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Swedish-American Archives of Greater Chicago
Manuscript Collection #3
Swedish Educational League Records, 1916-1966

SIZE: 2 Archives boxes

ABSTRACT: The records of the Swedish Educational League comprise two boxes and document the activities, membership, finances, and lectures and programs of the League. The records are in both Swedish and English. Included in this collection are meeting minutes, constitution and bylaws, membership and financial records, correspondence with guest speakers, and lecture programs. Also included are publications issued by the League, including their 1946 commemorative history.

HISTORY: One of the developments of the "folk movement" trend in Sweden in the later years of the 19th century was the formation of adult education clubs to help laypeople better understand the problems and decisions which had come with their increased say in their nation's and society's affairs. This adult education tradition emigrated to America along with Swedes trained in its ways. Gustav L. Larson and an "educational committee" started a series of informative lectures within the International Order of Good Templars Lodge number 3, "Jupiter", in the fall of 1915. Well-known scholars of both Swedish and other backgrounds were invited to speak. The program was such a success the Jupiters Studieförbund (Jupiter's Study League) was formed to present yearly programs and business and social meetings. The League received enthusiastic support from many noted Swedish-American educators and scholars on the Chicago scene. When it became obvious that the League was serving a much wider public than just Jupiter Lodge's membership, it was decided to change the League to an independent study and lecture forum, Svenska Studieförbundet (The Swedish Study League). The first president was Aksel G. S. Josephson, librarian at the John Crerar library in Chicago.

The League was a strong success and spanned 40 years of adult education. Some of the most noteworthy speakers from over the League's years of activity included Clarence Darrow, famous lawyer and humanitarian; Professor Anton Carlson of the University of Chicago; historian Leland Carlson; and Scott Nearing, world famous socialist, economist, and later champion of the "back-to-the-land" movement. Lecture topics always varied widely, ranging from talks on Chinese culture of the 20th century or Roosevelt's New Deal to Swedish poetry, photography, or inflammations of the nose and throat. Most lectures in the early years were given in Swedish, depending on whether or not the designated speaker knew Swedish. The last lecture given in Swedish was in 1936.

During the 1919-1920 season, a literary publication called *Ljus* (Light) was published. Another publication, the history of the League as put forth in the 1946 commemorative booklet,

An Adult Education Experiment in Scandinavian Tradition, was written by Henry Bengston and Gunnar Adolfson.

In 1926, it was decided to change the name of the organization from Svenska Studieförbundet/Swedish Study League to the Swedish Educational League (Svenska Bildings Förbundet).

Other groups which joined the League and gave support to its activities were the Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott (run by a Swedish-American temperance club) from 1925-1938; Verdandi Lodge Number 3 of the International Order of Svithiod 1926-1928; the Scandinavian Workers Educational League (a similar forum set up by a Swedish Socialist Club) from 1928-1933; and the second district of the International Order of Good Templars from 1931 until the League's end.

Lecture series were carried on strongly into the 1940's, when the League finally experienced a decline in popularity. The last years' activities were poorly attended, and the last lecture and the end of the Swedish Educational League came in 1956.

PROVENANCE: The records of the Swedish Educational League were held by Henry Bengston after its disbanding in 1956. After his death in 1974, Bengston's daughter donated the records to the Swedish-American Historical Society Archives.

RELATED COLLECTIONS: Henry Bengtson Papers, SAAGC Manuscript Series 2.

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS: There are no access restrictions on the materials, and the collection is open to all members of the public. However, the researcher assumes full responsibility for conforming with the laws of libel, privacy, and copyright that may be involved in the use of this collection.

PROCESSOR: Daniel M. Olson, October 1983-February 1984.

SEPARATION RECORD: Two photographs were removed from the collection and placed in the Archival Photograph Collection: A portrait of Gustav L. Larson, one of the founders of the Swedish Educational League; and a group picture of the first officers of the League.

INVENTORY BY FOLDER TITLE:

FOLDER TITLE	DATES	BOX	FOLDER
Announcements to Members	1917, 1919,1927?, 1931,1937, and n.d.	2	1
Correspondence between the League and prospective speakers and lecturers	1917	2	8
Correspondence	1918	2	9
Correspondence	1919	2	10
Correspondence	1920-1947, and n.d.	2	11
Correspondence.	n.d.	2	12
Financial	1925-1941	2	4

Financial and Membership ledger	1917-1918 and 1919-1922	2	3
Lecture bulletins (incomplete)	1917-1937, and n.d.	2	6
Letterheads and stationery	n.d.	2	15
Manuscripts for and one copy of 1946 commemorative booklet entitled *Swedish Educational League: An Adult Education Experiment in Scandinavian Tradition*	1946	1	2
Membership lists and book	1924-1932, and n.d.	2	2
Minutes	1917-1921	1	3
Minutes	1924	1	4
Minutes	1925	1	5
Minutes	1926	1	6
Minutes	1926-1932	1	9
Minutes	1927	1	7
Minutes	1927-1933	1	8
Newspaper clippings and articles by Henry Bengston on the history of the League	n.d.	1	1
Notes from speeches and introductions, and a resolution denouncing the 1941 Nazi-Soviet Pact	1917, 1926, 1935, c. 1941, and n.d.	2	7
Press releases and publicity materials	1926, 1937, 1941, 1950, and n.d.	2	13
Season programs (incomplete)	1916-1954 (missing: 1918-1924, 1951-1952, 1954-1955, 1955-1956)	2	5
Swedish Educational League publication *Ljus*	1919-1920	2	14

CONTAINER LIST:

BOX	FOLDER	FOLDER TITLES	SPAN DATES
1	1	Constitution and Bylaws	c.1917, 1925
1	2	Newspaper clippings and articles by Henry Bengston on the history of the League	1936-1937, 1940, 1966, n.d.
1	3	Manuscripts for and one copy of 1949 commemorative booklet entitled *Swedish Educational League: An Adult Education Experiment in Scandinavian Tradition*	1949, 1924
1	4	Minutes	1917-1921
1	5	Minutes	1924
1	6	Minutes	1925
1	7	Minutes	1926

1	8	Minutes	1927
1	9	Minutes	1927-1933
1	10	Minutes	1926-1932
2	1	Announcements to Members	1917, 1919, 1927?, 1931, 1937, n.d.
2	2	Membership lists and book	1924-1932, n.d.
2	3	Financial and Membership ledger	1917-1918, 1919-1922
2	4	Financial	1925-1941
2	5	Season programs (missing: 1918-1924, 1951-1952, 1954-1955, 1955-1956)	1916-1954
2	6	Lecture bulletins (incomplete)	1917-1937, n.d.
2	7	Notes from speeches and introductions, and a resolution denouncing the 1941 Nazi-Soviet Pact	1917, 1926, 1935, c.1941, n.d.
2	8	Correspondence between the League and prospective speakers and lecturers	1917
2	9	Correspondence	1918
2	10	Correspondence	1919
2	11	Correspondence	1920-1947, n.d.
2	12	Correspondence	n.d.
2	13	Press releases and publicity materials	1926, 1937, 1941, 1950, n.d.
2	14	Swedish Educational League publication *Ljus*	1919-1920
2	15	Letterheads and stationary	n.d.