. Taylors Falls had fallen victim to the demise of river traffic above the port of Stillwater on the lower St. Croix in the mid-1880s. North Branch had become the dominant market town for the central portion of the county, while Lindstrom had become the dominant center in the southeast. Lindstrom owed much of its rise to the building of a rail line eastward from Wyoming to Taylors Falls in 1880. The railroad added to Lindstrom's central position in the southeastern townships and brought vacationers from Minneapolis and St. Paul to support a growing resort business on the Chisago lakes. The other villages and hamlets showed moderate growth except for Franconia, which succumbed to the dual blows of a railroad bypass and the death of river traffic on the upper St. Croix.¹⁰

It is important to note that no town ever dominated the whole county. All of the Chisago towns were essentially service centers for the local rural population. They contained an abundance of agriculturally oriented businesses, such as seed and implement dealers, blacksmiths, liveries, and grain mills. Retired farmers normally made up much of the population.

The agricultural development of Chisago County followed agricultural trends in the state as a whole. By the 1880s spring wheat was clearly the most important cash crop. The federal census of 1880 reveals that Chisago County farmers, in 1879, planted 30,245 acres of wheat, 2,980 acres of oats, and 1,738 acres of corn.¹¹ The wheat bonanza continued on into the 1890s until the soil began to wear out from successive plantings. Slowly a more diversified agriculture began to take the place of wheat farming, and dairying became increasingly popular. By 1900 the wheat acreage had declined by almost one-half, and creameries had begun to spring up across the county.¹²

Farms in Chisago County tended to be small and owner-operated. According to the 1880 census, the average county farm consisted of only 102 acres as compared with the state average of 145. Of the 1,091 farms in 1880, 993 were operated by owners, 86 were share-

⁸Lars Ljungmark, *For Sale — Minnesota: Organized Promotion of Scandinavian Immigration 1866–1873*, 150 (Chicago, Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1971).

⁹The railroad was popularly known as the "Skally line." It got its nickname at the time of the great influx of Swedish settlers in Rushseba and Nessel townships. They reportedly told the conductor, as they boarded the train in St. Paul, "Ja skalla go till Rush City." See Sommer, *Looking Back*, 21.

¹⁰Dunn, *St. Croix*, 192.

¹¹*United States Census*, 1880, 3:194 (Table XI, "Cereal Production by Counties — Crop of 1879.")

¹²*United States Census*, 1900, 6:169 (Table 55, "Acreage and Production of Barley, Buckwheat, Corn, Oats, Rye, and Wheat in 1899, by counties.")

cropped, and 12 were rented for a fixed amount of money.¹³

SWEDISH GEOGRAPHER Helge Nelson noted that "In the whole of America there are not two counties showing so compact a majority of Swedish stock as Chisago and Isanti Counties."¹⁴ In fact, these two counties form the core of a rather large and contiguous Swedish settlement area which straddles the upper St. Croix and Rum River valleys. Its boundaries form a large inverted triangle, the southernmost point of which lies at Marine in northern Washington County. The triangle can be traced by running a line northeastward from Marine to a point approximately fifteen miles northeast of Grantsburg, Wisconsin, then westward to a point just beyond the western border of Kanabec County, and then southeastward across Isanti County and back to Marine. (See map on page 260.)

Every township within this triangle has a substantial (and usually dominant) Swedish population. In 1880 the region contained roughly 11,255 people who were either born in Sweden or had parents who were born in Sweden.¹⁵ The Swedish element accounted for about 58 per cent of the approximately 19,400 people living in the area. The next largest group — native "Yankees" — accounted for 22 per cent. The remaining 20 per cent was made up of Germans, Norwegians, Irish, Danes, and a few others. In fourteen townships more than 70 per cent of the population was Swedish, and in nine of these the percentage was 85 per cent or more.

There were three areas of intense Swedish concentration. The smallest lay in Wisconsin along the St. Croix tributaries known as Wood and Trade rivers. A second lay in eastern Isanti and northwestern Chisago counties. The third was situated along the west side of the St. Croix in southeastern Chisago and northern Washington counties. The three were separated from one another by large unsettled areas along the upper St. Croix and also along the Sunrise River.

Situated in the middle of this large triangle of Swedish settlement was Chisago County. Ethnically, its popu-

lation was very similar to that found within the triangle as a whole. In 1880 a total of 4,999 people in the county either had been born in Sweden or had parents who were born there. They accounted for 62.5 per cent of the county's population. The largest minority was the native-born American, or Yankee, population — some 20 per cent of the total. The largest immigrant minority was the Germans (7 per cent), followed by the Irish (4.5 per cent). Danes and Norwegians made up 1 per cent each.

The accompanying map entitled "Land Ownership by Ethnic Group" gives a picture of the spatial arrangement of these ethnic groups in the rural areas of the county. The map was based on a comparison of names in the 1888 platbook with those in the 1885 state census manuscripts. Whenever a positive identification was made, the land held by that individual was given an ethnic value. The shaded areas indicate land held by resident landowners; that is, land held by a farmer in the township of his residence or a neighboring township. The unshaded areas indicate land held by nonresidents according to this definition and land held by corporations and institutions, such as railroads, timber companies, the state, or the county.

The map does not show rented or share-cropped land. This, however, is not a serious omission because only a small number of tenant farmers lived in Chisago County.¹⁶ Another thing to keep in mind is that the average farm size in the county was only 102 acres. Many of the farms in the more densely settled areas were only forty or eighty acres. As a result, the population density was much higher than one would expect. What might appear to be an insignificant ethnic block often contained a deceptively large number of families. For example, the small block of Danish settlement in the northwest corner of the county contained seven farms.

It is interesting to note that the best agricultural lands were occupied by recent immigrants. The less desirable outwash soils of the Sunrise Valley and the cutover pinelands along the St. Croix and the lower reaches of Goose and Rush creeks were primarily occupied by "British and Irish" settlers, most of whom were native-born Americans from eastern states. They were perhaps Chisago County's version of the restless Yankees whom historians have characterized as being the footloose occupants of the frontier fringe of organized settlement, always one step ahead of the immigrant "fillers in."¹⁷ In contrast, the better land was almost exclusively occupied by immigrant groups.

The Swedes settled on two large blocks of land, one on each side of the Sunrise Valley. The southern block was the fully expanded Chisago Lake settlement. The northern block had expanded from a small core in Fish Lake township and was connected with Swedish settlement in neighboring Isanti County. This map represents

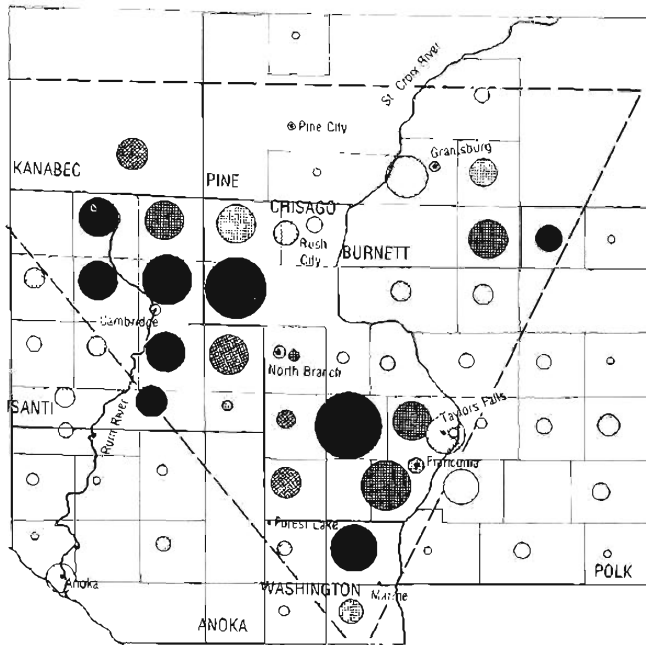
¹³United States Census, 1880, 3:64 (Table V, "Number and size of farms, with average size, and classification according to tenure by county.")

¹⁴Nelson, *The Swedes and the Swedish Settlements*, 190.

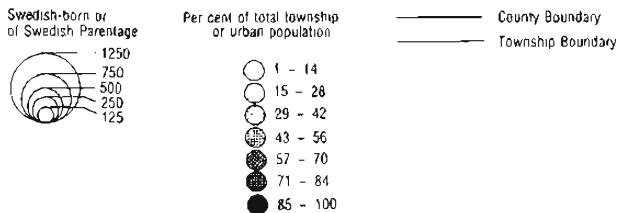
¹⁵To give a true picture of an ethnic group's numbers it is necessary to ascertain the ethnic background of the second generation, born in the United States. The figures used in this study were calculated from the 1880 federal census manuscripts which list the birthplace of each individual's parents. The figures were arrived at by tabulating the birthplaces of the parents and then dividing by two.

¹⁶United States Census, 1880, 3:64.

¹⁷Marcus L. Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History*, 76 (New York, 1964).



SWEDISH SETTLEMENT IN THE UPPER ST. CROIX AND RUM RIVER VALLEYS, 1880



the maximum extent of Swedish settlement except for some eastward expansion in Harris and Branch townships and some scattered settlement in Lent township.

Four concentrations of Germans were significant. The largest was in Nessel township on the north and east shores of Rush Lake; the second was found in the southeastern part of the county — in Franconia township. The third group occupied parts of western Wyoming and Lent townships;¹⁸ and the fourth, which is difficult to spot because it was less concentrated than the others, was located in Rushseba township.

Irish settlement is not shown on the map as being distinct from the British (and for the most part it was not). There was, however, one exception. This was a group that settled in Franconia township just east of the German settlement there. The only other distinct ethnic concentration was a colony of Danish immigrants — Danewood — situated in the northwestern corner of Nessel township. Elsewhere, the small Danish and Norwegian populations tended to mix with the Swedish.

The map does not show what ethnic groups dwelt in the towns and villages. On the whole, the Swedish, German, and Danish populations tended to be primarily

rural. Only 13.5 per cent of the Swedish population in 1880 lived in urban places. Of the Germans, 26 per cent were town and village residents, nearly half of whom lived in Rush City. There was virtually no urban Danish population. In contrast, 49 per cent of the British and Irish population dwelt in the towns. They were the dominant population in all of the major towns except Rush City. The Norwegians were also strongly inclined toward urban living.

The most striking aspect of the ethnic pattern in Chisago County is the very marked segregation that existed between the ethnic groups. Only in Rushseba township did there appear to be any spatial mixing of the population. Even there one finds some segregation as Germans were predominantly on the eastern side of the township while the Swedes tended to concentrate to the north and west of Rush City. Elsewhere, ethnic boundaries usually were very clearly demarcated.

HAVING ESTABLISHED the over-all spatial characteristics of Swedish settlement in Chisago County, we can now determine how the Swedish population was organized into local communities. Basic to this question is a definition of the term, "local ethnic community." As used here, it refers to a small area occupied by people having a common ethnic heritage where the bulk of the population functions as a social unit.

Social interaction commonly occurs at some focal point in a community, and there is good reason to believe that Swedish communities in late nineteenth-century Chisago County were organized around the local Swedish-American church. The church was the only spot in the county that could truly be called an exclusively Swedish place of social interaction. Other central places, such as the town hall or the local market town, could rarely be said to have served an exclusively Swedish population. They were places of cross-cultural contact.

The church served not only as a center of worship but also as a gathering place for social events. This aspect of Swedish church life in America was noted by George M. Stephenson: "Unlike the Swedish parish churches, the Swedish-American churches were in fact 'meeting-houses,' and the phrase 'go to meeting' soon became current. Sunday morning was the only time the peasant in Sweden saw the inside of the parish church; but in America the congregation was a social unit, and people who seldom attended services and who held aloof from church membership made use of the church for

¹⁸The township of Wyoming was named after this group, which migrated there from the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania. See S. E. Strudle, "The History of Wyoming," unpublished manuscript in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society.

purposes of social intercourse. Church societies and dinners helped to produce a family feeling."¹⁹

In Chisago County the importance of the local Swedish church was heightened by the lack of denominationalism. From the very beginning, the Augustana Lutheran Church was virtually unchallenged throughout the county. It organized its first church in Center City in 1854. By the turn of the century there were nine

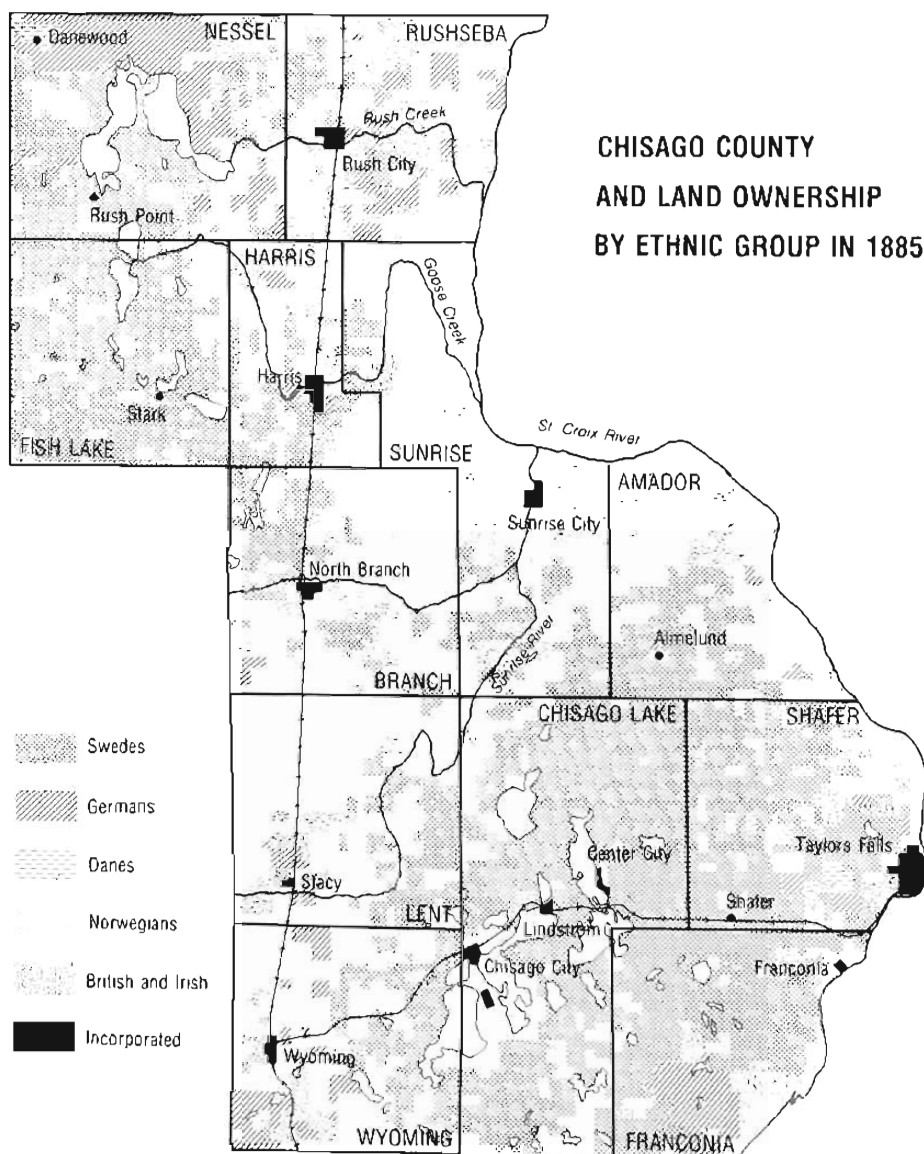
congregations in the county with 6,033 baptized members.²⁰

The Swedish Baptists founded a congregation in Center City in 1856, but it was unable to maintain itself among its intolerant Lutheran neighbors. In an 1856 letter to the State Baptist Convention, its members complained of being "surrounded with a great number of our own nation who are all greatly opposed to our principles . . ."²¹ The Chisago Lake Baptist Church closed in 1860, and the Baptists withdrew to Isanti County. There was no Baptist church in Chisago County from that date until 1873, when Baptists managed to organize two small congregations in the western parts of Fish Lake and Nessel townships. The Swedish Methodists faced similar difficulties. They first organized a church in Center City in 1858. The congregation, never very large, eventually moved to Lindstrom in 1892 in hopes

¹⁹George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration: A Study of Immigrant Churches*, 407 (Minneapolis, 1932).

²⁰Emeroy Johnson, *God Gave the Growth: The Study of The Lutheran Minnesota Conference 1876-1958*, 74 (Minneapolis, 1958).

²¹P. Ryden, *Scenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia*, 241 (Minneapolis, 1918).



of finding a more promising field for its work.²²

Organizing new congregations was one of the strong points of the Augustana Lutheran Church. Clergymen were sent out to areas recently settled by Swedish immigrants to assist the faithful in chartering and building churches. Chisago County was no exception. A congregation was organized at Taylors Falls in 1860 to serve the Swedish population of eastern Shafer and Franconia townships. Another was established at Fish Lake in 1867 for the Swedish population on the far side of the Sunrise River. Following the 1868-72 settlement boom, congregations were also organized at Rush Lake in 1870, at Chisago City in 1874, and in Rush City in 1876. In the 1880s the two largest congregations — those at Chisago Lake and Fish Lake — were partitioned. The church at Almelund was organized as a daughter church of the Chisago Lake church in 1887. The church at Harris was organized in 1882 out of the Fish Lake congregation. It apparently failed shortly after its founding and had to be reorganized in Harris in 1891. The church at North Branch was founded in 1887. Its members came from the Fish Lake congregation and the Spring Lake congregation in Isanti County.²³

An accompanying map shows the land owned by church members in 1905. It was constructed in much the same way as the map showing land ownership by ethnic group. Names from church registers were matched with names in the 1914 platbook. The 1905 state census manuscripts were used as a guide in predating the 1914 map to about 1905. The 1905 map shows all nine congregational fields as they appeared at the height of their strength.²⁴ They suggest rather compact communities which appear to have distinct areal limits. The only boundary appearing blurred is that between Chisago Lake and its daughter church, Almelund.

From the membership fields a generalized community map was produced and superimposed on the 1905 map showing land ownership by church members. The boundaries were drawn by eye to include the maximum number of known church members while keeping the number of other ethnic groups at a minimum. With the aid of platbooks and manuscript censuses, the author determined the Swedish population and the number of church members in each community for the dates 1885 and 1905 (see Table 1). The populations ordinarily include all Swedes found living within the generalized community boundaries, although certain town populations were omitted because they appeared to be transients.

Between 1885 and 1905 there was an absolute gain in population in all of the Swedish communities except Chisago Lake which lost 152 people. As might be expected, the younger communities of Almelund, Harris, and North Branch all registered substantial gains. The older communities had already reached fairly

Table 1.
COMMUNITY POPULATIONS, 1885 AND 1905

Community	1885		
	Swedish population	Church members	Percentage church members
Almelund	457	321	67.7
Chisago City	824	647	78.5
Chisago Lake	1,898	1,206	63.5
Fish Lake	703	536	76.2
Harris	261	114	43.9
North Branch	359	152	42.1
Rush City ^a	353	137	38.8
Rush Lake	518	311	57.1
Taylors Falls ^a	469	304	64.1
Total	5,842	3,728	63.8
Community	1905		
	Swedish population	Church members	Percentage church members
Almelund	851	609	71.6
Chisago City ^a	1,054	609	57.8
Chisago Lake ^a	1,746	889	50.9
Fish Lake	715	406	56.8
Harris ^a	574	386	67.2
North Branch	999	646	58.8
Rush City ^a	749	228	30.4
Rush Lake	506	350	69.2
Taylors Falls ^a	580	394	68.0
Total	7,744	4,517	62.2

^a excludes transient population of towns.

stable populations by 1885. The change in church membership followed the same pattern. The older congregations lost, or barely maintained, their membership, while the younger congregations experienced growth.

The strength of the churches within their respective communities also varied, but on the whole it would appear that church membership was quite common

²² Reuben W. Anderson, *A Century of Service — History of the First Methodist Church of Lindstrom* (centennial pamphlet published by the church in 1958).

²³ Johnson, *God Gave the Growth*, 73, 84-85.

²⁴ Johnson, *God Gave the Growth*, 74. Two useful platbooks for Chisago County are C. M. Foote and E. C. Hood, *Platbook of Chisago County* (1888), and *Atlas and Farmer's Directory of Chisago County, Minnesota* (1914).

among Swedes in Chisago County. In 1885 the nine congregations claimed between 40 and 80 per cent of their community populations. The strongest congregations were at Chisago City, Fish Lake, and Almelund. The weakest were at Harris, North Branch, and Rush City. On the average the nine accounted for 63.8 per cent of the community populations in 1885. In 1905 the situation was much the same, although there were important changes in the status of individual congregations. Chisago City, Chisago Lake, Fish Lake, and Rush City suffered sharp declines, while others — notably Harris, North Branch, and Rush Lake — managed to gain membership strength in their communities. The aggregate picture had not changed much by 1905 when the nine congregations accounted for 62.2 per cent of the total population in communities.

THE EXISTENCE of nine Swedish communities organized around the Swedish Lutheran churches of Chisago County has been established, and now the question to consider is whether they differed from one another in terms of the origins of their populations in Sweden. The aim at this point is to determine what areas of Sweden were represented in each Chisago County community and how homogeneous each community was. This requires detailed information on the origins of the community populations that unfortunately does not exist. However, a partial accounting can be made on the basis of the Swedish church records which contain information on the birthplace of most church members.²⁵ If it is assumed that church members were representative of the community population as a whole, this information may be used to gain some insight into the local origins of the community members.

For each of the county congregations a map has been constructed (one example — Fish Lake — is included with this article) showing the parishes in Sweden where members were born. Only members who emigrated between 1850 and 1905, and were present in the church community by 1905, have been included.²⁶ The size of the circles on the map shows the number from each parish. The data were also mapped at ten-year intervals

to see whether any shifts occurred during the period, but very little variation was found. Consequently, only the birthfield map for the entire 1850–1905 period has been presented here.

The base map shows the old historical provinces — known as the *landskap* — of Sweden. Although they have served no administrative function since the Middle Ages, these units have greater historical and cultural significance than the modern counties (*län*). The identification of the emigrants was certainly with the province rather than the county.

The birthfield map also contains two simple devices for measuring the distribution. The average position of the distribution is shown by a small cross marking the arithmetic mean center. The dispersion about that center is shown by a circle representing the mean distance of all points from it. The advantage of both these measures is that they are easy to compute. The disadvantage is their sensitivity to extremes. For the purpose of this study this shortcoming does not seem serious enough to warrant the adoption of more complicated methods. A second map, entitled "Comparison of Birthfield Average Position and Dispersion," shows these measures for the nine congregations.

Perhaps the simplest way of comparing the communities with respect to their homogeneity is to look at their relative dispersion. The more concentrated the birthfield, the more culturally homogeneous was the population (see Table 2).

Table 2.
RELATIVE DISPERSION OF BIRTHFIELDS

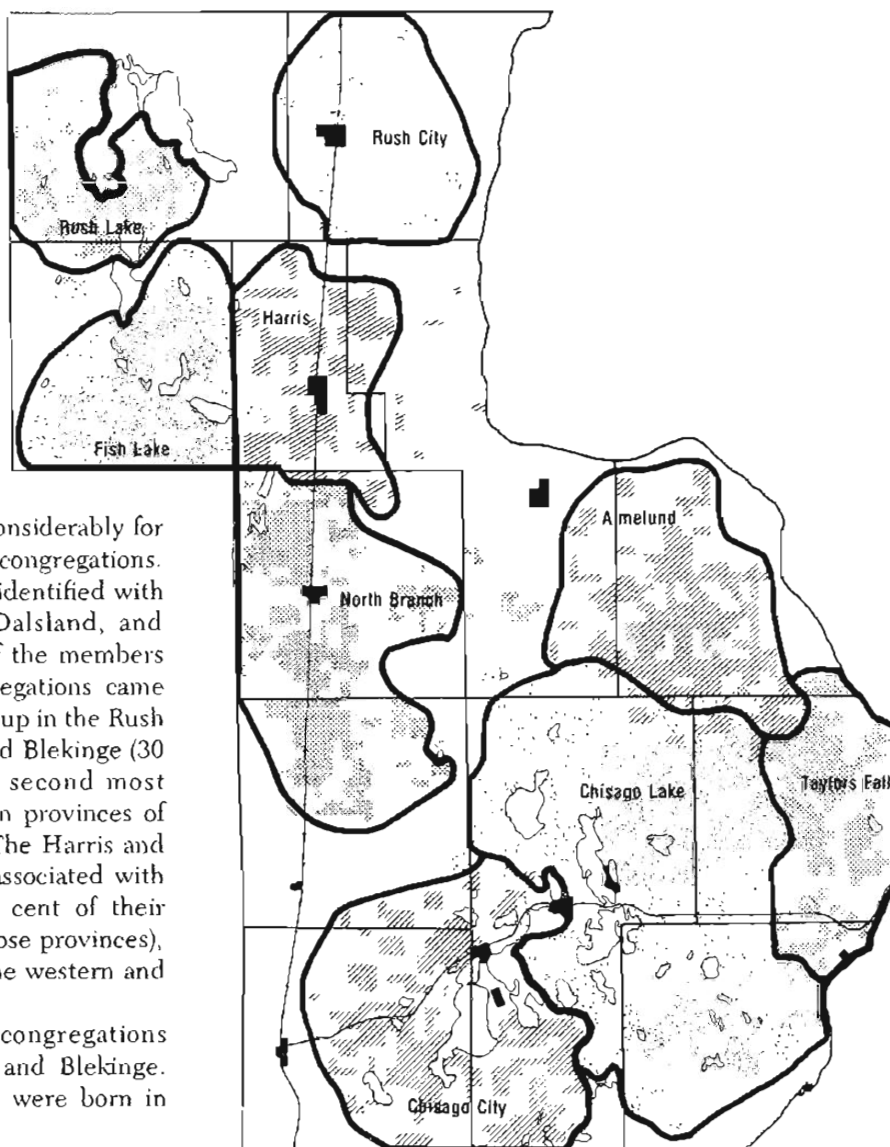
Congregation	Diameter of dispersion
	circle in miles
Chisago City	57
Chisago Lake	80
Almelund	82
Taylor's Falls	112
North Branch	125
Harris	242
Rush City	262
Fish Lake	265
Rush Lake	317

The congregational birthfields apparently are of two types. The first includes the five congregations located in the southern portion of the county: Chisago City, Chisago Lake, Almelund, Taylor's Falls, and North Branch. They are all characterized by very compact distributions centered in the Swedish province of Småland. The four congregations in the northern part of the county — Harris, Rush City, Fish Lake, and Rush Lake — are characterized by highly dispersed birthfields centered far to the north of those for the southern congregations.

²⁵Some of the later church records, which were kept on printed forms supplied by the synod, list this information under the heading, "born or baptized." It seems probable, however, that the information listed was the place of birth because this was the practice in the earlier records which were prepared entirely by hand. In any case, baptism occurs in the Lutheran church at an early age, so that the place of baptism was usually the same as the place of birth.

²⁶All were not necessarily members of the church by 1905. Some were listed in the church records as having "arrived in this place" by 1905 but did not join the church until a later date.

SWEDISH COMMUNITIES AND LAND OWNERSHIP IN 1905



The Swedish places of origin varied considerably for the members of the four north Chisago congregations. Rush City and Rush Lake were strongly identified with the western provinces of Värmland, Dalsland, and Västergötland. More than 50 per cent of the members of the two northernmost Chisago congregations came from these provinces. The next largest group in the Rush City congregation came from Småland and Blekinge (30 per cent), whereas in Rush Lake the second most numerous group came from the northern provinces of Hälsingland and Dalarna (31 per cent). The Harris and Fish Lake congregations were strongly associated with Småland and Blekinge (72 and 65 per cent of their respective congregations were born in those provinces), but strong minorities also existed from the western and northern provinces.

The members of the south Chisago congregations came almost exclusively from Småland and Blekinge. In all five cases more than 90 per cent were born in the two provinces.

The birthfields of the five southern congregations alone center on Sweden's southern provinces of Blekinge, Småland, and the northeastern portion of Skåne (see group of detailed birthfield maps with this article). The differences among the southern Chisago congregations may best be understood in terms of the pattern of traditional administrative units at the local level. Thus, the maps show, besides the provincial boundaries, the boundaries of the *härad*s — historic administrative units dating back in most cases to pre-Christian times when they were a functional part of the civil and religious administrative systems. The *härad* was still a significant unit in the nineteenth century but has subsequently been surpassed in importance by the commune. Finally, the maps show the boundaries of several cultural and linguistic regions as they have been delineated by one authority on Swedish church history — Berndt Gustafsson.²⁷

Except for a narrow coastal plain in the east, Småland and Blekinge occupy a poor upland plateau. The rapid

retreat of the ice sheets in glacial times left a poorly drained landscape with a myriad of lakes and streams. Settlement in the late Middle Ages was of a rather discontinuous nature because it took place on isolated pockets of land around the glacial lakes. "Småland" is a late provincial designation meaning "the small lands," or provinces. Hence it is a collection of much older, relatively independent units. These original small provinces seem to be the basic elements in Gustafsson's regional system.

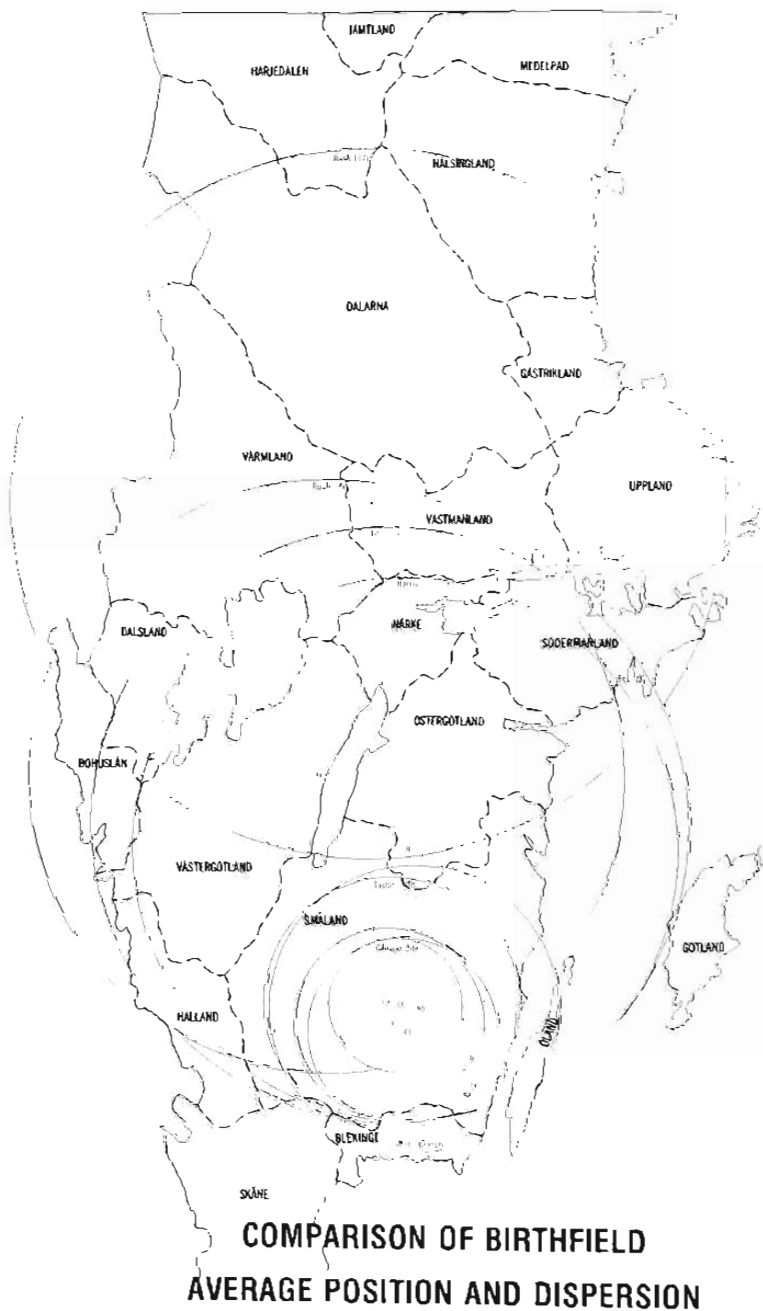
The most important old province — and the core of the region — was Varend which contained the *härad*s of Norrvidinge, Uppvidinge, Konga, Kinnevald, and Albo. To the west was the old province of Finnveden (Västbo, Östbo, and Sunnerbo *härad*s) which had strong

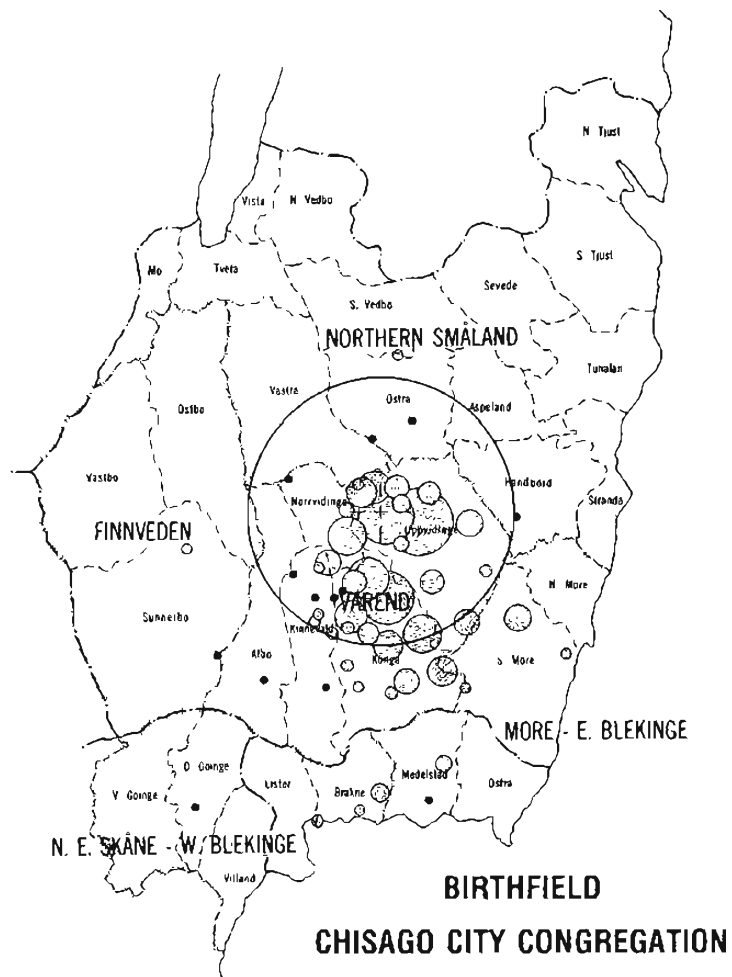
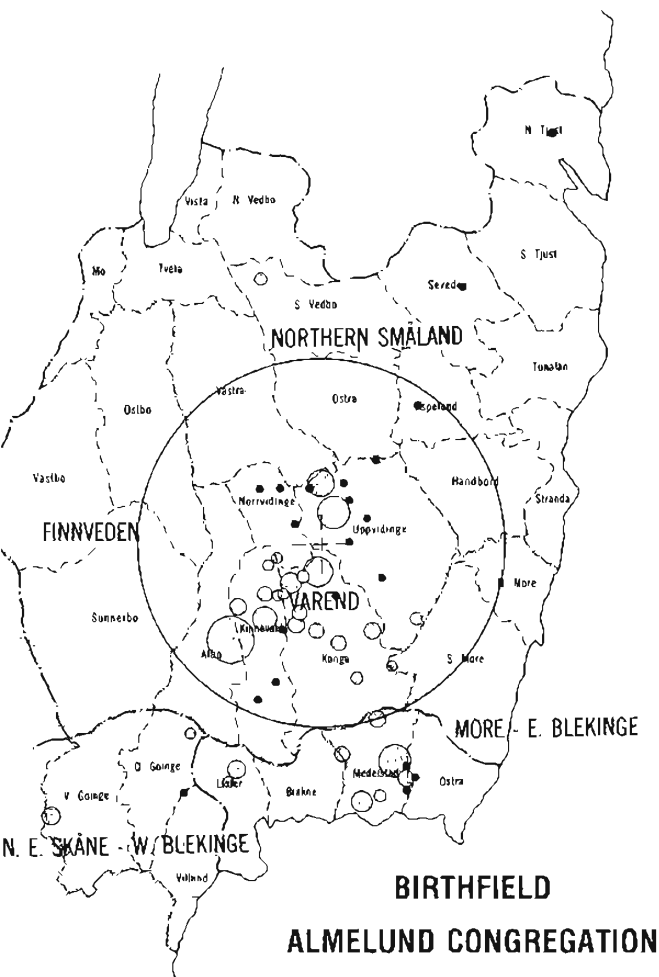
²⁷ Berndt Gustafsson, *Svensk Kyrkogeografi*, 168–69 (Lund, Sweden, 1958).

ties with the adjacent districts in southern Halland. Each of these comprises a separate region in Gustafsson's system. To the south of Varend was an area comprising the western half of Blekinge (Bräkne, Lister) and the upland härad of northeastern Skåne (Villand, Ö. Göinge, V. Göinge). Despite the fact that a provincial boundary passed through this region it seems to have had some historic unity. The eastern half of Blekinge (Medelstad and Östra härad) had similar ties with the small historical province of Möre. The remaining (northern) portion of Småland was linguistically and ethnologically oriented toward the province of Östergötland.

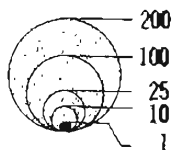
The majority of the members of the five southern Chisago congregations came from two of these historic regions — Varend and Möre-East Blekinge. Emigrants from Varend (totaling over 50 per cent) dominated the congregations of Chisago City, Chisago Lake, Almelund, and Taylors Falls (see Table 3). Emigrants from the old province of Möre and its associated districts in eastern Blekinge dominated the North Branch congregation and formed strong minorities in the Taylors Falls and Almelund congregations.

Within these two regions certain härad can be identified with each of the congregations. Most of the Chisago City congregation was born in the adjacent





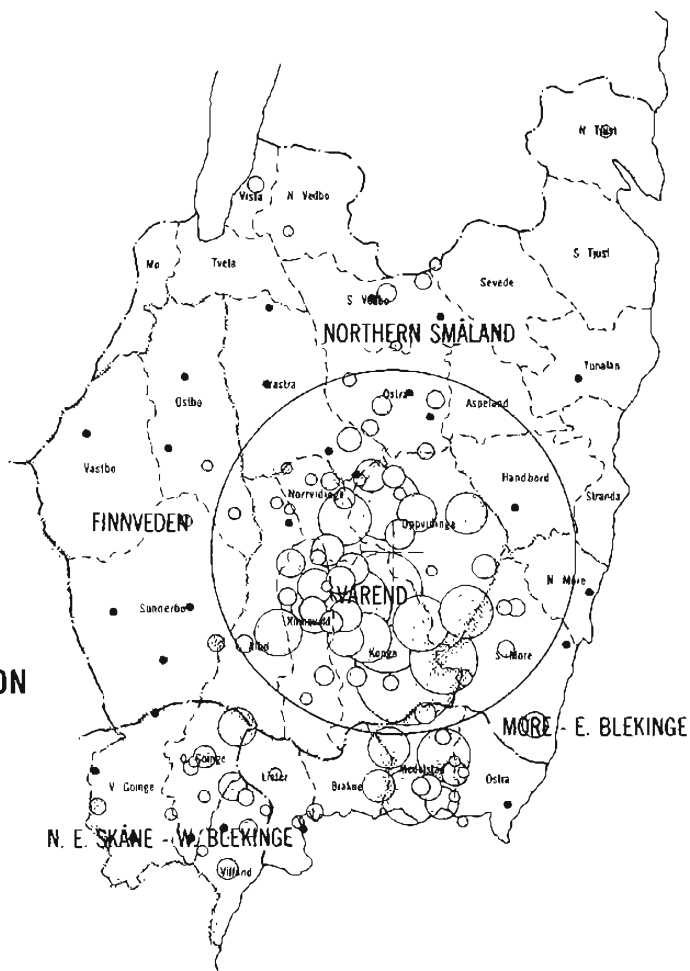
Number of persons emigrating, 1850 - 1905



Arithmetic mean center

- Harad boundaries
- Provincial boundaries
- Culture region boundaries

BIRTHFIELD
CHISAGO LAKES CONGREGATION



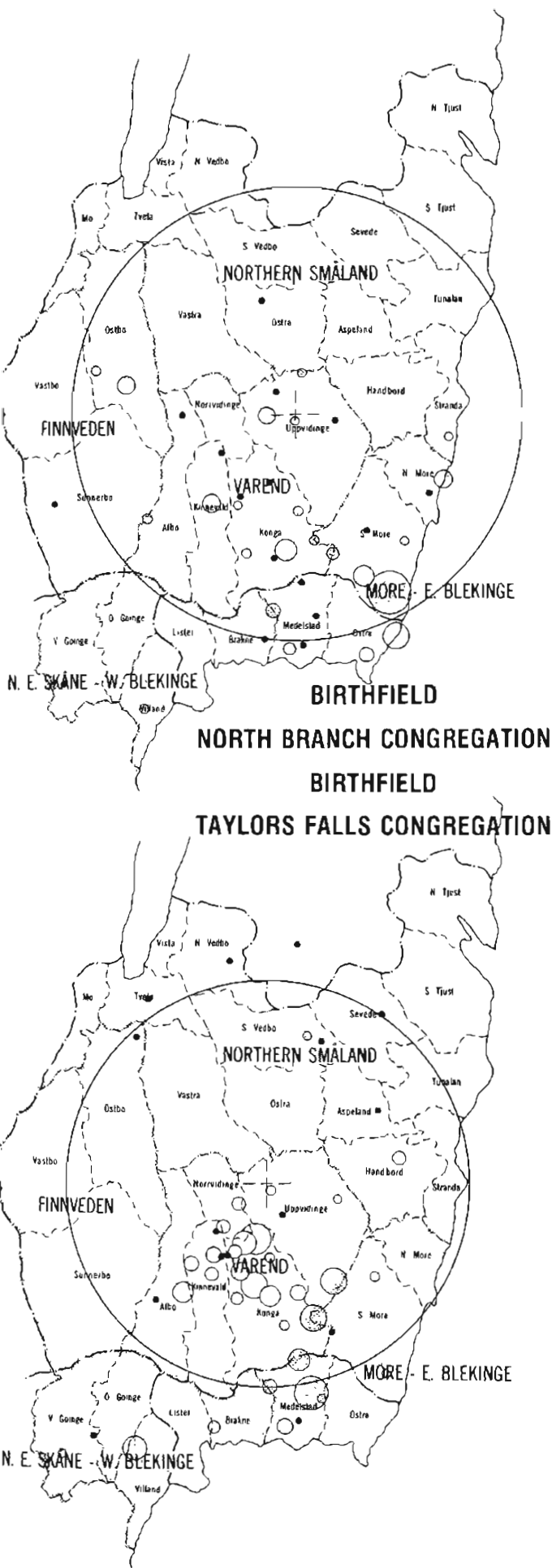


Table 3.
POPULATION OF THE FIVE SOUTHERN
CONGREGATIONS BY CULTURE REGION AND
HÄRAD (in per cent)

Cult region härad	Chisago City	Chisago Lake	Alme- lund	Taylor's Falls	North Branch
<i>Värend</i>	89.7	71.1	68.2	57.4	25.1
Konga	37.3	45.2	22.9	42.6	13.3
Uppvidinge	43.8	12.8	16.7	8.1	6.9
Kinnevald	2.3	6.6	9.4	5.0	4.4
Norrvidinge	5.6	3.4	1.2	1.7	—
Albo	0.7	3.1	18.0	6.0	0.5
<i>Finnveden</i>	0.3	0.7	—	—	7.9
Västbo	—	0.1	—	—	—
Östbo	—	0.3	—	—	7.4
Sunnerbo	0.3	0.3	—	—	0.5
<i>N.E. Skåne — W. Blek.</i>	2.1	7.0	6.5	7.3	2.5
Villand	—	1.8	0.4	5.0	1.5
Östra Göinge	0.2	2.1	0.8	—	—
Västra Göinge	—	0.5	2.0	1.0	0.5
Lister	—	0.6	3.3	—	—
Bräkne	1.9	2.0	—	1.3	0.5
<i>Möre — E. Blekinge</i>	3.9	10.0	18.8	21.5	56.1
Norra Möre	—	0.1	—	—	4.9
Södra Möre	2.8	1.4	—	2.0	33.0
Östra	—	0.2	—	—	11.8
Medelstad	1.1	8.3	18.8	19.5	6.4
<i>Northern Småland</i>	0.7	3.7	2.4	4.2	1.0
Tjust	—	0.1	0.4	—	—
Sevede	—	0.2	0.4	0.3	—
Tonalän	—	0.1	—	—	—
Aspelund	—	—	0.4	0.3	—
Handbörd	—	0.1	—	1.7	—
Stranda	—	—	—	—	1.0
Möckelby	—	0.2	—	—	—
Tveta	—	0.1	1.2	0.3	—
Vista	—	0.2	—	—	—
Norra Vedbo	—	0.1	—	0.3	—
Södra Vedbo	—	0.8	—	0.7	—
Östra	0.5	1.0	—	0.3	—
Västra	0.2	0.8	—	0.3	—
<i>Others</i>	3.3	7.5	4.1	9.6	7.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

härad of Uppvidinge and Konga. Chisago Lake and Taylors Falls were both closely identified with Konga härad, although Taylors Falls contained a strong minority from Medelstad härad in Blekinge. Four härad (Konga, Medelstad, Albo, and Uppvidinge) were fairly equally represented in the Almeland congregation. Considerable numbers from Albo and Kinnevald härad gave Almeland the strongest westerly component of any of the congregations. Södra Möre was the most rep-

resented härad in the North Branch congregation which also had sizable minorities in neighboring Östra and Konga härad.

IT HAS BEEN established that the nine Swedish communities differed from one another in terms of their origins within Sweden. Not only can they be identified with different parts of Sweden, but also they vary in the degree of their homogeneity. It is possible, too, that there were corresponding differences in stability between the communities. One might expect the communities with the most homogeneous populations to be more stable than the others. To test this hypothesis it is useful to look at the stability of each community population over a period of time.

For the purpose of this study, a stable population is defined as one that is not spatially mobile. Measuring population stability is a matter of determining what proportion of a population remains within a restricted geographic area (the community) over a period of time. The period chosen was 1885–1905. The major problem in measuring population stability is that one cannot assume that there was a uniform death rate in all the communities and then make a simple head count of those remaining in 1905. Age structures among the nine communities differed so significantly that death rates could not possibly have been the same. Therefore, it was necessary to find some way of normalizing the differences in death rates between the communities.

A solution to this problem was sought through the use of Coale and Demeny's reference work, in which an appropriate population model was found for a rural Swedish population at the turn of the century.²⁸ The life expectancy table for that model was used to calculate, for each male five year age group (such as 5–10, 15–20), the percentage expected to survive after twenty years.²⁹ These survival rates were applied to the male populations of each community in 1885 to determine the number of expected survivors. The difference between the number of expected survivors and the actual total remaining in 1905 is the number of individuals who are presumed to have left the community. The percentage of the expected survivors who actually remained (retention rate) is the measurement of the stability of the population.

The degree of population stability experienced by each community during the twenty-year period is shown in Table 4. The percentage of the surviving population retained varied from a low of 41.7 per cent in the Rush Lake community to a high of 79.2 per cent in the Almelund community. The average figure for the nine communities was 60.8 per cent.

Another view of population stability can be created by dropping out those aged twenty or less in 1885 — perhaps the most mobile element in the popula-

Table 4.
POPULATION STABILITY, 1885–1905

Community	1885 male pop.	Expected survivors	Actual survivors	Population retention
Almelund	195	160.4	127	79.2%
North Branch	169	139.2	96	69.1
Taylor's Falls	227	177.9	119	66.9
Harris	144	113.4	70	61.7
Fish Lake	388	288.3	168	58.3
Chisago City	422	328.0	191	58.2
Rush City	173	139.3	79	56.8
Chisago Lake	959	767.5	421	54.9
Rush Lake	281	224.3	92	41.7

tion over the period. The group included many who were not born in Sweden. As American-born children of immigrants, they might not be expected to share the same sentiments toward the provincial character of their community as their parents and therefore would move. In addition, economic factors probably prompted many of them to leave their communities. Few owned farm land or were actively employed on farms. Some would inherit their father's farm, and some would remain on their father's or a neighbor's farm as laborers, but most would have to seek employment elsewhere. Removing this group leaves the male population that was economically active in 1885. There is more chance that the cause of their moving might be social.

The degree of stability for the adult male population of each of the nine communities for the period 1885–1905 is shown in Table 5. The retention rate was generally higher than when all ages were considered. The figures vary from a low of 67.6 per cent in Fish Lake to a high of 106.1 per cent (more remained than

²⁸ Ansley J. Coale and Paul Demeny, *Regional Model Life Tables and Stable Population*, 196–97 (Princeton, New Jersey, 1966). The model was selected by using the death rates for ages 0–5 listed in the 1900 census for rural populations of Swedish descent in the registration states. The latter were those that had "laws or ordinances requiring the registration of deaths, and which, in the judgment of the Director of the Census, possess records affording satisfactory data in necessary detail." See *United States Census, Special Report, Mortality Statistics, 1900–1904* (Washington, D.C., 1906).

²⁹ If an individual crossed a census tract boundary during the twenty-year period he would be recorded in the census as having lived in the tract less than twenty years, but the move might not have taken him out of the community. Therefore, such local moves had to be traced. To simplify the task, only males were used. Females are more difficult to trace because they change their names when they marry.

Table 5.
POPULATION STABILITY, 1885-1905
(Males aged 21-60 in 1885)

Community	1885 male pop	Expected survivors	Actual survivors	Population retention
North				
Branch	71	50.0	54	106.1%
Almelund	88	63.9	62	97.0
Chisago				
City	183	122.2	111	91.6
Taylor's				
Falls	106	68.8	59	85.7
Harris	70	45.9	37	80.6
Chisago				
Lake	445	304.7	226	74.2
Rush City	76	52.1	38	72.9
Rush Lake	123	82.2	56	69.3
Fish Lake	199	139.1	94	67.6

were expected to survive) in North Branch. The average figure for the nine communities was 82.8 per cent.

WAS THE stability of the nine communities related to differences in the cultural homogeneity (spatial concentration of birthplaces) of the populations? It is difficult on the basis of only nine instances to say that any relationship does or does not exist. However, a correlation test can be made to see what it may suggest about such a relationship.

The communities were ranked according to both their stability and their homogeneity, and these rankings were compared by using the Spearman rank correlation test. This is an easily computed test that is useful in situations where data are limited and no assumptions can be made about the normalcy of the distributions. The resulting correlation coefficient ranges from -1, indicating no correlation, to +1, indicating complete correlation.

The correlation coefficient between population stability and cultural homogeneity for the nine communities

was +.267. This is not a strong correlation but nevertheless is a positive one. If only the 21-60 age group in 1885 is considered, the coefficient increases to +.667. Again, it must be emphasized that the number of instances being considered is not sufficient to make any strong statements. One can only say that it would appear that there may be some connection between stability and cultural homogeneity in the nine communities of Chisago County.

If one does assume a connection here, the residuals would require some explanation. In fact, the only major deviations occur in the cases of Chisago City and Chisago Lake. Both of these have much lower levels of stability than would be predicted by their degrees of cultural homogeneity. An explanation of this might be found in the fact that these two communities experienced a certain amount of commercialization and urbanization during the "resort boom" which began in the Chisago lakes area during the 1890s. This must have meant increased contacts with the outside world in these two communities, which may have contributed to a higher degree of mobility among the population. When only the adult population was considered, the stability of Chisago City and Chisago Lake populations ranked much higher. This might be taken as an indication that the effect of increased contacts may have been greater on the younger population.

Almelund and North Branch constitute relatively minor deviations from the expected correlation. They ranked first and second in stability, which is higher than would be predicted by their degrees of cultural homogeneity. This may be due to the ages of these communities. They were the youngest of the southern ones, and, consequently, a larger proportion of their populations was made up of recent immigrants who may have been more inclined to remain in one place than those who had been in America for some time.

THE PHOTOGRAPH on page 256 is by Eugene Becker. Maps are by the author; those on pages 260, 261, and 264 were adapted by Alan Ominsky from the author's.



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