

Vår Historia

SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

THE SWENSSONS AND BETHANY COLLEGE



PUBLISHED
BI-MONTHLY



CONTENTS

Swenssons	1
Bethany College	2
Photos	2
Old Main Art	3
Program/Donate	3
SVHA Info	4



Lindsborg, Wis.
GRAND GALLERIES
Rock Island, Ill.

Now that classes are underway in Bethany College's 136th year, A reflection on the founder and his family is surely in order. SVHA President Chris Abercrombie wrote a splendid bio on Dr. Carl Swensson:

The Reverend Doctor Carl Aaron Swensson, founder of Bethany College and its second president, was born in Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania in 1857. In 1879 at 22 he answered the call to be pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Linds-

borg, replacing the Reverend Olof Olsson who had lead the group of Swedish settlers to the Smoky Valley in 1869. Olsson had moved to join the faculty of Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. Within six months of his arrival Swensson proposed the establishment of a Lutheran school in Lindsborg. The congregation enthusiastically endorsed their new pastor's plan. A portion of the church's land in the northeast section of Lindsborg was set aside for the new institution. In his book *Bethany in Kansas* author and historian Dr. Emery Lindquist describes Swensson as "...not only a dreamer but a dynamic man of action".

On October 15, 1881 ten students, all at least 12 years' of age and each paying a tui-



tion fee of \$5.00, gathered in the sacristy of Bethany Lutheran Church for the first classes. The list of enrollees shows that Bethany was a coeducational institution from the beginning. J. A. Udden was hired as the teacher for the Bethany Academy.

Swensson worked tirelessly to promote and fund the new academy. A frame building, now part of the Heritage Square at the Old Mill Museum complex, was purchased and moved to the location of the present-day Presser Hall.

THE SWENSSONS AND BETHANY COLLEGE CON'T.

Lane Hart, a 3-story brick building, was constructed in 1883. Lane Hart served as the college building, from dorm rooms to cafeteria to class and practice rooms until the large 5-story Old Main opened in 1886. Old Main was razed in 1968 to make way for the Wallerstadt Learning Center class room and library buildings. Lane Hart, ultimately used as a girls' dorm, was declared a fire danger and razed in the 1980's.

It's interesting to note that Dr. Swensson was so persuasive and charismatic that he was able to get the town's people to move their cemetery from the site he wanted for Old Main, relocating the bodies a mile east in what is now Elmwood Cemetery. To raise badly needed funds for

the new Academy Dr. Swensson and his wife Alma called a rehearsal of Handel's oratorio "Messiah" in December 1881. Even though many of the volunteer singers had trouble with the English words Mrs. Swensson was a patient teacher and had the chorus and orchestra ready for a number of performances in the Smoky Valley during Holy Week of 1882. Thus was born the Bethany College Oratorio Society that has presented Handel's masterpiece every Holy Week but one. That year's rendition was interrupted by the Spanish flu epidemic but made up later in the year keeping the yearly performance record intact.

A die-hard Republican, Swensson is quoted as having

declared: "A Swede is the best thing in Europe, an American is the best thing in the United States and a Swedish American Republican is the best thing in the world." -- Carl Aaron Swensson to a Republican rally in Moline, Illinois.

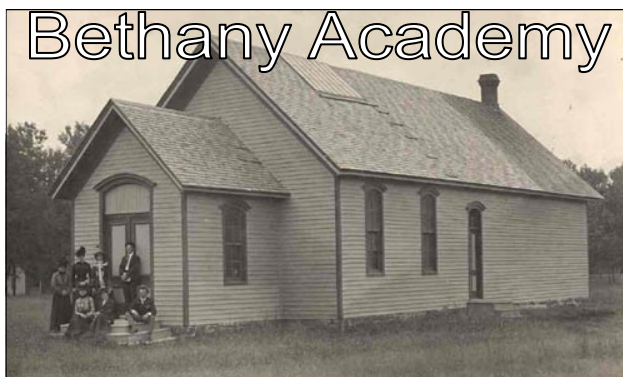
The sad news of Dr. Swensson's death, while on a trip to Los Angeles to promote Bethany College, was received on February 14, 1904. He was only 46 years' of age.

* Carl and Alma were married September of 1880 and had two children, Bertha Maria Fredrika, born in 1882 and Annie Hilma Theodora in 1885. Annie "Theo" as she would be called, became a successful and beloved Professor at Bethany as well.

Mrs. Swensson believed in equal rights. She took an emphatic stand for women suffragettes. Also, when Gov. Henry Allen's chauffeur, who was African-American and was told he couldn't stay in Lindsborg, Mrs. Swensson offered him a room in the

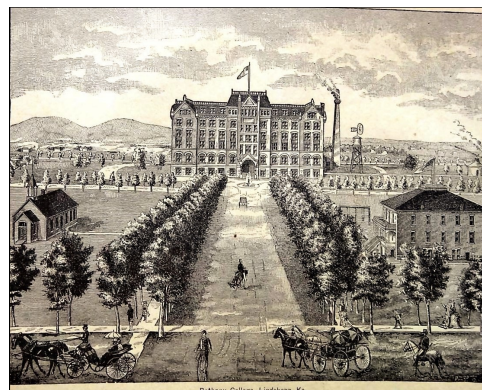
Parsonage, he was not allowed to accept it though. Being an impeccable hostess, which was expected of an important pastor's wife, she entertained a variety of people, important and just regular folks and did so with a style she learned in Sweden. Alma lived to be 80 and died of a stroke in 1939. This photo was taken by Life magazine photographer Herbert Gehr just months before her death. Alma Swensson Hall was dedicated May 30th, 1949 as a memorial to this fine lady.

**added by Tim S. VP*





These two etchings of Bethany College were drawn for the 1887 Kansas Atlas—only one was used, do you know which one?



SVHA 2017 - 2018 Program Schedule

Once again our Program Chair, Elly Ostlind, has put together a spectacular and informative schedule this academic cycle.

- **Sept. 12, 2017**—"The Cowboy" presented by Jim Gray, Executive Director of the National Drovers Hall of Fame, author of "Head 'em up and move 'em out".
- **Nov. 14, 2017**—"History of the Opat family, Lindsborg" presented by Jason Opat, CEO of Integrated Media Group
- **Jan. 9, 2018**—Anna James, her home country of Uzbekistan and the chess connection to Lindsborg. Anna is the Executive Director of the Anatoly Karpov Chess School in Lindsborg.
- **March 13, 2018**—"From Lindsborg to France and back: The Lindsborg Boys During WWI" presented by Dr. Tom Jorsch, Bethany College History Professor.
- **May 8, 2018**—"The Orphan Train" presented by Shaley George, Curator of the National Orphan Train Complex, Concordia KS.

Programs will be held 7:30 pm at:

Bethany Home Activity Room, 321 N. Chestnut, Lindsborg.

Please cut along the dotted line

Smoky Valley Historical Association
P.O. Box 255
Lindsborg, KS. 67456

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year

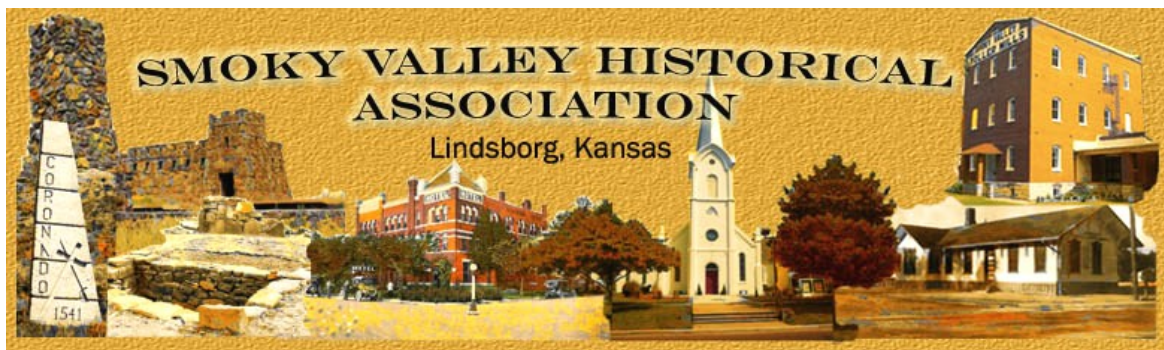


Smoky Valley Historical Association is a non-profit organization and is registered under 501(c)3

All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.

Please mail to P.O. Box listed above.

Thank You!



The Smoky Valley Historical Association

Board of Directors

Chris Abercrombie - President
 Tim Stewart - Vice President
 Julie-Ann Neywick - Secretary
 Lenora Lynam - Treasurer
 Elly Ostlind - Program Chair
 Marvin Johnson
 Chester G. Peterson
 Dr. Duane Fredrickson - Emeritus

Interested?

We have two BOD positions open. Email to info@lindsborghistory.org

Meetings

We have bi-monthly meetings starting with January and held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Bethany Home. All meetings are in the Activities Room. We have five meetings per year as July is skipped. Program starts at 7:30 p.m. with topics of local historical interest. Come join us!



Funding

Membership contributions are the SVHA's major source of on-going funding. A free-will donation in any amount will secure your membership in the Association for the year. Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year.

Grants, such as those awarded by the Kansas Humanities Council, are also available from time-to-time to further the mission of the SVHA.

Smoky Valley Historical Mission

The purpose of this association shall be to collect, arrange and preserve historical data, books, pamphlets and manuscripts pertaining to the early history and settlement of our community in general and the City of Lindsborg in particular; to preserve and beautify places of historical interest in our city, its vicinity, and properties entrusted to the association; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.

Contact Us

You can e-mail us at:

info@lindsborghistory.org
 or mail to:

Smoky Valley Historical
 Association, Inc.
 PO Box 255
 Lindsborg, KS 67456

Check our Facebook page for the most up-to-date information concerning the Smoky Valley Historical Association.



CORONADO HEIGHTS PARK

Official T-shirt

CLOSE-OUT

\$10.00 each!
(Plus tax - All sizes same price)

Adult/Youth sizes limited or gone - ask for sizes Available!

ON-LINE ORDERS:
www.smokyvalleyhistory.org

AVAILABLE LOCALLY AT:
Old Mill Museum
 120 E. Mill St.
 Lindsborg



Thank you for your contributions, and supporting the historical preservation of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley of Central Kansas.

Our pioneers left their legacy long after they were gone, so can you. Managing estates, bequests, and gifts through retirement plans can help keep our preservation ongoing and long-lasting.