



Facts and Fiction

Anderson, Aspelin, Carlson, Engstrom, Erickson, Garenson, Gustafson, Hallgren, Johnson, Lindquist, Martinson, Mostrom, Nelson, Nordell, Oberg, Olson, Peterson, Sundstrom, Tilberg. . . Good old Swedish names, common in Kansas from its early days. Pioneers direct from Sweden (or almost direct), bringing courage and strength and tradition and culture, settled in ethnological groups around the state; "made a go of it" despite hardships, setbacks, homesickness; formed communities, churches, schools; had children who had children, all of whom have made and are making a great contribution to the heritage of Kansas.

Probably nearly every Kansan is aware of the large number of Swedes around Lindsborg, the center of "Swedishness" in the state. Probably nearly everyone in the state is aware of the biennial Svensk Hyllnings Fest (the "Honoring of the Swedes" Festival) held in Lindsborg early in October in odd years.

Probably most non-Swedes are not aware, however, that along with the Swedish immigrants came the folklore of Swedish trolls—ugly, invisible imps ranging from giant-size to human-size. Even though they are invisible, anyone who knows about them knows that they look like human beings, but with long tails, wild hair, and warty noses. Trolls are not wicked creatures; they are just stupid. They tend to make mistakes with their magical powers, and so sometimes it seems as if they are evil.



They reach adulthood after three or four thousand years, but maturity does not seem to keep them from making mistake after mistake.

Well, anyway, it is rather interesting to contemplate the fact that quiet Kansas has had, unbeknownst to the majority of its residents, a group of invisible supernatural beings here for many

"Blue Valley Farm," a linoleum cut by Birger Sandzén. (Birger Sandzén is probably Kansas' best known artist—and certainly the best known Swedish painter of America. Many of his works, such as this one, portray Kansas scenes.) (Courtesy of Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery, Lindsborg)

many years, especially around Salina, McPherson, Lyon, Clay, Marshall, Osage, Shawnee, Wyandotte, and Republic counties!

Although the folklore of trolls is relatively unfamiliar to non-Swedes, a few examples of some other types of "native" Swedish folklore *will* be familiar:

Some of the beliefs collected around Dwight by Florence (Engstrom) Lemley are as familiar to non-Swedes as to Swedes:

Always cut your hair in the light of the moon; it grows too fast if cut in the dark of the moon.

Plant above-ground crops in the light of the moon, and those that grow underground in the dark of the moon.

If you borrow salt, don't return it; if you do, both lender and borrower will have bad luck.

Butchering must be done in the proper sign of the moon or it will all be lard.

Calves must be weaned in the proper sign of the moon so they and the mothers won't bawl.

Asafetida used in horses' feedboxes prevents distemper.

Sassafras tea, senna tea, turpentine and kerosene were (and are) common prescriptions for a variety of ailments.

Irma M. Jones, working in the Assaria area, reports a few other cures:

For chest colds, one of the commonest cures was goose grease (or lard or turpentine) warmed and rubbed on the chest, and then covered with a wool flannel cloth.

For a sore throat, warm pork rind held in place with a wool cloth was usually effective.

For infections, cow manure was warmed and placed on the infected area, or sometimes hops leaves were soaked and heated for a poultice.

There is also a similarity in children's rhymes and little games. Here is a rhyme to help children remember the order of the months, collected in 1963 by Florence Lemley:

Januari forjar aret
Febrari kommer näst
Mars, April har knopp i baret
Maj ock Juni blomma näst.
Juli, Augusti, ock Septembre
Shöna, juolega framgo
Med October ock November ock
December äro gra.

And what does it bring to mind for the "native" English speaker? Why, the timeworn jingle—

Thirty days has September,
April, June, and November;
All the rest have thirty-one
Except my grandmother,
And she has a little red tricycle.

A rhyme and game that most kiddies learn very early in this country concerns itself with toes: "This little piggie went to market; this little piggie stayed at home . . ." A Swedish counterpoint brought to Kansas is played with the fingers:

Tumme tut	(thumb)
Slickeput	(slick one)
Longeman	(long one)
Straffe hand	
Lille put i England.	(little man from England)

(Along with the rhyme, the collector, Mrs. Lemley, found two explanations of why the index finger is called *slickeput*: One is that it is the finger children suck so much, and the other is that it is the finger used for wiping out kettles and bowls and then licked off.)

The Swedes come in for their share of jokes, too, of course. One of the best known in this state concerns a group of Swedish immigrants. They had come from Sweden to settle in Kansas because they had heard such magnificent stories about it. Their boat landed in New York. They gazed with wonder at the great city and exclaimed, "If this is New York City, imagine what Lindsborg must be like!"

This is one of the favorite jokes of our Swedish expert, Dr. Emory Lindquist, whose article "The Swedes in Kansas" follows on the next pages. Dr. Lindquist, of Swedish stock himself, loves his Kansas Swedes (and is much beloved by them — just ask one!), and knows more about them and their history than anyone else does.

He is the author of *Smoky Valley People* (1953), a widely known book about the Swedes around the Lindsborg area, and has written and published a number of articles, including the following one written especially for the *Heritage*.

This fall, in September of 1963, Dr. Lindquist became President of the University of Wichita. He had served as President of

Bethany College (in Lindsborg, Kansas — of course!) for ten years before going to the University of Wichita in 1953 as Dean of Faculties, and later as a full time teacher. He holds degrees from Bethany College, England's Oxford University (where he was a Rhodes Scholar), University of Colorado, and an honorary degree from Augustana College (Illinois).

It is with great pride that *Heritage of Kansas* presents its expert on Swedes — Dr. Emory Lindquist, a man of keen mind and gentle heart, and his contribution about "his" people toward our better understanding of Kansas and its heritage.



Costumed in traditional Swedish clothes, Lindsborg school children dance a traditional dance during the Svensk Hyllnings Fest of 1963. (Courtesy of Lindsborg News-Record)