

Society Visit to the American Swedish Historical Museum

On Sunday, 25 August 2019, a group of Society members and guests joined a Special Member Excursion to the American Swedish Historical Museum (ASHM) in Philadelphia. The group gathered in the Museum's palatial Grand Hall before enjoying an informative presentation by Mr. Larry Ward, an expert on local Swedish colonization, who also represents the Mouns Jones House and the Historic Preservation Trust of Berks County—and the author of the featured article found earlier in this issue. He spoke on the cultural impact of the New Sweden Colony in the early 17th Century, and particularly the Swedish settlements along the Schuylkill River corridor north and west of the Delaware River. Following the talk, a guided tour of the exhibits within the stunningly furnished Museum was led by ASHM's Curator. After the tour, there was a time for refreshments, and an opportunity to visit the unique Museum shop. A visit to the Museum is highly recommended – www.americanswedish.org.

Decades before the Penn Grant, the New Sweden Colony was established in the Delaware Valley in 1638, and five years later, in the autumn of 1643, the first European community in Pennsylvania was founded by Sweden, decades before the English arrived.

The beautiful American Swedish Historical Museum, located within FDR Park, just north of the old Navy Yard in South Philadelphia, was established in 1926, and is the oldest Swedish museum in the United States. That year was also the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and along with Americans from all backgrounds celebrating their heritage, the museum's founder, Dr. Amandus Johnson, inspired a group of committed, successful Swedish-Americans to build the Museum as a permanent monument to the less well-known Swedish legacy in the United States.



The Stuga gallery, with many household objects, evokes a 19th century Swedish farmhouse. *Courtesy of John O. Senior*



(ABOVE) The American Swedish Historical Museum. *Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne.* (BELOW) The Fredrika Bremer Room, with Swedish furniture and textiles. • (OPPOSITE LEFT) A recreation of the original *Kalmar Nyckel* that served as Gov. Peter Minuit's flagship for the 1638 expedition that founded the colony of New Sweden. (OPPOSITE RIGHT) A view of the stern, featuring ornate decorative carvings. *Photos courtesy of © John O. Senior*



The Museum site was once part of a seventeenth-century land grant from Queen Christina of Sweden to Swedish colonist, Sven Skute. The Museum's architect, Swedish-American John Nydén, combined architectural features from three prominent edifices in his design. He modeled the main building after a seventeenth-century Swedish manor house, Eriksberg in Södermanland. The copper cupola atop the building is inspired by the one on Stockholm's City Hall, and the arcades which flank the Museum are patterned after those at George Washington's home, Mount Vernon.

The Museum's 20,000 square foot interior contains twelve exhibition galleries, reference library, curatorial storage and archives, offices, museum store, large dining room/conference area and kitchen. — *Report by John O. Senior*



Thank You

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