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Honors Thesis

THE NORDSTJÄRNA PROJECT: RECOVERING VOICES OF
SWEDISH-MORMON MIGRATION

By
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment
of graduation requirements for University Honors

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Brigham Young University
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ABSTRACT

THE NORDSTJÄRNA PROJECT: RECOVERING VOICES OF
SWEDISH-MORMON MIGRATION

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Bachelor of Arts

This thesis investigates the Swedish-Mormon migration of the 19th century through the lens of *Nordstjärnan*, a periodical that served as a crucial link between the Swedish diaspora in Utah and their counterparts in Sweden during this era. This study compares Arnold Barton's observations of a love-hate relationship within the broader Swedish emigration to the diasporic relationship Swedish-Mormons had among themselves; suggesting that *Nordstjärnan* played a central role in portraying Swedish-Mormons as a symbiotic group compared to their countrymen. *Nordstjärnan* played this key role in reinforcing distinct Swedish-Mormon-American identity in both its positive reflection of the Swedish-Mormon identity and of immigration as a whole. This thesis utilizes *Nordstjärnan* as a primary source alongside key historical texts, contextualizing the Swedish-Mormon migration within broader immigration trends while highlighting the publication's role in facilitating dialogue, providing spiritual and practical guidance, and reinforcing communal bonds across the Atlantic.

This investigation reveals that *Nordstjärnan* not only chronicled the migration experience but also served as a medium for maintaining Swedish cultural heritage and Mormon religious

identity, supporting the community through its conversion to the Mormon faith and further, adaptation to life in America. The periodical's content, from emigration logistics and spiritual discourse to accounts of persecution and adaptation, reflects the multifaceted nature of the Swedish-Mormon experience. It also reflects *Nordstjärnans* propagandistic goals of portraying Utah and the Church in a positive light. This ultimately illustrates how faith, cultural identity, and migration narratives intersect to shape a unique community within the larger picture of American religious and immigrant history

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend a special thanks to my Grandfather Val G. Hemming for inspiring me from a young age with stories of our ancestors from Sweden. His commitment to our family history has made this project entirely possible. Additional gratitude is due to Dr. Christopher Oscarson for his generous lending of several key literary sources as well as an open ear and critical eye throughout the duration of this project. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Jill Austin, for her unending support and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

The Swedish-Mormon¹ Migration from Sweden to the Mountain West during the 19th and early 20th century is a story of mutual faith and support between the Swedish diaspora in Utah and Church members still living in Sweden. In his book, *A Folk Divided*, Arnold Barton describes the broader Swedish immigration to America and claims, “Immigration created a complex love-hate relationship between those who sought new lives in the New World and those who remained in the old homeland” (Barton xi). Barton and his book capture how those who stayed behind often have felt betrayed and abandoned and those who left, guilty for their exit. Barton’s words ring true for in some ways for Swedish adherents to Mormonism, persecution by their fellow countrymen certainly contributed to negative views of their home country. Despite this their mutual and enduring bond of faith with fellow Swedish Mormons seems to have supplemented this negativity with a symbiosis and shared faith culture that cultivated a unique Mormon-Swedish-American identity. The emergence of this distinctive identity is captured in the early Mormon-Swedish periodical *Nordstjärnan*. As a Church publication, the goal of *Nordstjärnan* was to facilitate this identity by reinforcing positive images of Swedish-Mormon life. This sharing of experiences of Church membership, belief and themes of both Mormon and Swedish Culture across decades acted as a keystone for immigration and dialogue between Swedish-Mormons and their emerging diaspora in the West.

WHY *NORDSTJÄRNAN*?

I served in the Stockholm Sweden mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from 2019-2021. During my service, I noticed piles of old *Nordstjärnan* periodicals

¹ I will use the term “Mormon” to represent The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, as this is the term frequently used in *Nordstjärnan* and would have been most recognizable to its readership. The Mormon Church will in this thesis be interchangeable with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

tucked away in the corners and basements of various Church locales. Seeing these sparked an interest in me to learn more about what this particular publication meant to Mormon Church members in Sweden. My own ancestors converted to the Mormon faith during the 19th century, where soon after they immigrated to the United States. To me, *Norstjärnan* presented an opportunity to better understand the identities of my ancestors who carried multiple identities as Mormons, Swedes and Immigrants. Speaking with my grandfather, who also served a mission in Sweden from 1958-1961, unexpectedly revealed that he had collected and bound a complete set of the published *Nordstjärna*. This fortuitous coincidence and our shared glee at the connection gave birth to the creation of my *Nordstjärna* project. Before reviewing the periodicals, I studied several sources about broader Swedish immigration in order to be able to contextualize the Swedish-Mormon immigration within it. This centered around Arnold Barton's *A Folk Divided* and Lars Ljungmark's *Swedish Exodus*. To focus specifically on the immigration of Mormon Swedes, I used William Mulder's *Homeward to Zion* in combination with Andrew Jensen's *History of the Scandinavian Mission*. These books together provided me with key facts and figures to guide my study of *Nordstjärnan*.

Early in my research, I discovered that *Nordstjärnan* had been digitized completely by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This resource was free to use online and allowed me to easily access *Nordstjärnan* as a primary source. As my research moved forward, I chose to focus my reading of *Nordstjärnan* on significant immigration years from Sweden to Utah: 1877, when *Nordstjärnan* was first published, through 1910, when large emigration groups were becoming less common. During my reading, I extracted all of the poems from the periodical, anything that involved emigration, letters of interest, as well as any instances describing the experience of Church members in Sweden.

Since Swedish immigration during the 19th century represents a significant historical event, I chose a methodology of contextualization to highlight Mormon emigration within larger historical trends. In addition to Swedish History, Mormon Church history was also an important lens to use in contextualizing the Mormon-Swedish emigration. As a Church-published and sponsored periodical, the *Nordstjärna* chronicles an important part of Mormon history. Contextualizing *Nordstjärnan* in both Swedish and Mormon history further emphasizes its importance in building a Swedish-Mormon identity with pieces from both of these distinct historical backgrounds.

Further, my training in humanities research helped me to recognize themes and patterns across the narratives of the Swedish-Mormon emigration within *Nordstjärnan*. This close reading of a range of texts and literary forms in *Nordstjärnan* yields many compelling examples of an emergent and distinct Mormon-Swedish-American story. Whereas the common narrative discusses immigration as a rupture and point of tension between those who stay behind and those who choose to leave, it is clear that *Nordstjärnan* offers an alternative interpretation of the relationship between the two groups. Its role in influencing the Swedish-Mormon identity should not be ignored and offers a new direction for the study of Swedish-Mormon emigration in the 19th and 20th centuries.

EMIGRATION AND SWEDEN

The 19th century saw several waves of emigration from Europe to the United States. This great exodus, numbering over 33 million individuals, occurred from 1820 until 1930 (Blanck 11). Immigrants sought a new life of opportunity offered in the rapidly growing United States, leaving behind the history of generations past to start their own journeys in an unfamiliar

territory. Promises of wealth, freedom and land were often the motivators for people to leave their homes behind. The Homestead Act of 1862 promised that any “adult” or “intended ” citizen could claim up to 160 acres of land under the condition that they seek to improve it. While the Homestead Act had varied effectiveness and utility, this promise of land is an example of why the United States was so attractive to the eye of those disillusioned with their European lives (Barton 108).

While immigration was at first arduous and costly, the proliferation of steamship technology in Europe during the American Civil War² significantly reduced the cost of trans-atlantic travel, making the journey all the more accessible for emigration. In addition to a lower cost, travel across the Atlantic was reduced to a matter of days instead of weeks. These changes not only made immigration easier, but also meant that immigration did not become what Arnold Barton called an “irreversible commitment” (Barton 38). If life in America was not to one’s liking, it was possible to return to Europe for a fair price. Increased immigration formed the backbone of the American working class needed to build cities, settle homesteads and ultimately expand westward as the nation burgeoned into the 20th Century. These immigrants integrated their identities into that of the American Dream that brought them to what Lars Ljunmark called the “promised land of material success” (Ljungmark 10).

Sweden stands out as a significant contributor to this stream of immigration, accounting for over 1.25 million immigrants, 40% of them leaving during the 1880s (Ljungmark 11). At one point, according to Ljungmark “one-fifth of the world’s Swedish population was living in America” (Ljungmark 12). In 1867, 1868 and 1869, Sweden experienced massive crop failures across the country. Rural Swedes, faced with financial ruin, looked hungrily across the Atlantic where newspapers and letters told them that land was being handed out for free, ripe for the

² 1861-1865

plow. This largely agrarian migration was followed in the 1890s by waves of industrial workers seeking better conditions (Beijbom 50). These migrants formed communities across the United States, with the Midwest and Chicago in particular as a hub for Scandinavian migration in general (Ljungmark 93).

As emigrants found their homes in the United States, they communicated their experiences back to those left behind in Sweden. These letters were a central source of knowledge for those that read them, and often determined the reader's outlook on life in America and whether immigration was a sound idea (Beijbom 83). Arnold Barton notes importantly in *A Folk Divided* that “Letters sent home by Swedes already in the US offered information and encouragement to emigrate. These first hand accounts had greater trust of the peasantry than other sources could” (Barton 16). Elsewhere in Scandinavia, the Danish postal service recorded the number of letters that had been sent back from America during this time and found that it totaled over 1.8 million (Beijbom 84). It can be reasonably assumed that a similar amount was sent back to Sweden, slowly warming up the population to the idea of America and what it had to offer the opportunistic Swede.

The sheer amount of immigration from Sweden was met with animosity as the Swedish public saw many of their family and friends leave their homeland to seek their fortunes in the United States. This is observed by Arnold Barton in *A Folk Divided*, which leads to his categorization of Swedish Immigration as “love-hate”. By the 1890s, a new sense of national identity was growing in Sweden, and it was during this time that national heritage sites and museums were created, notably Skansen and the Nordiska Museet (Blanck 22). It is almost as if it had dawned on the Swedish general psyche after two decades of immigration that they had lost

a significant portion of their people, which begged a deeper reflection on what it meant to be “Swedish.”

These sentiments were nothing necessarily new; some in Sweden saw these immigrants as individuals lusting after fortune, turning to a land of dubious moral and religious conditions to seek personal gain. In 1855, a prominent Pastor by the name of Hasselquist spoke of these emigrants as traitors to their fatherland, blinded by pride (Barton 34). By the turn of the century anti-immigration sentiments had reached the point where a National Society Against Emigration was founded in 1907 (Barton 210). This society pushed against immigration from Sweden through various means including propaganda campaigns meant to counter ideas that might convince Swedes to leave Sweden behind (Barton 211). Perhaps this society was formed too late to meet its goal, as the heyday of Swedish immigration had largely passed by 1907. The advent of World War I would put an end to any large-scale immigration from Sweden to the United States, with the number of immigrants steadily declining (Barton 305). After 1910, Swedish immigration to the United States gradually dropped to a few thousand a year as opposed to the tens of thousands during the height of immigration (Ljungmark 11).

I have a personal connection to these Swedes that sought a new life in the United States. My ancestor James Jons Persson immigrated from southern Sweden in 1872, during one of the notable periods of Swedish immigration. He traveled across the Atlantic, arriving in New York before journeying to Salt Lake City and ultimately settling in Idaho. He made his passage alone, going ahead of his family to make arrangements for them to follow. His son John Axel Pearson³ immigrated as a youth in 1883 and would establish himself in Idaho alongside his father. John Axel is an interesting example because he would eventually return to Sweden on a mission for

³ Immigrant Name changes to an Americanized version were common during this time period, hence Persson became Pearson.

the Mormon Church in 1898. During this mission John had the opportunity to reconnect with his Swedish family and, at the same time, to encourage religious immigration from Sweden to the United States. As a missionary for the Mormon Church, John was tasked with converting Swedish people to the faith and with supporting the existing members in the areas he was assigned. Part of this support included the encouragement to gather in “Zion,” or Utah, where the Mormon Church had formed its headquarters in the late 1840s. In his journals, John records endless miles of walking from village to village, spreading the word of his faith. He wrote with particular excitement when he and his companion missionary were able to acquire bicycles, significantly increasing their range of operations as well as their comfort of travel.

The Persson family experience was not unique, beyond the socio-economic reasons for immigration, there were also many Swedes that moved because of their faith (Beijbom 30). The Mormon Church was actively sending missionaries to Scandinavia during the periods of high immigration in the late 19th century and early 20th century. During this period, around 7500 Swedes immigrated to the United States with the goal of living in the Intermountain West, the center of Mormon settlement in America (Ljungmark 35). John Axel was one of these 7500 who, in hearing the call of their faith, heeded it, thereby creating a unique stream of immigration with the Mountain West as their goal.

While many Swedes were immigrating to the promising cities of the United States or the heavily wooded regions of the Midwest, these Mormon converts were headed to the Great Basin of Utah and the surrounding territory, relatively inhospitable tracts of land where the price of religious freedom would be paid in difficult labor. Utah presented a stark contrast to the verdant Nordic countries. Rocky, imposing mountain ranges crisscross the State, rising high above the dry, often desert-like terrain. A far cry from the lush forests of Skåne⁴, or the birch-infested

⁴ The regional term for the south of Sweden.

islands of the Stockholm archipelago, Utah was for all intents and purposes an alien world for many Swedes. On top of this, Utah was far from developed. The city of Salt Lake had only recently been founded and much of the state was unpopulated. To make the decision to come to Utah was by no means easy for the Swedish-Mormon, yet many made the choice to go. Regardless of the disparaging climate, these Swedish-Mormon decided that their lives would be better in this environment than in their homeland. This speaks to the strength of both their faith and the power of the call they were issued by their religion.

We can catch a glimpse into the lives of these 7500 through the lens of *Nordstjärnan* as we encounter its key role in informing Swedish members of their duty to travel to Zion. *Nordstjärnan* gave encouragement and provided practical advice for how they were to accomplish this feat. Enclosed in its pages are the letters, poems and thoughts of these immigrants who were caught in this period of intense push and pull.

THE CHURCH IN SWEDEN

The Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter-Day Saints found itself a foothold in Europe in 1837 with the formation of the British Mission (Mulder 31). Once the British Mission was established, Church leaders had a key steppingstone for further excursion into continental Europe. The goal of this and following missions was to spread the message of The Church of Jesus Christ Of Latter-Day Saints and to convert those willing to accept it. The individual missionaries were the backbone of these missions and left families and homes behind in order to share their religious beliefs. These early missionaries had few means and relied much on the goodwill of others and their fellow Church members to maintain themselves during their period of service. The British Mission, the first mission opened in Europe, formed a model for all

missions to follow, including the Scandinavian Mission. In the October 1849 General Conference held in Salt Lake City the first missionaries were called to Scandinavia to build the Church in Denmark and Sweden. Scandinavian Church members Erastus Snow and Peter O. Hansen were called to Denmark. John E. Forsgren alone was called to serve in Sweden (Jensen 2). These men were the first official missionaries to arrive in Scandinavia.

The religious environment that they encountered was one already divided. William Mulder described: “Snow felt that he and his companions had come at the right moment, that an earlier mission probably would have proved a failure. The leaven of religious dissent and social unrest at work in all three Scandinavian countries had prepared the way.” (Mulder 39). Many in Scandinavia were becoming disillusioned with the monolithic Protestant entities that were the state churches of Sweden and Denmark. Before the Latter-Day Saint missionaries arrived, there were already several movements that claimed to be an improvement on the Protestant establishment (Anderson 5). Earlier, religious immigration occurred in the late 1840s led by the “Jansonists” who left Sweden with his religious group to settle in Bishops Hill, Illinois (Anderson 28). Religious freedom was in the constitution of Denmark at the time the missionaries arrived, even though it was not generally known by its own populace (Mulder 41). This was not yet the case in Sweden, where religious freedom remained dubious until the Act on Freedom was passed in 1859 (Petersson 196). Forsgren, a native Swede, visited his family in Sweden and found them at their farm in Gävle where he baptized his brother after raising him from his sick bed (Mulder 37). After one year in Scandinavia, the missionaries achieved a foothold in the region with over 300 members brought into the fold across the region, this number would grow into the steady thousands as more missionaries arrived (Mulder 39). It was into this growing Church that *Nordstjärnan* appeared as a supplement to Swedish Church

members. *Nordstjärnan* was predated by an Mormon Danish-language publication *Skandinaviens Stjerne* in 1851, which was created by early missionary Erastus Snow (Jensen 34). Both of these publications were dwarfed by their British counterpart the *Millennial Star*, which began distribution much earlier in 1841 (Ludlow 1992). While certainly not as large as these other publications, *Nordstjärnan* remained the only publication directed specifically towards Swedish members of the Church. For this reason it becomes invaluable in its direct relationship with the Church and the immigration of Swedish Church members.

THE CONTENTS OF *NORDSTJÄRNAN*

Nordstjärnan opens a window into the minds of Swedish-Mormons. Within *Nordstjärnan* are poems, letters, lectures and news all forming a point of reflection and connection for the Swedish-Mormons and their experience as members of the Church. As I discussed earlier, I set parameters in my study of *Nordstjärnan*. Although published throughout the 20th century, I decided to frame my reading within the portion published between 1876 and 1910 as a way to overlap this significant period of immigration with the Swedish-Mormon psyche.

Nordstjärnan is first and foremost a Church publication published by the Scandinavian Mission by the Mission President and missionaries working in the mission. Due to the lay nature of the ministry, there was frequent turnover of editors and contributors as members of the Scandinavian Mission arrived to take their positions and were released from service. Despite this frequent reorganization of the mission, *Nordstjärnan* continued to be published and distributed bimonthly, making it a compelling source of history that remained consistent throughout early LDS history in Scandinavia.

Nordstjärnan presents an opportunity to track the messaging that Church leaders thought would be both encouraging and educational for its members new and old in Scandinavia. As the Swedish *Book of Mormon* was not published in full until 1878, *Nordstjärnan* served for many in Sweden as the most important Swedish language resource published by the Church (Mulder 234). Even after the publication of the Swedish *Book of Mormon*, *Nordstjärnan* was still arguably the most important conduit for Swedish members to connect with identity as Mormons. On top of this, *Nordstjärnan*'s nature as a small magazine made it easier to share between members of the Church and their friends. In his history of the LDS Church in Scandinavia William Mulder in his epic *Homeward to Zion* describes the various ways Church periodicals were distributed:

H. J. Christiansen, subscribing in America to the Nord-stjärnan in 1892, recalled its great work as missionary: "A poor fisherwoman brought it to my mother and blessed will she be for it." Ropemaker Anthon Skanchy found it being read and reread by some Norwegian Saints in 1879 who had no other contact with the church. On Falster Island, where (so recalled a disaffected member) one-third of the congregations were married women whose husbands hated the church, a missionary used to leave copies of *Sterne* in a moss-covered box buried near a certain grain house, where he always found two marks, milk, and food left there by the women in return." *Sterne*'s colorful history even included a government ban: the Finnish post office once considered it subversive and sent only its empty wrappers on to the subscribers. (Mulder 79)

These stories and recollections clearly demonstrate what *Nordstjärnan* could have meant to many of its readers. Not only was it a chance to hear news of Utah and the Church as a whole, it was an opportunity to connect with other members of the faith in Scandinavia. The publication frequently contained poems written by local members and members who had emigrated to the United States. These poems covered themes of nature, longing and faith, capturing the feelings of their writers who lived as Scandinavians and members of the Church. Their experiences were also recorded in letters that were written to the editor and published in the pages of *Nordstjärnan*. These letters included updates from emigrants on their journey, reports from friends and missionaries who had returned to Utah and even updates from Swedish missionaries abroad in other nations. As mentioned before, these letters carried a certain power. Just as "letters from America" were key to the general informing of Swedes about America, the letters published in *Nordstjärnan* served to inform Swedish Church members about what they might expect of life in Utah. The Scandinavian Mission understood the power of these letters, which may be why the Mission President chose so frequently to include them in *Nordstjärnan*.

Beyond letters, *Nordstjärnan* published information on the practical aspects of immigration. One might expect to find within *Nordstjärnan* notices about when and where emigration groups would depart, including the fare prices for travel and how much they should expect life in the various parts of Utah to cost. Unlike other immigration groups, the Mormon emigrants had the advantage of being guided through their journeys by experienced emigration officers specifically called by the Church to bring the faithful to Zion safely. William Mulder makes a distinct comparison between Mormon emigrants and other immigrant groups from Europe:

The ordinary emigrant from Europe soon discovered, as handbooks warned him, that he must look out for himself, choose the right route, buy the right ticket, get into the right car, and so on through the journey, without waiting for specific directions. The Mormon emigrant, on the other hand, was relieved of these anxieties. Setting out for a strange country was at best a trying experience, but he found himself costed by men he knew, in the company of fellow converts. (Mulder 141)

The organized and secure quality of the Mormon emigration experience led to a good portion of positive reviews. It is important to note that it was in the publisher's best interest to print stories of immigration that would encourage further groups to emigrate, but it is clear that they did not lack in reports of successful travels from Europe to new homes in the United States. Mulder further describes: "An air of dedication marked this activity. Mormon representatives at ports of departure and arrival and at outfitting stations on the frontier considered their work "missions." Even teamsters were "called" from season to season to haul immigrants to the valley" (Mulder 142). The publication of the successful emigration of Swedish and other Scandinavian Church members would continue throughout the period of high emigration and certainly played a role in facilitating immigration for many converts to the faith. After their arrivals in Utah, many of these members would continue correspondence with their friends in Sweden, creating a transatlantic dialogue of both Swedish and Swedish-American experience within the LDS Church.

Nordstjärnan was also a reporting mechanism for both general and Church news. Every publication of *Nordstjärnan* included a news section at the back that might include anything from a murder case in Stockholm to news of a famine in a faraway land. *Nordstjärnan* also served as a counter to much of the negative rhetoric that a Swedish-Mormon would have had to

hear from family and friends. The early Church in Scandinavia faced intense public opposition fueled by rumors spread by print and mouth alike all discouraging the spread of the new American faith:

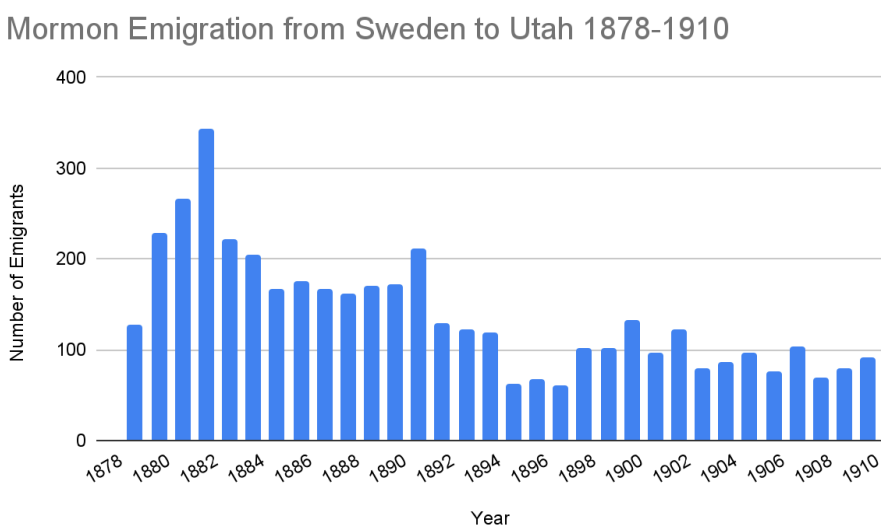
Overnight, established reputations could be blighted. Convert Hannah Sorensen, though twenty-five years a respected midwife in Snedsted, lost her practice and was threatened with the workhouse; Old impresarios, eager to engage Agnes Olsen's golden voice to sing Solveg's Song from Peer Gynt, told her no audience would tolerate her as a Mormon... Christina Oleson's Swedish pastor, encountering her on the village street one day, struck her with his cane for joining the despised Mormons. She felt she was getting off easy. (Mulder 118)

Conversion to Mormonism required a real sacrifice on the part of new members. However compelling the message from the missionaries was, converts would have to face the ridicule of their communities and swallow the possibility of broken ties with family and friends. Operating in Sweden was difficult for the missionaries, local and regional governments often punished the Elders if they were caught proselytizing. On more than one occasion the missionaries were arrested and held in jail for a time. Despite these threats, missionaries continued their work. Their work was efficient and created a strong core of members living in Sweden, as well as those who immigrated to Utah, that had a distinct sense of Swedish-Mormon identity. This group would support future missionaries, maintain Church buildings and hold Church callings, all key aspects of the Church's growth in Sweden (Mulder 117). It is in the pages of *Nordstjärnan* that this identity comes into fruition. This periodical not only represents

the Scandinavian Mission and the future Swedish Mission, but the thousands of Swedes who chose the Mormon faith and adapted it into their Swedish lives. Digging deeper into the content of *Nordstjärnan* reveals a vibrant lived experience distinct from that of any other Swedish Emigrant of the 19th-century.

NORDSTJÄRNAN READERSHIP

Fig. 1: Mormon Emigration From Sweden to Utah 1878-1905



This graph charts the number of Swedes who emigrated to Utah every year from 1878 to 1910 according to *Nordstjärnan*. Each year *Nordstjärnan* published a statistical report that included how many members emigrated. The above chart uses those reports as the basis for its data. While this data may or may not be wholly accurate, it represents the best information to track specifically how many Swedish-Mormons emigrated to the US during this time period. It is important to note that this data describes all of the Swedes who *left* Sweden, and does not mean that all of these individuals ultimately reached their goal of Utah. Upon reaching the United States there was little to differentiate them from other Scandinavian emigrants. For this reason

Nordstjärnan's statistical reports are the closest accurate representation of how many Swedish-Mormons emigrated.

Subscription numbers appear to have held steady around 1,000 copies. An 1894 edition of the periodical notes that the publication was printed in a batch of 1,000 copies (NS 1894 295). The Mission History of the Scandinavian Mission reports that active subscription was around 800 accounts in 1878 (SMH 1878 38). The Scandinavian Mission recorded 1534 members in Sweden at the end of 1878, which means that over half of these members likely had contact with *Nordstjärnan* (NS 1878 380). This number could have fluctuated due to the probability that many of these subscriptions could represent families or have been passed around among different people. Some of these subscriptions undoubtedly were being sent to Utah to Swedes who had already immigrated. This aside, considering the number of members in Sweden at the time of distribution and the number of subscribers, it appears that *Nordstjärnan* had a significant amount of readership within its target audience.

The legacy of *Nordstjärnan* and the emigration it captured in its pages is a living one. The total number of emigrants from Sweden accounted for in the graph above totals 4,416, which accounts for a significant portion of the around 7,500 total Church members who emigrated from Sweden to Utah during the 19th and early 20th century (Ljungmark 34). Today, the U.S. Census Bureau recorded almost 300,000 individuals who identified as having Scandinavian ancestry living in the state of Utah (U.S. Census Bureau DP02 2022). A third of these individuals identified Swedish specifically as their ancestry. This amounts to over 10% of the current population of Utah having direct Scandinavian ancestry, this is certainly a significant portion. This is to say that *Nordstjärnan* was widely read during a period of significant Mormon

emigration from Sweden to Utah– an emigration that still has significant representation today in its current demographics and an impressive recall of native ancestry.

THE CONTENT OF *NORDSTJÄRNAN*

This section will explore in-depth the key types of content found in *Nordstjärnan* and how these intentionally published elements contribute to the Swedish-Mormon identity as a whole. Each section will cover a specific part of *Nordstjärnan* and how it impacted the Swedish-Mormons on both sides of the Atlantic. These sections contain examples of what one could physically find while reading *Nordstjärnan* and how these examples contribute to the development of a distinct Swedish-Mormon identity.

POETRY

Poetry played a central role in the early publications of *Nordstjärnan*. The periodical featured poems sent in by readers as well as well-known poets, located in a *Poesi* [Poetry] or *Valda Dikter* [Selected Poems] section that was present frequently in the publication. Between 1877 and 1905 *Nordstjärnan* published over 200 poems in its pages (NS 1877-1905). It comes as no surprise that poetry would be a source of interest and inspiration for early Swedish members of the Church as it represented a way for them to express their Swedish-Mormon identity creatively. The poems published in *Nordstjärnan* feature strong themes of faith, nature and the Zion they saw growing in far away Utah. These themes highlight how the content of *Nordstjärnan* constantly pulls in two directions, towards Zion in the West and the heartstrings of the homeland in Sweden. In this chapter several examples of poetry from the periodical will be

presented to highlight these themes and why they are compelling evidence of an identity balanced between Zion in the west and the Swedish homeland.

This first poem printed in *Nordstjärnan*, lacking a title, appeared in the inaugural issue published in 1877. It would begin the continuous tradition of poetry being printed within the periodical, often written by Scandinavian Church members or the editorial staff. Most of these poems are not directly attributed to their authors, using the authors initials instead of a full name. This makes it difficult to identify the exact author of each piece. By examining the names of the editorial staff as well as prominent Church members an inference can be made. This poem written by one “J.C.S” is most likely written by J.C. Sandberg, the first editor of the *Nordstjärnan* who also served as the Mission President of the Scandinavian Mission.

This poem was written for publication specifically in the periodical as it mentions “Nordstjärna” directly. The poem highlights many key aspects of the Scandinavian member experience. The first stanza lays out the goal of *Nordstjärnan* stating:

Deför vill vi, unga, gamla, Följa anden af vår tid, Och all nyttig kunskap samla. Den ger styrka, glädje, frid. (NS 1877 14) [Therefore we, young and old, want to follow the spirit of our time, collecting all useful knowledge. It gives strength, joy, peace.]

One of the central goals of *Nordstjärnan* will be to act as a repository for knowledge—knowledge that can be trusted to bring strength, joy and peace to its readers. The next stanza continues to establish *Nordstjärnan* as a reliable source of truth describing its words as “sanningstrålar” [beams of truth]. The first two stanzas of this poem indicate the value that J.C. Sandberg and his editorial staff anticipated *Nordstjärnan* would have for its readers.

The next stanza identifies the Trans-Atlantic quality of the periodical stating:

Vi ska söka till at följa Tidens gång i Öst- och Väst. (NS 1877 14) [We shall seek to follow the passage of time in both East and West.]

Nordstjärnan served Swedish-Mormons on both sides of the Atlantic, encouraging readers from both the United States and Scandinavia to send in letters for publication and positioned itself as the intermediary between the two bodies of Saints. Thus, early on this periodical placed itself at the center of two groups of Swedish-Mormons: the growing group of those settled in Utah and those who continued to live in Sweden.

The poem closes with an admonition for Swedes already settled in the United States:

Glöm ej edra vänner här! Sänd med tillit edra söner. (NS 1877 14) [Don't forget your friends here! Send with confidence your sons.]

This final sentiment emphasizes the divide both physical and spiritual that stands between the emigrated and those still in Sweden. It also foreshadows the future generations of Swedish-American missionaries that would return to their parents, grandparents, or homeland to seek further converts. These missionaries, like *Nordstjärnan*, represent continued bonds between these separated groups.

This poem manages to send a striking message to its readers about the identity of the Swedish Church member. It is important to remember that this poem was written by J.C. Sandberg, mission president and the highest Church authority in the region, who had good reason

to reinforce a sense of Swedish-Mormon identity. Its language clearly highlights the connection that exists between central Church authority in Utah and its members in Sweden. The admonition for Swedes who have immigrated not to forget their friends in Sweden is a stark reminder of the role that distance plays in dimming both social and cultural memory. It seems to say that in order for the Church to continue to grow in Sweden, the hands of Swedes in Utah will be necessary and future generations of Swedish-Americans will be required to return to their ancestral home as missionaries to maintain the Church. It is fitting that this poem appears in the very first edition of *Nordstjärnan* as it sets the publication up as the voice of Church authority in Sweden and quickly identifies the existence of a Transatlantic community of Swedish Church members. It also distinctly sets apart the Swedish-Mormon bond from Utah to Sweden as one of mutual benefit. On one hand, Swedish Church members received fresh support from young Swedish-Americans from Utah; in return they shared their Swedish culture with these young people, sending them home with a knowledge of their ancestral home. For these reasons it is clear that poetry would serve not only as a source of aesthetic enjoyment, but rhetoric from Church leaders.

Another important poem that continues the theme of connection between Utah and Sweden is also a work of J.C. Sandberg, appearing in the January 17th, 1877 edition of *Nordstjärnan*. The poem lacks a title, but has a keen description of the skepticism that Swedish Church members faced. J.C. Sandberg again uses Utah and Sweden as a focal point for his poetry, his work appearing to be a defense of the Swedish members' desires to immigrate to Utah. His poem begins with several questions posed as if a non-Mormon Swede is questioning his friend who has decided to immigrate to Zion:

Hvi längtar du ständigt från fädernasjord? Hvarför är ditt sinne oroligt? Hvarför trifs du icke här uppe i Nord? (NS 1877 30) [Where do you constantly yearn from the land of the fathers? Why is your mind troubled? Why don't you thrive up here in the North?]

These questions, that paint Sweden as a homeland, put into question the loyalty of any who have a desire to leave. In these questions Sandberg also reveals that the decision to leave was not going to be an easy one, even for Church members looking forward to Zion. His description of a troubled mind was probably not unique to himself. If leaving one's homeland was not hard enough, Sandberg quickly includes skepticism about leaving for reasons of faith:

Låt ingen mormon dig bedraga, Nej stanna och blif i din fädernes tro, Det vill oss mycket behaga. (NS 1877 31) [Let no Mormon deceive you, No stay and stay in your fathers' faith, That pleases us very much.]

Here again, Sandberg encapsulates a sense of betrayal felt by the non-Mormon Swede. Sandberg makes it clear that the Mormons and their missionaries were seen as deceivers who led vulnerable Swedes away from their home both physically and spiritually. In 1860, it had become legal to leave the State-run Church of Sweden, but this was if you were to join another congregation approved by the state, which was not yet sympathetic to the LDS Church. Not only was leaving the Swedish Church a spiritual distancing, but a step away from wider Swedish social norms (Pettersson 195). While up to this point the poem may seem dour, Sandberg responds resolutely to these accusations of spiritual and national betrayal:

Märk ni! Som kan skrämmas af lögn och af list, Att tro alla rykten om Utah. (NS 1877 31) [Look here! Who can be frightened by lies and by cunning, To believe all the rumors of Utah.]

These lines demonstrate that the Sweden of J.C Sandberg was a country awash with rumors about the Mormons and their Zion. He accuses his countrymen of using these rumors as basis for their judgment of his fellow Church members. In a way, Sandberg is now teaching his readers how to respond to the prejudices that they may face in their decision to immigrate and join their fellow Church members in Zion. This is punctuated by a triumphal closing image:

Då vill vi i Zion med frihetsbanér, Med Brigham och Josef och Hyrum och fler.

Lofsjunga vår konung i höjden. (NS 1877 31) [Then will we all in Zion with freedom banners, With Brigham and Joseph and Hyrum and more. Sing praises to our king on high.]

This is obviously an idealized image of Utah, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum had at this point been dead for decades. This image instead evokes the spirit of Zion: the dream that new converts had decided to believe, was a living dream with a reality of life in Utah. Sandberg reminds his fellow members that their faith is based on spiritual principles, but also the physical promise of a Zion where they can worship as they please. Again, J.C. Sandberg is speaking as a voice of authority for Church members, his readers knew who he was and the power he wielded in the Church. It is in his interest to facilitate the creation of a Swedish-Mormon identity, because it will lead to stronger connection to the Church, which in turn encourages emigration and participation in the faith.

This poem's appearance in *Nordstjärnan* again demonstrates its place to inform Swedish-Mormons of their relationship with Zion in Utah and Sweden. While the non-Mormon Swede would have difficulty understanding why one would want to emigrate, this was not a sentiment saved singularly for Swedish-Mormons. This poem highlights the qualities of the Swedish-Mormon identity, where in Sweden, members saw their primary identity as Mormon, and secondarily as Swedish. The need to be true to this primary identity is the cause of the “troubled mind” mentioned by Sandberg. Once the immigrant arrived in Utah, where the surrounding population was Mormon, primary identities could switch back to being Swedish as it was a way to form distinct communities within the Mormon territory. The added faith identity is what allows for the Swedish-Mormon emigration to be viewed through a unique lens and adds a stronger bond between members of this group with multiple shared identities. These multiple shared identities, being Mormon, Swedish and connected to immigration allowed for a wider shared experience between Swedish-Mormons. These experiences as they are shared in *Nordstjärnan* serve to strengthen this bond as its readership was Transatlantic. One facet of this bond is the memory of nature in the homeland, which is a distinct theme in *Nordstjärnan* poetry.

Of the over 200 poems printed in the early *Nordstjärnan*, there are dozens that make mention of the specific natural qualities of Sweden. While these poems would be enjoyable to the Swedish members still living in Sweden, one can imagine that these vivid descriptions of Swedish nature would have a profound impact on readers now living in Utah. These poems and their descriptions gave a visual connection to the homeland for Swedes who were surrounded by a vastly different natural landscape. This would serve to remind immigrants of their homeland and give younger generations an image of a motherland far away.

In a poem titled “Våren” or “Spring” published in 1905, an unnamed author paints a picture of springtime in Scandinavia:

Vårvind susar öfver vik och fjord, Glädje andas himmel, haf och jord. Och i mänskans sinne – Det blir just därinne. Våren, ack hvad den är skön i nord! (NS 1905 144)

[Spring wind whizzes over bay and fjord, Joy breathes sky, sea and earth. And in the human mind - It finds itself there. Spring, oh how beautiful it is in the North!]

This poem highlights typical Scandinavian natural features, fjords and bays, as well as the beautiful springtime that comes after the long dark winter. One can almost feel the spring wind as they read and think of the message of natural bounty it brings.

Another example of natural poetry comes from a poem titled “Midsommar” which was written by popular poet at the time, Emil Kleén. The use of his poetry indicates that there was no issue using non-Mormon poetry as long as it fit the purposes of *Nordstjärnan*. This poem in particular focuses on the summer beauty associated with the popular celebration of Midsommar in Sweden:

Drömmar du sommarns drömmar? –Vakna! De kring dig stå, blänka ur himlens ljusa, skiftande sidenblå, glöda i vildrosblomman, röda af livets vin, sväfva på fjärlns vingar, surra med humlor och bin. (NS 1900 272) [Are you dreaming summer dreams? -Wake!

They stand around you, shining from the bright, changing silk blue of the sky, glowing in the wild rose flower, red with the wine of life, floating on the wings of the butterfly, buzzing with bumblebees and bees.]

Again, natural imagery is invoked to instill a dreamlike wonder of the idyllic Swedish summertime: bees, flowers and blue skies all colliding to create a paradise on earth.

These descriptions are powerful and romantic. They are a celebration of Swedish nature that takes ownership of an important part of the Swedish experience. For a publication that so often speaks of Zion in the West, *Nordstjärnan* is also dedicated to the people of Sweden and, in turn, their culture. With the Swedish-Mormon Church member identity being stretched by immigration, shunning of the state church and different social mores, there were pieces of Swedish identity that were still relevant as one transitioned to life as a member of the Church in Sweden and potentially in Utah. These pieces of identity appear nostalgic and tied to the nature of Sweden as a conduit for experiencing a sense of home. The inclusion of these descriptive natural poems indicate *Nordstjärnans* desire to encourage remembrance of Sweden in a positive light. Choosing nature is deliberate as it avoids the divisive perception of Mormons in Sweden. While the people of Sweden may not have treated the Swedish-Mormons and their emigrants memorably, the nature of Sweden was a medium of connection with Swedish identity beyond its institutions.

These poems altogether both dissuade and tout different aspects of the Swedish identity. J.C. Sandberg is quick to lay bare the shortcomings of the non-Mormon Swede who believes rumors about Utah and questions his friend. Alternatively, the inclusion of natural poems in *Nordstjärnan* show a sense of natural pride in Sweden. These thematic elements push and pull against each other, just as the Swedish Church members felt the push and pull of their own faith against their nationality. The existence of both shows that in *Nordstjärnan* the identity of Swedish Church members was not necessarily on one end of the spectrum or the other, but

somewhere in between, just like *Nordstjärnan* itself. *Nordstjärnan* served as the thread connecting both the Swedish and Mormon identities in both a physical and spiritual sense. This connection serves as a reminder of the desire that these Swedish-Mormons had to continue to engage with one another through shared experience. The amount of poetry published in *Nordstjärnan* indicates it was an important method of communicating both themes and rhetoric of faith and identity that ultimately create a gestalt of the Swedish-Mormon experience.

LETTERS

In almost every publication of *Nordstjärnan* there is a “Correspondence” section. This part of the periodical contains various letters written to the editor from Church members in both Utah and Scandinavia. These letters include reports about the welfare of current groups of emigrants, missionaries serving in other countries and updates on life in Utah from emigrated Church members. Publishing these letters served as both a source of news and of connection with the wider population of Scandinavian Church members, as well as propaganda for the Church. The letters in *Nordstjärnan* tend to be overwhelmingly positive towards the Church and its policies, which in turn supports the Swedish-Mormon identity captured within.

In the early years of *Nordstjärnan* the Scandinavian Mission had not yet been broken into separate Nordic nations, so *Nordstjärnan*, while written in Swedish, often also represented a broader Scandinavian Church member experience. The following letter excerpt demonstrates this point as it is written by a Scandinavian Mission missionary writing about his mission experience in northern Germany. In the letter he writes about his experience with government persecution while proselytizing in Kiel, Germany. He writes:

Med stor glädje fattar jag pennan för att skriva till eder och låta eder veta huru jag haft det under tiden jag varit inspärrad i fängelse i Kiel. (NS 1880 283) [With great joy I take up the pen to write to you and let you know how I fared during the time I was confined in prison at Kiel.]

This missionary, Ludvig Suhrke, was German himself and had been called to serve in the Scandinavian Mission which then included Kiel in Northern Germany. The joy that he expresses in sharing his experiences, even an experience like being thrown in jail, invites skepticism, but is understandable within the context of his intensely religious experience. In the letter he describes his time in jail positively, as an opportunity for him to study, sing hymns and even teach the guards that were watching him. This positivity is a useful tool for the publishers of *Nordstjärnan* to comment on how strength in the face of difficulty was a characteristic of members in Scandinavia. This letter's inclusion in *Nordstjärnan* highlights the hardships of Scandinavian Church membership, but also the rewarding feeling when these circumstances were weathered. This is an important message to share for members of a controversial church. This letter's inclusion in *Nordstjärnan* is a nod towards the agenda of the Scandinavian mission in supporting a Swedish-Mormon identity that embraces the difficult situations brought on by their faith. These words would have stood as an encouragement and as guidance to any reader in the face of their personal sacrifices they made to be a member of the Church.

The letter sections also included letters written from Utah to the mission president. These letters served to deliver information about life in Utah and to mark the existence of a growing Swedish diaspora in the state. In one such letter from 1877, Jon Halvorsen writes about an expanding audience for *Nordstjärnan* in Utah. He encourages the mission president saying:

Vi skola göra vad vi kunna för henne här. Många kommer att hålla den och om tiderna voro bättre, skulle det blifva många fler (NS 1877-77). [We will do what we can for her [*Nordstjärnan*] here. Many will hold it and if times were better, there would be many more.]

Halvorsen also mentions that publicity for the periodical will go further than word of mouth:

Br. Winberg sade att han skulle rekommendera den genom sin tidning (*Bikuben*). Jag skall om några dagar sända dig en lista öfver de prenumeranter som jag har fått. (NS 1877 77) [Br. Winberg said he would recommend it through his magazine (*Bikuben*). In a few days I will send you a list of the subscribers I have received.]

This letter from Halvorsen is evidence for the existence of *Nordstjärnan* readership in Utah. Further letters from 1884, 1892, 1894, 1895 mention *Nordstjärnan's* arrival in Utah which indicates that the periodical continued to be read over time in Zion (NS 1884-1895). While other newspapers for Scandinavians existed in Utah at the time of *Nordstjärnan* (like the *Bikuben* mentioned above) there was interest in receiving a periodical more closely tied to the homeland. *Nordstjärnan* would play the role as a thread tying itself from Stockholm to Salt Lake, giving now far removed Swedes the opportunity of continued connection with their Swedish homeland and identity.

These letters from Utah also play an important role in painting a positive portrait of the life of an immigrant upon arrival. In order to encourage further immigration, it was important for

Nordstjärnan to publish letters that reported favorably of conditions there. One such example from 1881 claims that the people living in Zion are the “happiest people on the earth” and that everyone lives in peace and calm (NS 1881 187). Another letter from 1878 admires how quickly the towns in Utah are growing, concluding that this place “has the most beautiful and happiest people I have seen on the earth” (NS 1878 219). These statements are high praise and do not necessarily reflect the truth. William Mulder observed that over one-third of those that converted to Mormonism in Scandinavia “abandoned the movement almost as soon as they embraced it” (Mulder 102). These included those that traveled to Zion, saw it for themselves and decided against it (Mulder 126). These overly positive letters are a sign of *Nordstjärnans* role as an ambassador for Zion. There is a clear message: go to Utah and you will find peace.

Letters also served as a place to encourage readers of the success of the Church in Sweden. *Nordstjärnan* presents the Church as a growing organization in Sweden. Of the many letters published, those from missionaries most often painted a bright picture of the Church’s growth and acceptance throughout the country. In a letter from Stockholm dated September 1879, L.M. Olson writes about missionary success:

“Våra men äro talrikt besökta och en mängd af fremmande är alltid tilstädes” (NS 1879 299).

[Our men are frequently visited and a number of strangers are always present.]

Missionary success was cause for celebration in the Church and could always be dependable in rekindling the memories of a convert’s own faith journeys. By focusing on the success of missionaries, *Nordstjärnan* gives its readers an image of a growing church, one that is being

filled with new individuals willing to construct a new Swedish-Mormon identity and give companionship to those already in the Church.

The publishing of letters in *Nordstjärnan* acts much like the “America-letters” mentioned in the introduction. Here were first hand accounts of news from both the US and Scandinavia as a whole. These letters made *Nordstjärnan* more than a religious publication, instead creating a periodical that could be seen as a source of more than spiritual guidance. *Nordstjärnan*, due to its interdisciplinary nature, could serve as a touchstone for diverse parts of its readers' lives and identity. Because of its broad coverage of missionary, member and emigrant experience, *Nordstjärnan* becomes invaluable as a source of keying in to experiences central to the formation of a Swedish-Mormon identity. *Nordstjärnan* continues to push forward this distinct Swedish-Mormon identity by intentionally publishing letters that conform positively towards Church policy of immigration and missionary work.

EMIGRATION:

One of the most important functions of *Nordstjärnan* was to provide accurate information on emigration for those hoping to make the journey across the Atlantic. As mentioned before, the Mormon emigration experience was highly organized and effective. Instead of entrusting a stranger with one's affairs, Mormon emigrants would be looked after by their fellow Church members. *Nordstjärnan* published emigration notices throughout the year to notify prospective emigrants when and where emigration would take place. Included in these notices was information on regulations and restrictions travelers could expect. In every notice, prices are given for travel as well as weight limits for allowed baggage per person (NS 1877 136). The price mentioned for one adult to travel from Copenhagen to Ogden in 1877 is 290 kronor, which

would amount to around 2,000 U.S. Dollars today (Bank of Norway 2018). For an infant the price is listed at 20 kronor (NS 1877 136). William Mulder describes how Church intervention provided a way for many immigrants to pay these fees:

“The heart of the system, pumping the needed credit into it, was called the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (P.E.F.). The spirit of this covenant and the program it had called into being were extended to Europe for the "redemption of the Saints" (Mulder 142).”

The P.E.F. was a fund for immigrants created and subsidized by the Church as well as the donations of its members which made emigration possible for those who could not afford it on their own (Mulder 142). With both the support of the Perpetual Emigration Fund and accurate immigration information published by *Nordstjärnan*, Swedish-Mormon emigrants had access to good information and means to travel to their new homes. It would be easy to overlook the value of these notices as they appear relatively frequently in the publication. Doing so would underestimate their importance, as these notices offered trustworthy advice and information in an environment that often took advantage of emigrants. The impact of these resources certainly made the journey more affordable and safe as the immigrants were guided by the Church with their safe arrival in mind, instead of a for-profit organization that may have tried to take advantage of them. These emigration notices and their information may have been the deciding catalyst for many of those who chose to take the risk and make the journey.

Beyond immigrant notices and general information, *Nordstjärnan* also published accounts and letters detailing the immigration experience. Beginning with departure, *Nordstjärnan* provided its readers with accounts from every step of the journey, from ship travel

to life in Utah. In an early edition of *Nordstjärnan*, J.C. Sandberg gives an inspiring account of a group of Swedish immigrants departing Scandinavia from Copenhagen, and he spares no detail in describing that:

Glädjen kunde läsas i allas ansigten; men det var ej den glädje som spåras hos andra utvandrare... Det var glädje genom sanningen, hvilken sanning hjort dem fria från både verldsligt och andligt tyranni och tvång. (NS 1877 202) [The joy could be read on everyone's faces; but it is not the joy that is traced in other emigrants... It was the joy of the truth, which truth set them free from both worldly and spiritual tyranny and coercion.]

Here Sandberg compares the Mormon immigrant to others. Because of the spiritual nature of the Mormon immigrants' departure, there was less of a sting to leaving old homes behind. There was a hope not only for a better life socioeconomically, but also spiritual freedom and enlightenment. Perhaps some of this joy that Sandberg mentions came from the knowledge that there was an existing community awaiting them in Utah:

Många utaf utvandrarne hade från slägtingar och anförvanter i Utah fått penningar tillsända för sin befrielse. (NS 1877 203) [Many of the emigrants had received money from relatives and relations in Utah for their liberation.]

This observation, while directed at the immigrants' experience, can also be read as a direction given to those already living in Utah that the general standard was to support the future immigration of family and friends. This could be done by the method that Sandberg observed,

sending money through the mail, or by contributing to the Perpetual Emigration Fund with tithing money paid to the Church. Either way, *Nordstjärnan*, documents this departure and highlights a standard for future emigration.

Readers could also expect to see letters from their friends and family living in Utah published in *Nordstjärnan*. These letters were useful for both understanding life in Utah and also for encouraging future emigration. In a 1877 letter from G. Tomasen written to *Nordstjärnan* he begins by stating:

I den tro att det vill intressera Nordstjernans läsare att höra något ifrån detta land som kallas Zion, hvilket är Zion för dem som komma här i den hänsigt att uppbygga Guds rike på jorden. (NS 1877 139) [In the belief that it will interest the readers of Nordstjernan to hear something from this land called Zion, which is Zion for those who come here with the intention of building the kingdom of God on earth.]

Tomasen quickly differentiates between Utah and Zion. Utah is the territory that the emigrants will travel to and Zion is the spiritual home for those who come with the intention of building. This spiritual rhetoric continues in his letter as he addresses life in the territory of Utah:

Alla de ogudlige och blodtörstiga embetsmän som regeringen har sändt här för att regera detta folk, de har utfört lite eller intet för att hindra Jehovas planer (NS 1877 139). [All the wicked and bloodthirsty officials that the government has sent here to rule this people, they have done little or nothing to hinder Jehovah's plans.]

Tomasen here dispels any rumors that members may have heard about Utah. He confirms beyond doubt that Zion, as a place where Mormons could worship as they pleased, was still the goal, despite the involvement of the U.S. Government in the State Legislature. The dream of Zion was not dead due to some outside force, but rather alive and well and ready to accept all hands willing to come. This is an propagandic letter that *Nordstjärnan* has published. These letters, being printed in *Nordstjärnan*, would be regarded as a trustworthy source by many of its readers. It is very likely that the inclusion of these letters in the publication played a central role in convincing members to emigrate, whether the information was wholly true or not. While it remains difficult to say exactly how many people that *Nordstjärnan* directly influenced to emigrate, it would be inaccurate to diminish its role in providing the means and the reasoning to do so. In addition to this, this encouragement to emigrate highlights again the unity felt by Swedes on both sides of the Atlantic. The Swedish-Mormon emigration was not one of leaving homes behind; rather, of gathering at a new, spiritual home in Utah. Because these emigrants knew they would be joining a community with an identity similar to their own, and also had the support of their existing faith community in Sweden to aid their departure, they represent a markedly different experience than those other emigrants who did not possess the same “joy” that Sandberg described above.

TEACHING AND DEFENDING THE FAITH

It may come as somewhat of a surprise to see politics highlighted in a religious periodical. This speaks to the political upheaval surrounding the Mormon Church during its formative years in the 19th century. To be Mormon was to be directly involved in one of the interesting political debates of the day. The formation of Utah as well as the practice of

polygamy with the early Church made Mormonism a topic of high debate in American and Scandinavian circles alike. *Nordstjärnan* played the role of defender of the faith as well as of the culture of Mormonism in America. Mormonism had many enemies and members in Scandinavia certainly faced pressure from their social circles on their decision to be Mormon.

A difficult source of this pressure on Swedish-Mormons was the frequency of Mormon apostates sharing their negative experiences with the public, further hardening public opinion towards the Church. Almost a third of members in Scandinavia would end up disaffected with their faith, some of them after they had reached Zion in Utah. The reasons for leaving the Church were myriad Mulder aptly observes:

Such wholesale disaffection refutes the easy explanation that Mormonism was such an effective Pied Piper because its tune was America... Belated discovery of unacceptable doctrine, inability to endure ostracism and persecution, capitulation to doubt and disbelief created by adverse propaganda, disappointment in the expectation that transportation to America was a handout - all undoubtedly weighed in the scale of apostasy. (Mulder 126)

Mulder highlights the many challenges that Mormon converts faced both in their homelands and on their journeys to a new home in Utah. By publishing positive commentary on divisive Mormon issues, *Nordstjärnan* gave a source of support to members, providing them with information they could use to inform themselves against the waves of “adverse propaganda.” One such article published in *Nordstjärnan* is a response to public slander about polygamy in Utah. The first paragraph paraphrases a news article printed in the “San Francisco Chronicle” and uses a secular publication as the basis for an argument about the positive views that many

“gentiles” or non-Mormons living in Utah had about their Mormon neighbors. The article goes so far as to say:

Det är icke en “gentile” i Utah som med sanning kan säga, att hans mormonska grannars familjeförhållanden hafva haft någon som helst för honom skadlig verkan. (NS 1882 168)

[There is not a gentile in Utah who can truthfully say that the family relations of his Mormon neighbors have had any injurious effect upon him.]

Whenever Utah or Mormons came up in the public news cycle, *Nordstjärnan* prepared a response for the benefit of its readers to use for their own conviction and the defense of their convictions among their social circles. Since Church membership was not significantly large, it was important that Swedish-Mormons had a voice that confirmed their faith as well as answered their concerns. These responses published in *Nordstjärna* would engage both audiences in Sweden and in Utah, giving them the chance to extend their sympathy over their shared identity. Again, *Nordstjärnan* becomes a channel for the Swedish-Mormon identity to grow in a Transatlantic fashion.

CHURCH POLICY

It would be a mistake to think of the Mormon Church as a global church during the 19th century. Although there were foreign missions and members in several different countries, the Church was largely Utah-centric. This is not surprising as much of the rhetoric being spread from Church leaders during this time encouraged emigration to Utah in order to build up “Zion,” a land where the Church could prosper. This “Utah-centricity” of the Church made those in Utah

more immersed in the social and theological mores of the Church. Members further away had to rely on letters, publications, or word of mouth regarding the state of the Church and its leaders in Utah. *Nordstjärnan* served as a key node of communication where updates on Church policies could be shared. Because the editor of *Nordstjärnan* was almost always the current Scandinavian Mission President, inaccuracies could generally be avoided. There are several articles that concern the necessity of gathering in Zion, informing the members in Sweden that a significant tenet of their faith would continue to be emigration to Utah. One from 1878 reads:

De Helige i de sista dagar, blifva befallda att draga ut från Babylon, att de icke skola bliva delaktiga i hennes synder... medan de ogudaktige dräpa hvar-andra... skola de Helige uppbygga Guds rike i fred och härlighet; "de skola varda ett folk på Zions berg, och Herren skall vara deras konung. (NS 1878 298) [The Saints in the last days, be commanded to withdraw from Babylon, that they shall not be partakers of her sins... while the wicked kill each other... the Saints shall build the kingdom of God in peace and glory; they shall be a people on Mount Zion, and the Lord shall be their king.]

This quote uses biblical imagery with words like “Babylon” and “Mount Zion” to give direction to Church members about the spiritual and physical safety of living in Zion. Another article from 1878 reads:

Många tusende åtlyda varningen och utsamlas från nationerna till Zion år efter år, ty detta är säkerhetsarken, beredd för dens rättfärdige, för att undgå de sista dagars vederstyggelser och vedermodor. (NS 1878 362) [Many thousands obey the warning and

are gathered from the nations to Zion year after year, for this is the ark of safety, prepared for its righteous, to escape the abominations and tribulations of the last days.]

This message is clear: the world is Babylon and Zion is Utah. Part of being a part of God's chosen people is to gather at "Mount Zion" for safety from evil and sin. This is again a powerful propagandistic message chosen by *Nordstjärnan*. These messages are largely present in the earlier editions of *Nordstjärnan* and less so from the 1890s onward. This is evidence for a transforming belief, that over time as the emigration process was refined and the realities of living in Utah became more clear, the idea of Zion became less physical and more spiritual. William Mulder captures this change brilliantly in *Homeward to Zion*:

Though emigration was the great common impulse among the converts, they were told not to make gathering the sole aim, confusing means and ends. Simply getting to Utah did not ensure salvation. Motives were all-important. Converts should come to build up Zion, willing to be identified with it in adversity as well as in prosperity, the object not wealth but only serving God. Whatever temporal benefits attended removal from Babylon came through the gospel and through their... blessings which were the natural fruits of righteousness. (Mulder 126)

These changes in attitudes towards important guidance, such as emigration, needed a place to be shared in a timely way. As an official Church publication *Nordstjärnan* took on this responsibility in Sweden, fulfilling its role as a "shining light of truth" for members looking to Utah for instruction. Here again, *Nordstjärnan* displays dynamic qualities as a publication tasked

with translating messages from Zion, regarding them through a Swedish lens, which then would be distributed to readers both in Utah and Sweden.

A 19th century reader of *Nordstjärnan* could expect far more than a periodical of religious instruction. Beyond reprints of lectures given by prominent Church leaders, as well as the letters, notices and poems mentioned above, *Nordstjärnan* published current events. The *Nordstjärnan* informed its readers on a wide array of subjects, allowing them to make the most of their subscriptions while simultaneously giving the Church the chance to comment on a wider portion of their members' lives..

The “Blandade ämnen” page appears at the back of every edition of *Nordstjärnan* and features blurbs explaining the current events taking place both in Sweden and around the world. One such page mentions an earthquake in Germany, a tragic shipwreck in the Thames River as well as the foundation of a new “sect” in America called the People of Jehovah (NS 1878 287). While it remains unclear where the editors of *Nordstjärnan* were sourcing their news, the consistent nature of its inclusion in the publication indicates that they sought out a steady source of interesting and global news.

The inclusion of a news section in *Nordstjärnan* again speaks to the periodical's dedication to a Transatlantic audience. Readers in Sweden would have access to the general news of Europe, which would have been difficult to come by in relatively isolated and journalistically fledgling Utah. While this news would have been in many other newspapers available to readers in Sweden, its inclusion in *Nordstjärnan* increases its value to the reader as a source of everything they needed to know to be an informed Swedish-Mormon as well as a shared source of current events for conversation and commentary.

A REPOSITORY OF PERSECUTION

Finally, *Nordstjärnan* served as a repository for the persecution experienced by members and missionaries in Sweden. It was not a simple task to be a member in a nation where Lutheranism reigned in the form of the Swedish State Church. In the pages of *Nordstjärnan* there are stories and articles detailing the nature of persecution in Sweden. A significant example of this is an article published in 1885 titled: *När skall förföljelsen stanna?* “When will the persecution stop?” Its words do not give a direct answer to its rhetorical title, instead encouraging members to continue with faith:

Det står icke i var magt att säga huru länge denna utbildnings-inrättning skall bestå. Den kommer troligtvis att fortfara till dess de helige äro beredda till att utföra arbetet, hvartill de äro kallade. (NS 1885 217) [It is not in anyone's power to say how long this educational probation will last. It will probably continue until the saints are ready to do the work to which they are called.]

This encouragement continues in the form of spiritual promises to the faithful who ride out the waves of persecution:

Det it emellertid de heliges privilegium att känna tidernas tecken, som bebada tillkommande företeelser af största intresse, och i den mörkaste timme är det också deras rättighet att hafva sä mycket af den helige ande, att de kunna se den sig närmande ljusa dag. (NS 1885 217) [However, it is the privilege of the saints to know the signs of the times, which predict future events of the greatest interest, and in the darkest hour it is also

their right to have so much of the holy spirit that they can see the approaching bright day.]

This article was translated from the Deseret News, one of the large newspapers in Utah. The point is not lost that persecution was still a very real prospect for members of the Church worldwide. Its inclusion in *Nordstjärnan* is evidence of a shared experience in Sweden. There was perhaps no group more demonized in Sweden than the Mormon Missionaries themselves. A letter from 1885 published in *Nordstjärnan* shares a harrowing experience from missionaries serving in southern Sweden. The missionary describes how a mob of young people assaulted them as they were meeting in a member's home:

De släpade oss ut på golfvat och sade: "påkallen nu den Gud, som I tron på, och låten se, om han vill hjälpa eder!

I denna förvirring kastade en af pöbeln ett stycke jern, hvilket träffade mig i hufvudet.

Blodet strömmade ut ur mitt sar. (NS 1885 77-78)

[They dragged us out onto the floor and said: "Now call on the God you believe in and let us see if he wants to help you!"]

[In this confusion one of the mob threw a piece of iron, which hit me on the head.]

[The blood flowed out of my wound.]

This gruesome depiction is an example of both the physical and psychological threats that faced the missionaries and members in Sweden. The publication of these stories should not be interpreted as a message of fear, but rather as a sign of the unity of members and missionaries.

The shared struggle of being a member and a missionary built unity and can be seen as a badge of honor as Mormon history in general contains its fair share of persecution. Despite resistance, the message of the Church would go forward, even when resistance took the form of the government. L.M. Olson observes that despite restrictions put on missionaries by local authorities, their work continued:

Sedan sista konferens hafva våra Äldster tjugu olika gånger varit inkallade för kyrkliga och civila myndigheter, men endast litet har blifvit giort mer än att förbjuda dem att predika. (NS 1879 123) [Since the last conference, our Elders have been summoned twenty different times before ecclesiastical and civil authorities, but little has been done more than forbidding them to preach.]

By sharing these examples of persecution, *Nordstjärnan* could seek to normalize such events and strengthen their members against these challenges. The shared experiences on both sides of the Atlantic are a source of meaningful connection and understanding and allowed Swedish Church members to connect to Church history as a whole, relating more deeply to the early pioneers and Church leaders who faced displacement, persecution and death. Their inclusion in *Nordstjärnan* is a nod towards this history and in a way legitimizes the Church in Sweden as an extension of this larger Mormon narrative. If the missionaries and their activities were not resisted, what would that say about the truthfulness of their radical message? This and other questions float behind the words of *Nordstjärnan*, ultimately undergirding the central question of what it means to be a Swedish-Mormon. Part of this identity was a familiarity with persecution, which *Nordstjärnan* uses its pages to make more than clear.

CONCLUSION

The study of the Swedish-Mormon migration through the lens of the *Nordstjärnan* periodical unveils a rich story of faith, identity, and transnational dialogue that significantly contributed to the formation of a unique Swedish-American identity within the context of the Mormon movement. It also reveals the highly intentional messaging that *Nordstjärnan* employed to emphasize the tenants and importance of this identity. This paper has traversed the diverse experiences of Swedish-Mormons from the motivations behind their emigration, the spiritual and cultural synergies between Mormon and Swedish traditions, to the vivid accounts of church life and migration narratives captured within the pages of *Nordstjärnan*.

The Swedish-Mormon migration narrative is not solely a tale of leaving one's homeland for religious freedom or economic betterment in the New World. Instead, it emerges as a profound journey of faith-driven community building that transcends geographical boundaries. *Nordstjärnan* served as a vital conduit for maintaining a sense of community and continuity among the Swedish diaspora in Utah and those who remained in Sweden. It provided a platform for shared experiences, reinforcing bonds of faith while also preserving a distinct Swedish cultural identity within the broader Mormon community.

The symbiotic relationship between the Swedish diaspora in Utah and Church members in Sweden was emphasized by *Norstjärnan* intentionally, underscoring a mutual enrichment that goes beyond Arnold Barton's notion of a love-hate relationship between immigrants and their homeland. Instead, through the shared bond of faith and the cultural dialogue facilitated by *Nordstjärnan*, a more nuanced understanding of identity emerges—one that incorporates elements of both Swedish heritage and Mormon faith into a cohesive whole. This synthesis of

identities afforded the Swedish-Mormons a unique place within the American melting pot, where they could contribute to the socio-cultural fabric of their new homeland while retaining a strong connection to their roots.

The significant role of *Nordstjärnan* in fostering this transatlantic dialogue cannot be overstated. By offering insights into the emigration process, sharing spiritual messages, and providing updates on Church affairs and members' well-being, the periodical not only informed but also inspired and comforted its readership. It acted as a lifeline, connecting the scattered members of the Swedish-Mormon community across the Atlantic and helping them navigate the challenges of their multiple identities.

Moreover, the narratives of faith, perseverance, and community support found within the pages of *Nordstjärnan* reflect broader themes of migration and religious commitment. The Swedish-Mormon migration story, as part of the larger Mormon migration to Utah, contributes to our understanding of the complexities of religious migration and the development of religious communities in the American West. It highlights the interplay between faith, identity, and migration in shaping the experiences of immigrant communities and their continued relationship with their land of origin.

In conclusion, the exploration of the Swedish-Mormon migration through *Nordstjärnan* reveals a compelling narrative of faith-driven migration, community solidarity, and identity formation. The Swedish-Mormons, guided by their spiritual convictions and connected by the threads of shared heritage and belief, carved out a unique space for themselves in both the landscapes of Utah and the annals of migration history. Their story, as captured in the pages of *Nordstjärnan*, offers valuable insights into the dynamics of religious migration, community

building, and identity negotiation, contributing to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted experiences of religious immigrant communities in America.

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