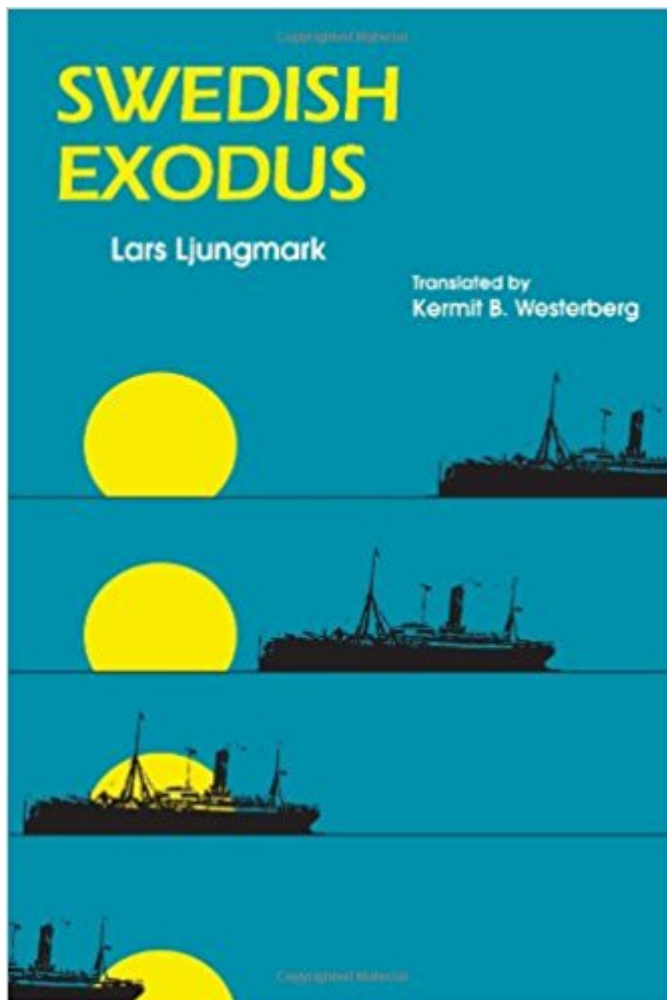




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Swedish Exodus



Synopsis

"America fever" gripped Sweden in the middle of the nineteenth century, seethed to a peak in 1910, when one-fifth of the world's Swedes lived in America, cooled during World War I, and chilled to dead ash with the advent of the Great Depression in 1930. *Swedish Exodus*, the first English translation and revision of Lars Ljungmark's *Den Stora Utvandringen*, recounts more than a century of Swedish emigration, concentrating on such questions as who came to America, how the character of the emigrants changed with each new wave of emigration, what these people did when they reached their adopted country, and how they gradually became Americanized. Ljungmark's essential challenge was to capture in a factual account the broad sweep of emigration history. But often he narrows his focus to look closely at those who took part in this mass migration. Through historical records and personal letters, Ljungmark brings many of these people back to life. One young woman, for example, loved her parents, but loved America more: "I never expect to speak to you in this life. . . . Your loving daughter unto death." Like most immigrants, she never expected to return. Another immigrant wrote back seeking a wife: "I wonder how you have it and if you are living. . . . Are you married or unmarried? If you are unmarried, you can have a good home with me." Ljungmark also focuses closely on some of the leaders: Peter Cassel, a liberal temperance supporter and free-church leader whose community in America prospered; Hans Mattson, a colonel in the Civil War and founder of a colony in Minnesota; Erik Jansson, a book burner, self-proclaimed messiah, and founder of the Bishop Hill Colony; Gustaf Unonius, a student idealist and founder of a Wisconsin colony that faltered. The story of Swedish immigrants in the United States is the story in miniature of the greatest mass migration in human history, that of thirty-five million Europeans who left their homes to come to America. It is a human story of interest not only to Swedes but to everyone.

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Customer Reviews

"Swedish Exodus" is an indispensable reference for Swedish researchers. In these pages one can find out why so many Swedes decided to come to America, how they managed it, where they emigrated to in America, how many came during each year of the mass migration, how many remigrated each year, how many came from each major Swedish district, and how they did in America. It even outlines the consequences of the emigration on Sweden. It is nicely indexed, contains a useful bibliography, and is illustrated with photos and drawings.

Being of Swedish descent I always wondered why my forebears came here. Now I know. Concise. Not wordy. Good for someone that wants a good simple explanation of the Swedish Exodus.

The chapters of this book set out the points of major importance about Swedish emigration to America. This is good as a place to start reading about Scandinavian emigration studies and its solid selected bibliography is helpful for guidance to more academic works.

Although the first Swedes to come to America founded their own colony bordering what later became Philadelphia and stretched into New Jersey in 1638, it was not until over two hundred years later in the 1850's that Swedish immigration to America reached a substantial level. This book tells the interesting story of how over a million Swedish immigrants, from 1851 to 1930, came to establish themselves in the United States. Included are accounts of a number of immigrant histories and how they came to settle in various parts of our country, usually in the Midwest. One learns that Sweden in those days was far from the progressive nation that we now know, but instead a heavily stratified society lacking in religious freedom outside of the state-sanctioned Lutheran church. Not only did many Swedes find the freedom and opportunity that they sought in America, their immigration had a lasting influence on Sweden itself as it moved towards becoming a more attractive country for its existing citizens--thereby dissuading them from voting with their feet and leaving the old country for America's beaoning shores.

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