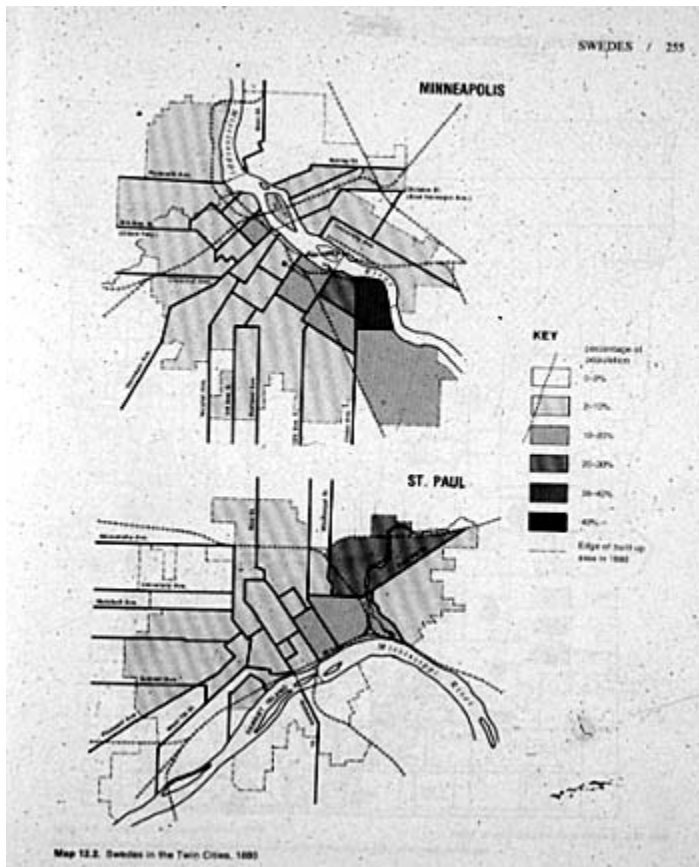


# From Swede Hollow to Arlington Hills, From Snoose Boulevard to Minnehaha Parkway: Swedish Neighborhoods of the Twin Cities

By David A. Lanegran, Ph.D. Macalester College St. Paul, Minn

It is estimated that nearly sixty percent of the Swedes who came to the United States settled in the cities of the upper Midwest and Pacific Northwest. Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth and Seattle all had sizable Swedish populations. The immigrants moved into cities whose forms and functions were determined by the industrializing mass society of the late nineteenth century. The industrialized culture produced urban landscapes that contained little evidence of the European cultures of the immigrants occupying them. Nonetheless, the urban neighborhoods occupied by Swedes in the Twin Cities are quite interesting. They ranged from some of the Cities' rawest slums to fine pastoral suburbs adjacent to luxurious parks.



Beginning in the 1880s, Swedish immigration to the Twin Cities grew dramatically. John Rice reports that, by the end of the decade, Minnesota became the state with the largest Swedish population with approximately 60,000 immigrants. Of that number 26,000 or 45% settled in the Twin Cities. The migration continued at a rapid rate until the outbreak of the European War. By 1913, about 280,000 people left Sweden most of them young and single and looking for work. Minnesota's Swedish population peaked in 1905 at about 126,000 of which 38,000 lived in the Twin Cities. Chicago had a larger population of Swedes, but about 7.5% of the Twin Cities' population was Swedish. No other large city had such a high percentage. The large number and high proportion of Swedes made it possible for them to create their own neighborhoods. Although the majority of the Swedes lived in a few

Illustration 1: The distribution of Swedes in St. Paul and Minneapolis from *They Choose Minnesota* by John Rice. The distribution of Swedes in each city shows the concentration in a few low-cost neighborhoods near the downtowns and along the railroad tracks.

neighborhoods, for reasons that will become clearer later in this paper, they cannot be considered a ghettoized population.

The Cities attracted immigrants for one basic reason. They offered employment for people with limited ability to speak English. The Swedish neighborhoods in both Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as the much smaller community in South St. Paul shared many common features. The overwhelming majority of the immigrants were of common origins with few skills. They were willing to work, however, and many had strong backs. Given their status they could most readily find jobs in the developing industrial sector. The railroads, lumber mills, flour mills, slaughter houses, construction firms, cabinet shops, garment factories, breweries all welcomed good workers. The first residential communities were located within walking distance of the factory zones. In those days walking distance was up to three miles. Another very important form of employment was domestic service, though no permanent community of domestics developed.

### **St. Paul**

Although no powerful Lutheran church spire challenges the Dome of the Roman Catholic Cathedral's dominate position on the skyline of St. Paul, Swedes and their decedents made up a significant proportion of the city's population for most of its history. From the time of the city's first land boom in 1857 until the end of the great European migration about 1920, St. Paul's manufacturing and transportation industries attracted immigrants from both northern and southern Europe. Germans were the largest single ethnic group until 1920. The decline of German immigrants, combined with the increase of the Swedish population made Swedes the largest group of foreign-born residents in the city by 1930.

Swedish immigrants came to the Twin Cities along the same route that carried their countrymen to the Chisago Lakes area northeast of St. Paul. However, instead of heading up the St. Croix to take up the wooded farmland, they disembarked at St. Paul. Many of the immigrants lacked the capital to begin farming and hoped to make quick money in town.

St. Paul was the leading port of the Upper Mississippi. It is located on the north side of the river where the valley occupied by Phalen Creek and Trout Brook joins that of the Mississippi. This tributary valley is the largest break in the 80- to 100-foot cliffs that wall the river. This site was selected by the founders of the city because it allowed them to develop a wagon road with a gentle grade to the uplands away from the river. The main section of the city developed on the high and drier ground west of the marshy creek mouth.

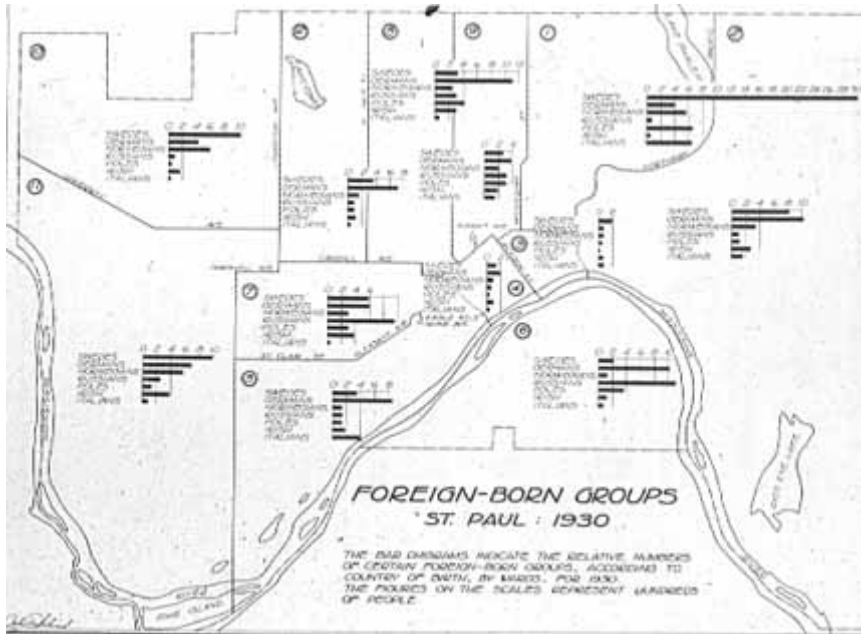


Illustration 2: This map of Foreign-born groups in St. Paul in 1930 shows the exceptionally large population of Swedish people on the East Side. Map from Calvin Schmid, *Social Saga of Twin Cities*.

Founded by New Englanders and people from the Mid-Atlantic states, St. Paul soon became known for its fur trade, port activities, wholesaling and healthy climate. Together with Minneapolis, the city of St. Paul dominated the distribution of manufactured goods, news and people in the region. Although Stillwater was the largest city in the area when the Territory of Minnesota was created in 1848, by 1850 St. Paul was Minnesota's largest city.

The Swedes came to St. Paul before mass transportation systems were developed. As a result travel in the cities was slow and difficult. Most people walked to work, to school, and to attend social functions. They generally tried to live close to their jobs because people worked long hours for five and some times six days a week. All residential communities, commercial districts and places of employment in St. Paul during the early years were located close to the river landing. Near by the port were the main commercial, financial, entertainment and warehouse districts of the city. When the railroad replaced the steamboat and began to dominate transportation in the region after the Civil War, their tracks and repair shops were located in level creek beds. Soon the railroad landscape almost surrounded the city core. Further away from the city center, in the small stream valleys, mills and breweries were established. Swedes lived near all these sites.

The wealthy of the city first lived to north and east of downtown in an area know as Lafayette Park. But later, in 1870s and 1880s, they moved west of the center to St. Anthony Hill and Summit Avenue. Some Swedes lived in the monumental Victorian mansions west of city center as servants. In fact, many a "Swede Girl" got her start in America by living in a cramped garret room and waiting on the elite of the Hill District.

## The East Side

This configuration of housing and employment opportunities determined the location of the Scandinavian community in St. Paul. Through out the nineteenth century, Scandinavians generally lived on the east side across the railroad tracks from downtown and on the other side of town from the Hill District. The Swedes were highly concentrated on the East Side as can be seen in Swedish Born Population of St. Paul Minnesota 1895-1939).

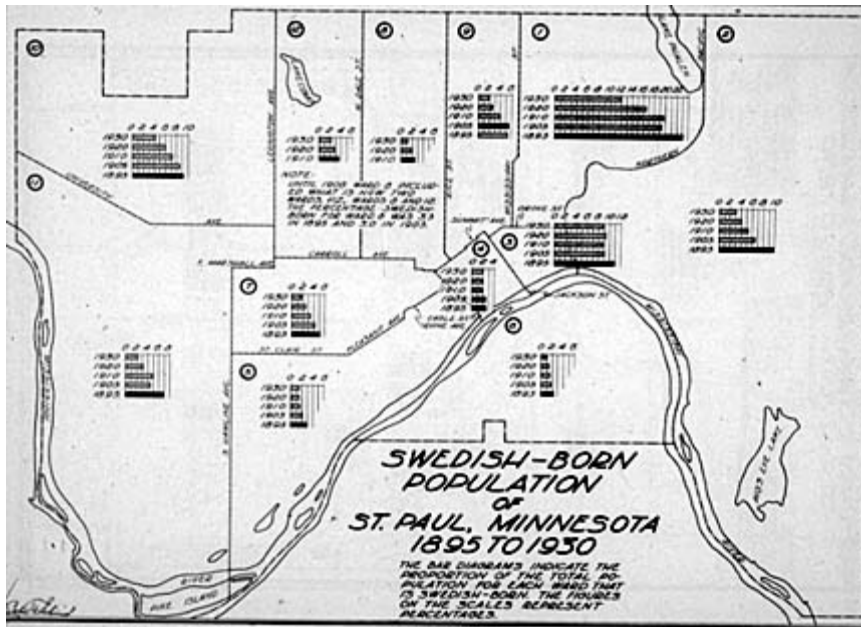


Illustration 3: The pattern of Swedish born and foreign stock (children of parents born outside the United States) shows the pronounced concentration on the East Side. Map from Calvin Schmid, *Social Saga of Twin Cities*.

In fact the map understates the Swedish domination of the area because it shows only foreign-born and ignores the children of the immigrants born in this country. By 1930, after the period of greatest migration from Sweden had ended, over half the Swedish-born population was still on the East Side. However, during the late 1930s and after, new residential areas in the western portion of the city attracted increasing numbers of the more affluent. In these new middle class neighborhoods, Swedes made up a very small fraction of the total population, and became Americanized.

The reasons behind this marked concentration of Swedish immigrants are relatively clear. Although there was no organized effort to ghettoize Swedes there were several reasons for them to cluster on the East Side of their own accord. First, several places of employment for unskilled and semi-skilled labor were located on the East Side. Because people walked to work, a home in the area was very convenient. Second, the Swedes knew about this area because it is on the way to the major cluster of Swedes in the Chisago Lakes area. All immigrants going to and from the river landing to the rural community would pass through the East Side. Those moving to town tended to locate on the side of the city closest to their rural home area. Third, once the first group was established it attracted others by the typical chain immigration process. Most immigrants

came to St. Paul on the advice of a friend or relative who had come before them. The newcomers naturally sought out their relatives or friends and tried to live near them.

Fourth, ethnic areas attracted newcomers because these places functioned as transition zones in which people could gradually move from their own culture to the dominate Anglo-American culture. In such areas, shopkeepers spoke the languages of the immigrants community and sold traditional items. These communities were havens of comfort from the pressures of acculturation. We must remember that the immigrants felt threatened by the diversity around them and many of their fears were justified. For example, Gust Nygren a six foot five, former lumberjack, felt it necessary to carry a cheap 25 caliber pistol in his pocket when he went to work in the slaughter houses in South St. Paul, during the first decade of the twentieth century. Other Swedes working there carried in their boots, dirks they had customized from the butcher knives supplied by the company.

The fifth major factor was the lack of opportunities to settle elsewhere in the city. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, there were few places in the city where unskilled or semi-skilled labor lived. New immigrants could go to Frogtown, the marshy area to the north of University Avenue and west of the Capitol, but Frogtown was occupied by German-speaking people. They could have settled along West Seventh Street to the southwest of downtown, but this area was also occupied by Germans and Bohemians and did not offer extensive employment opportunities.

All of these factors worked together to create the East Side settlement. Once it was established it took on a positive image, reflecting the images the immigrants had of the themselves and was never classed a ghetto. East-siders could not imagine a better place to live. It was a large and diverse section of the city, ranging from inner city manufacturing and housing to suburban residential areas and parks. Swedes lived in all parts from the worst to the best.

### **Svenska Dallen**

Undoubtedly the most famous part of the East Side was Swede Hollow or Svenska Dallen. (Illustration 4: Swede Hollow) The hollow is actually the lower part of the Phalen Creek Valley, a narrow ravine about three-quarters of a mile long with sides 60 to 80 feet high. The valley was used by rail road tracks to Duluth. The Swede Hollow community was first occupied by people other then Swedes. Trappers, lumbermen and casual laborers squatted in the Hollow in the 1840s. The Swedes began to occupy the shacks in the 1850s. They dominated the place for about half a century. The creek attracted industry very early: the North Star Brewery (1855); Brainard Mills (1856); City Mills (1860); Excelsior Brewery (1863); Union Mills (1864); St. Paul Mills (1867); and North Star Mills (1872). These establishments, together with the railroad and business in the city center, provided jobs for the early settlers and later the Swedish immigrants. (Illustration 5: Photo of Swede Hollow in 1905 - showing mill, brewery and Hamm's house.)

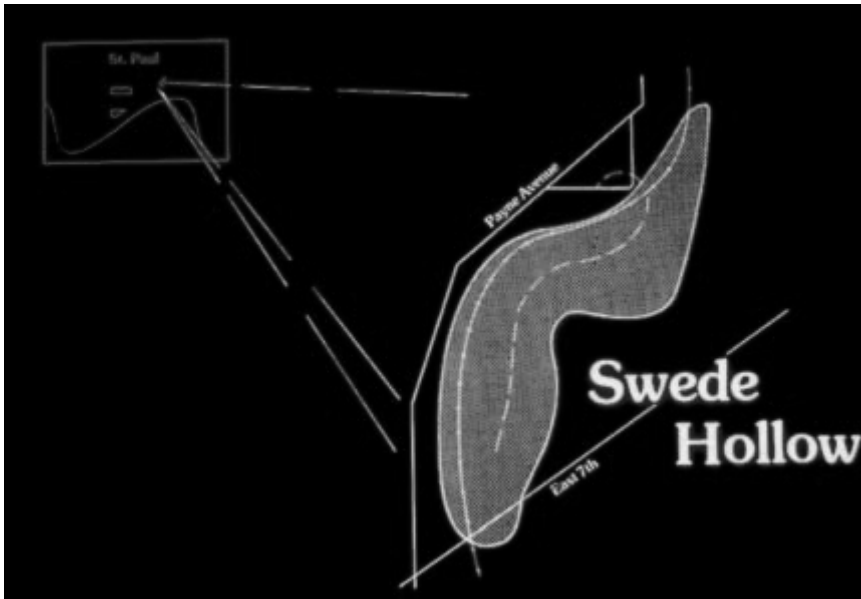


Illustration 4  
Swede Hollow was the name for the community in the valley of Phalen Creek that was roughly adjacent to Payne Avenue.



Illustration 5: This view shows the primary features of the Hollow at about 1905. The Swedes are located in the vernacular buildings (a.k.a. Shacks) in the valley. A mainline to northern Minnesota and Wisconsin ran along a cut on the west side of the valley. The Hamm's mansion dominated the east side and the Hamm's brewery with its powerful smoke stack dominates everything. This is a representative view of the early industrial cities before the wealthy capitalists moved to the suburbs to avoid the atmosphere of their factories and the squalor of the low income Illunneighborhoods.

During the last years of the nineteenth century Swede Hollow served as a funnel through which many Swedes entered the East Side. Swede Hollow was a "stepping stone" neighborhood, a temporary home where immigrants stayed only until they could afford to move up the hill. It was a place where impoverished newcomers could find cheap housing while they got started. It also served as a refuge for people who had fallen on hard times and needed a place to stay while they pulled themselves together again. It was a slum. As can be seen in (Illustration 6: Plate 4 Reuben Donnelly, *Donnelley Atlas of St. Paul*. 1982), unlike the residential areas surrounding it, the Hollow was not divided into a regular grid pattern of streets and alleys. In fact, the one street in the Hollow was much more like a country lane, meandering along the side of the creek. The steep valley walls prevented the laying out of neat town lots as in the rest of the city. Instead, the houses



Illustration 6: This insurance map from 1892 shows all the individual lots and buildings on the lower East Side. The valley of Phalen Creek is actually Swede Hollow with individual houses, but no property lines are shown. The fact that the power company had the right to flood the valley to establish a water-power site prevented the sale of the land, so the Swedes were verifiable squatters.

were crowded and clustered close together where space was available. Residents got their water from a natural spring and used the creek as their sewer. Of course, each house had its outdoor privy and some residents even cantilevered their outhouses over the creek. The houses were small, largely homemade, with a variety of additions and modifications. Most families had gardens and barnyard animals.

The slum in the valley was dominated by the Hamm's brewery and the mansion of Theodore Hamm, its owner. In those days the captains of industry were proud of their accomplishments and liked to look at their factories. Their status was so great they could even live near a slum. We do not know if Mr. Hamm liked to look at the Swedes down in the hollow, however. In 1881, Swedes in the Hollow were joined by Irish immigrants. The new comers lived in portion of the valley between the Seventh Street and Fourth Street bridges. This community was called Connamara Patch. Patch is the most derogatory term for a settlement in the English language. Being located down stream from the privies of Swede Hollow was bad all year round, but it was worst in the spring when the rising creek encouraged a massive neighborhood clean-up. Anything that was unwanted was thrown into the flood tide and pushed off downstream with poles. (Illustration 7: Creek and houses)

According to Hollow resident, Nels M. Hokanson, there was friction between the groups during those years. He wrote vividly about the coming of the Irish:  
*Some were Irish, and their numbers grew steadily along with their chickens, ducks, pigs, goats and other animals. Once the young men even brought some wild western horses, whose kicking and neighing disturbed our sleep for several nights. The combative Irish boys, whom father called the "damnable Irish," threw stones at the drum during Salvation Army services, they picked fights with Swedes and harassed me at every opportunity.*



Illustration 7: Phalen Creek during a dry period. This provides a sense of scale for the neighborhood. The houses were small and built with scavenged lumber.

Other Hokanson reminiscences of family life in the hollow provide a rather idyllic picture:

*Winter interfered with the arrival of the vegetable wagon because the only road was often closed by snow drifts. Father would be called out to help clear the tracks when heavy snow and freezing halted streetcar operations. Between jobs, he cut wood and kept close to the stove where he liked to read the Swedish paper. Sometimes he sang folk tunes accompanied by his dragspel (accordion) which he kept under the bed. In the evenings, friends would often come to share the warmth, drink coffee, take snuff or smoke their curved Swedish pipes. Mother spun wool or knitted and listened to the talk from her place in a corner under a picture of King Oscar II of Sweden. Sister was put to bed early. I liked to sit in her little rocking chair and watch the reflection from the wood fire while I listened to the news the visitors reported: a Swede found dead---probably from a heart attack, another beaten by a drunken Irish, a Swedish couple hauled off in the paddy wagon after a fight.*

Conversations in the Hokanson household also dealt with politics, economics and better places to live and work. The family left the Hollow for Aitken, Minnesota, and in so doing was typical of many other families who passed through on their way to their dream houses. (Illustration 8: A view of housing in hollow during winter)



Illustration 8: Swede Hollow in winter. In this scene we can see how the householders have built fences around the houses and left the remainder as common ground.



Although Hokanson and many other former residents of the Hollow interviewed in the 1970s looked back on their childhood in Swede Hollow with nostalgia, public health workers who visited the area remembered the numerous cases of whooping cough, pneumonia, undernourishment and other childhood diseases. The survivors were tough. (Illustration 9: Swede Hollow in Fall; close up of houses, creek, outhouses and paths)



Illustration 9: There were no city services in the Hollow, so outhouses were hung over the creek to provide some sort of plumbing. The houses show many signs of modifications made by "jack-knife carpenters" who were famous for building "by guess and by golly." The cantilevered outhouses must have given big Swedes some anxious moments!

Although the community continued to be called Swede Hollow, a series of immigrant groups followed the Swedes through Svenska Dallen after 1900, First Italian became the dominant language on the lower East Side, and the hollow was known for the smell of fermenting grapes each fall. The Italians' place in the Hollow was taken over by Mexicans after World War II. (Illustration 10: Chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe) In



Illustration 10: The Chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe was established in a box car for Mexican residents of the Hollow.

1956, the spring that had served as the community's water supply for over a century was declared unsafe. The fourteen families occupying the hollow were evicted and the houses were burned by the city fire department. (Illustration 11: Houses burning in Swede Hollow) The Phalen Creek community, known as Swede Hollow long after the Swedes abandoned it, was obliterated.



Illustration 11: In 1952 the St. Paul Fire Department burned down houses in Swede Hollow after the entire community was condemned.

### **Arlington Hills and The Greater East Side**

When families became financial stable, they left the Hollow and they moved north and east up the slopes into Arlington Hills or further out toward Lake Phalen. A strong residential community developed in the first decades of the twentieth century on what was then the fringe of the city. It was subdivided by real estate speculators who sold lots to individuals who then built modest middle class homes and planted neat lawns and gardens.



The basic pattern of the neighborhoods was controlled by the grid pattern streets and topography. Hills were occupied by wealthier people. The lowest areas were avoided because of the problem of wet basements. The community developed a pattern of detached wooden or stucco houses in a few basic styles: the St. Paul eclectic cube (Illustration 12), the bungalow, the story-and-a-half (illustration 13), or duplexes. There were only a handful of

Illustration 12: The middle class Swedes who moved up the street from Swede Hollow built houses that were designed for the new industrial culture of the United States. No elements of Scandinavian architecture were incorporated into the landscape. Here is a rather modest eclectic cube or four square.



Illustration 13: This story and a half was built by a railroad machinist for his wife and three children. To save money the basement was added later.

apartment houses. The community wholeheartedly adopted the own your own home mentality. The builders used plan book designs for these houses. (Illustration 14: Page from house catalogue) That is, they went to one of the many lumberyards in the city and

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**FIRST FLOOR.**  
 Parlor - - - 12 feet by 20 feet 6 inches  
 Bedroom - - 8 feet 6 inches by 11 feet 9 inches  
 Kitchen - - - 14 feet by 11 feet 9 inches  
 Pantry - - - 8 feet 2 inches by 3 feet 6 inches

**SECOND FLOOR.**  
 Front Bedroom, 8 feet 2 inches by 10 feet 6 inches  
 Rear Bedroom, 8 feet 6 inches by 11 feet 9 inches  
 Large Bath - - 14 feet by 11 feet 9 inches  
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Size: Width, 24 feet; length, 28 feet, exclusive of porch.

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Illustration 14: Most houses in the lower income neighborhoods were based on a few standardized plans that were provided by the lumber companies. Because the areas were built up by small scale contractors, there were no large areas with identical buildings that characterize the developments of the 1950s.

browsed the books of those plans available there. After selecting the basic plan they liked, they modified it to suit their tastes and incomes. The dimensional lumber needed to build the house was delivered to the site. A basement was dug and foundation laid. In the first decades, homes were frequently built without basements to save money. However, the climate and culture dictated that basements would be added as soon as possible. Many, if not most, of the carpenters who built the East Side were Swedes or Scandinavian.

Churches were established and social organizations were formed. (Some said that wherever any three Swedes are gathered together, you will find two churches - see Illustration 15.) The churches had strong ethnic streaks and were not touched by the ecumenical spirit until after World War II.



Illustration 15: Several churches were built in the area. This was originally the home of the Evangelical Free Church.

Here the children went to school, people shopped, banked, worked, and, when they died, they were moved to the nearby cemetery via Carlson's Funeral Home. By late twentieth century standards the area was shockingly safe. Children and teenagers walked or rode their bikes for miles through the area. Everyone walked to school regardless of the weather. Commutes of two and one half miles were common. Young girls walked to and from the beach on Lake Phalen without the need for protection. Of course, there were many eyes watching this area. Women generally did not work outside the home and the older generation was not institutionalized. People lived in their

houses long after retirement and could monitor the streets. All through the first three quarters of the century residents of the area identified with the Greater East Side. When asked to name their neighborhood, they most often responded with the East Side. They could, when pressed, produce street names, but to a remarkable extent, they maintained an identity with the entire area.

The success of the East Side community seems to stem from its diversity. As families increased in wealth they could adjust their housing conditions and neighborhood status by moving further out toward Lake Phalen and the edge of the city. Thus, even though the Swedes abandoned the Hollow and much of lower Payne Avenue, they remained on the East Side and maintained their institutions and the positive image of the area for over a century.

## Payne Avenue

All successful residential areas were served with local shopping streets. The East Side had two, Payne and Arcade Avenues. Arcade was also Highway 61 heading for Duluth. Although it had many establishments that served the community, its role was more like that of a thoroughfare. Payne Avenue had a more local function and got the epithet, "Snoose Boulevard."

St. Paul's "Snoose Boulevard" was the main street of the Swedish Community. According to Wilfred Anderson who had a store on the Avenue for over three decades, if you could not speak Swedish you had no business on Payne Avenue.

Just as other inner city commercial strips Payne Avenue developed in response to the needs for goods and services of the people on the East Side. Dozens of similar commercial strips developed along street-car lines in all the inner neighborhoods. Commercial development began in the late 1880s on the corners of Bradley, Bedford and Decatur near the manufacturing associated with Phalen Creek and the railroads. The first stores which sold groceries and meats, shared the street with salons, barbers and professional offices. The expansion of the commercial district northward began in earnest in 1893 when the bridge over the railroad track was completed. The streetcar line that ran along Minnehaha and then north on Payne spurred the rapid growth.

From the turn of the century until the late 1940s, the street was characterized by long established merchants who had been in business on Payne Avenue for several decades. Jacobson's bakery provided the usual daily fare plus "melt-in-your-coffee" cinnamon rusks beloved by young and old. There were several butcher shops like Westlund's and Charlie Olson's. Charlie had big barrels of herring in his store and, in the winter, stacked lutefisk like cord wood outside the door. Swenson Brothers sold furniture, the Rylanders appliances, the Borgstroms drugs, and the Setterholms groceries. A few Swedes bought their furs from Leafgren. Everyone bought coal and firewood from the Petersons, who delivered to basement coal bins. A few had their pictures taken in Erickson's Photo Studio.



The local and national economies slowed during the 1930s, but Payne Avenue and the East Side prospered after 1934, when Prohibition was repealed and Hamm's brewery could go back into full production. Through the use a great deal of political pressure Wilfred Anderson got the Swedish liquor license after the repeal of prohibition. (Illustration 16: Anderson Store) He was fond of telling of how representatives from the various

Illustration 16: Wilfred Anderson clothing store and liquor store on Payne Avenue. The signs tell us he offered a wide range of clothing for both work and social occasions.

immigrant communities lobbied the city Council to make sure that each group got its own liquor license. They did not want to deal with outsiders. Because the number of licenses was severely limited, owning a license guaranteed an entrepreneur a good income. Anderson's Liquor Store was adjacent to his merchandise market.

The Avenue seems to have thrived until the early 1950s, when nearly 165 establishments, small groceries, craftsmen's shops, dry goods stores and professional offices, usually operated by local residents, were in operation. Some of the shop keepers cemented the older community together. Most sold goods on credit to the residents and this bond of trust seems to have been very important. The merchants not only fetched desired items from the shelves, they also delivered them all through the area. During the Depression and War Years, these services were crucial.

The 1950s brought dramatic changes, however, because residents began to abuse the credit provided by the small merchant. When they had money, residents shopped for bargains at the cash and carry supermarkets. When their check was gone, they returned to the neighborhood and ran up large bills in the local stores. Grocers like Setterholm rewarded promptness and gave children bags of candy when their mothers settled their monthly accounts. But not everyone settled up, and some households owed the grocer as much as \$1500 by the middle 1950s. Nearly all the small grocers and meat markets saw their customers switch to the cash and carry stores. None of the neighborhood markets survived the 1960s. (Illustration 17: Store converted to house.)



Illustration 17: Neighborhood convenience store that was closed and converted to housing. These stores could not compete with the supermarkets that developed during the auto era.

After the 1950s, the Avenue provided a place for neighborhood residents to have casual meetings and a place where community celebrations, such as a Salvation Army parade or the Harvest Festival, might occur. These once a year events were but faint shadows of the multiple bonds that had once tied residents to merchants during the early years of the community.

## **The St. Paul Swedish Community Today**

The suburban siren call of increased living space, new homes, modern schools, churches with parking lots and increased status pulled many of the successful families of Swedish and mixed ancestry out of the old inner neighborhoods of the East Side. The younger generations, Americanized in public schools, lost most of their distinctive Swedish culture, and, no longer feeling the need to live in the Swedish community. Although most stayed in on the Greater East Side others moved to other parts of the Metro Area. The population of St. Paul's East Side decreased and grew older. There was a 16% decline between 1940 and 1970. The Scandinavian churches that had changed to English language services during the 1930s began to follow the general movement to the suburbs and the historic community began to break up. By the 1970s, the majority of the immigrant generation had sold, or was in the process of selling, their houses. Twenty years later, they are all gone. Their place was not necessarily occupied by other Scandinavians. The disappearance of the community is often told as a success story; proof that the melting pot really works. With the passing of the immigrant generation and the dispersal of the second and third generations into newer, middle class neighborhoods in the suburbs, there is no longer a recognizable geographical core of the Swedish population in St. Paul. While there are still many people of Scandinavian ancestry living on the East Side, celebrating holidays in a traditional manner, and, while some churches maintain a Scandinavian flavor, there is not one Scandinavian restaurant on the East Side.

The third and fourth generation descendants of Swedish immigrants have forgotten the life in Swede Hollow. They do not feel threatened by other groups and do not require a special spatial community. They are a part of the Twin Cities. For them and their descendants, Swede Hollow and the East Side are places through which people, who are seen only in old photos, passed on the journey toward Americanization.

## **Minneapolis**

The pattern of Swedish neighborhoods in Minneapolis is significantly different from the highly concentrated neighborhoods of St. Paul. The earliest Swedish immigrant appears to have come to Minneapolis in 1851 from Skane. He established his shoemaker's shop in the old neighborhood upstream from St. Anthony Falls. He must have been able to speak more languages than Swedish, however, because many years passed before any significant numbers of Swedes called Minneapolis home. The 1860 Federal Census enumerated no Swedes in the city. But, by 1870, there were 676 native-born Swedes in the city and, by 1900, the figure had grown to 20,035. The Swedish population peaked in 1930 at 26,515. (Illustration 18: Swedes in Minneapolis ) The total population of the city was 375,000. As in the case of St. Paul these figures do not include the second and third generations. Of all the European ethnic groups that settled in Minneapolis, the Swedes were the most numerous. In 1940 they comprised 17% of the population.

There were many more Swedes in Minneapolis than in St. Paul. There were so many Swedes in Minneapolis, they constituted the largest foreign-born group in every section of the city. This pattern reflects both the greater employment in the industrial sector of

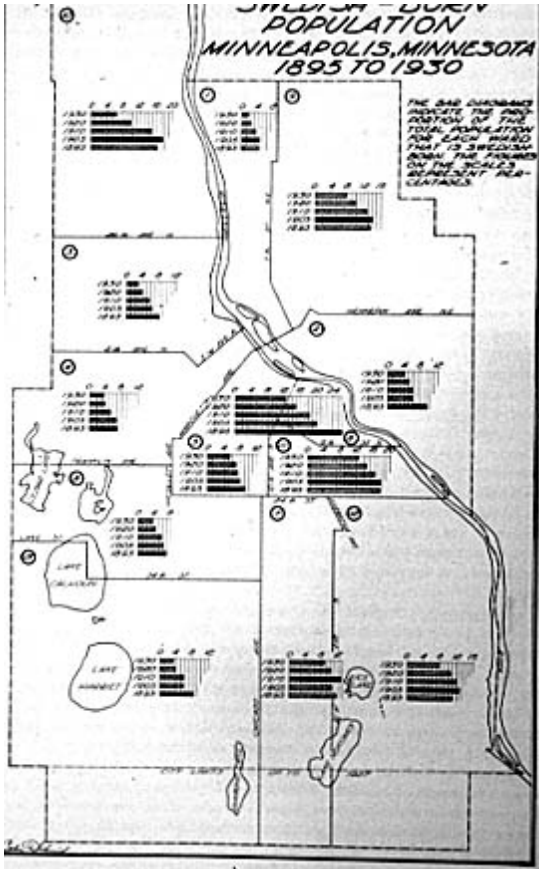


Illustration 18: The distribution of Swedes in Minneapolis was more uniform than the pattern in St. Paul.

the city and the lack of competing ethnic groups. By 1910 Minneapolis was home to 70% of all the Swedes living in the Twin Cities.

Although Swedes were everywhere, it is possible to see a pattern of concentrations. After 1870, the Swedish population increased rapidly. The city's two Swede Towns developed on the north side of the river in the Second and Ninth wards and south of the river along Washington Avenue, east of the Milwaukee Railroad Depot. This second area, known as Cedar-Riverside, became the most highly concentrated Swedish and Scandinavian section in the city. From these two central cores the Swedish population spread north west up the river. They moved east and south from the depot area into the Seward section of the city. At the turn of the

century, 25% of the population in this area was Swedish. In the other northern areas, nine to fifteen percent had come from Sweden.

The largely a self-contained Cedar Riverside neighborhood had low income housing on the river flats in an area known as Bohemian Flats and more substantial homes further south toward Franklin Avenue. There were at least two Snoose Boulevards here, Washington Avenue, the old homeless men district where the lumberjacks, farmhands and other seasonal workers hung out, and Cedar Avenue, which was lined with Scandinavian businesses, beer joints and theaters.

By the turn of the century, the population was rapidly pushing southward across the level neighborhoods of South Minneapolis. In this large area with a grid pattern of rectangular blocks, single-family houses were developed by builders in a manner similar to that described earlier. The major difference was that neighborhoods were defined by arterial streets and the generic term "South Minneapolis" was used to refer to large areas of middle class housing districts occupied by Swedes and others. Almost 44% of the immigrants in Ward 12 were born in Sweden. In addition 32% of Ward Seven and 20% of Ward Thirteen were also born in Sweden. The same was true of the northern suburban zone. About 25% of both Wards 9 and 10 were Swedish immigrants

Another concentration of blue collar Swedes lived near the industrial zone of northeast Minneapolis. This area, more commonly known for its Slavic population, was home to



Swedes until the Second World War. Swedes dominated the Maple-Hill-Columbia neighborhoods and the area south of Broadway called Dogtown. Neither of these areas housed many Scandinavians after 1950. On the west side of the river a concentration of Swedes was located in the Camden area near Shingle Creek. This working class area was home to the greatest concentration of Swedes outside of the Cedar-Riverside core. In most ways this neighborhood resembled the middle class area of south Minneapolis and the East Side of St. Paul. Families owned their own homes, worshiped in nearby churches, and children were further Americanized in the public schools.

Since the 1950s it has become increasingly difficult to determine the extent of the Swedish or Swedish American population in Minneapolis. Gradually, the ethnic community of the Swedes in Minneapolis proceeded outward. They moved first to Franklin Avenue, then to Lake Street, later to Minnehaha Parkway, and, finally, to the suburbs. Those elderly who chose not to leave the core have now passed away and little sign remains of the once exuberant community along Cedar and Riverside. Today, Mount Olivet, the largest Lutheran Church in the world located near the southern edge of Minneapolis, and dozens of suburban Lutheran churches give testimony of the modern blended Scandinavian community of the metro area.

## **Conclusion**

Redevelopment of the historic cores In 1956, after the spring that provided water for Swede Hollow residents for over a century was declared unfit for human consumption and the Mexicans living in the Hollow were evicted, the houses were burned down by the fire department. The following year, vandals burned down the unoccupied Hamm mansion. At first, the remains of Swede Hollow were neglected. Then, the valley became a site for dumping rubble from demolished buildings. Plans were made to fill in the Hollow to support a new highway toward Wisconsin. That plan failed and, in the early 1970s, the sorry looking valley was selected as a site for a park to commemorate the success of the immigrants. The plan was adopted by the St. Paul Garden Club under the leadership of philanthropist Olivia Dodge. The Club worked with the city government, the Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Park Department to clean the area and develop some amenities. The site of the old Hamm mansion was incorporated into the park and an overlook was developed. After a long struggle, the railroad right of way was paved for a recreational path, and the Hollow is now accessible to bikers and other sports enthusiasts. (Illustration 19: Bike path in Swede Hollow) Today the area surrounding the Hollow continues to attract new arrivals to the city. The Swede Hollow neighborhood continues to be home to low income households living in private residences. Cedar-Riverside on the other had is the site of one of the areas' largest public housing project, the 20 story apartment blocks overwhelms the old commercial structures on Cedar Avenue. This what remains of the bold 1960's plan to build a new town-in-town on the fringe of the University of Minnesota. This new community was to be building although the principals of urban planning developed in Sweden during the 1950-'s. Minneapolis in the late 1960's and early 1970's was very different from Stockholm in the 1950's and the plan failed. Today, rather than a vibrant mixed income community supporting a flourishing artistic scene, we have one of the cities highest concentrations of low income households.



Illustration 19: The old railroad bed in Swede Hollow has been converted to a recreational trail

Although the landscapes of the two historic Swedish neighborhoods are now quite different from each other, they are still home for new arrivals in the city. Their residents are immigrants from inner cities elsewhere in the United States, or from war torn areas in Southeast Asia or East Africa. A new ethnicity gives character to these places. Thus the processes of immigration and urbanization processes continue to determine the culture of Swede Hollow and Cedar Riverside long after the Swedes have gone.

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