

Scandinavians in New Hampshire

Century of Immigration to America (1820-1924)

- Of emigrants in all three Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark), overwhelming majority to the U.S.; about half of the remainder to Canada
- Immigration from Scandinavia significantly smaller than from other groups in Europe
- Total Scandinavian immigrants, 1820-1920, 2.15 million, of which 1.1 million were Swedes, 710,000 Norwegians, and 301,000 Danes
- Most came between 1865 and 1914
- Norwegians first large, organized group of Scandinavians to U.S. in 19th century; mostly from rural areas; due to land scarcity and population pressures; primarily settled in Norwegian enclaves; appeal of U.S. was its social equality; after 1890, more settled in cities
- Earliest immigrants to U.S. from Sweden in 19th century were middle-class individuals, adventurers, soldiers, technicians who came as passengers on ships delivering Swedish iron ore; 1840s through 1870s brought small farmers hungry for more and better land; some seeking broader religious freedom; mostly families; 1880s rural laborers predominant; most came alone; by 1900, more from towns and cities; young men and women rather than families; with Swedish base here, increasing chain migration; economic motives prevailed for most, due to rapidly expanding population and finite amount of land suitable for farming
- Large majority of the 301,000 Danish immigrants came for economic reasons; from the lower ranks of society; before 1900, from rural areas; after 1900, over half from cities and towns; mostly young people; as 19th century wore on, more individuals than families; most came as part of chain migration

Scandinavian Immigrants

- Scandinavians began arriving in northeastern U.S. in 1840s; came to work on railroad between Portland and Montreal; also on logging railroads of the Winslow Co. in Berlin
- Scandinavians brought love of winter sports; 1872 started the Nansen Ski Club, oldest ski club in U.S.; helped popularize cross country skiing and Nordic ski jumping; several Berlinites competed in the Olympics
- All adults in family tried to find work; Scandinavian women worked as domestic servants, dressmakers, launderers, cooks, boardinghouse managers, making linen products
- In Berlin, after 1885, Scandinavians joined French Canadian, Russian, and Irish immigrants; many came to work in the booming paper industry

Churches

- Attitudes about life in America often reflected church attitudes; Lutherans supported temperance and later Prohibition
- Swedish churches all Protestant; dominated by Lutheranism; churches controlled much of the Swedish American press
- Most Norwegians were Lutherans; organized into separate synods; founded church affiliated colleges
- Churches a focal point for socializing within immigrant communities; were community centers and religious organizations
- Among Danish emigrants, nearly 20,000 Danish Mormons between 1850-1900, many financed by the Mormon church; Danes did not form many ethnic religious institutions; large numbers not affiliated

Other Scandinavian Institutions

- Swedes established large numbers of institutions, including schools and colleges, newspapers, magazines
- Norwegians established an ethnic press, totaling some 800 different publications

FYI

- Scandinavians can usually understand one another; however, Swedish and Norwegian are separate languages; Danish and Norwegian are similar
- Many Scandinavians fought in Civil War, most on Union side; John Ericsson, Swedish immigrant, designed the *Monitor*, iron-plated warship with revolving gun turret; ships like it helped North maintain blockade of Southern ports
- During WWI, Scandinavians suffered from prejudice against German Americans; use of Norwegian and other Scandinavian languages discouraged as it signified foreign sympathies; targets of anti-foreign bigotry after WWI
- Carl Sandburg, son of Swedish immigrants, famous American poet of 20th century; won Pulitzer Prize in history for biography of Abraham Lincoln and another for his poetry
- Mildred “Babe” Didrikson Zaharias, daughter of Norwegian immigrants; many believe the greatest American woman athlete
- Swedish-American Charles Lindbergh first person to fly across Atlantic Ocean alone
- Chief Justice, U.S. Supreme Court, Earl Warren; vice-presidents Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale; all of Scandinavian heritage

Early History of Scandinavians in America

- In 1638, Sweden founded a colony, New Sweden, near Wilmington, Delaware, the first permanent settlement in the Delaware River valley
- Settlers of New Sweden, 1/3 of whom were Finns, introduced the log cabin to North America

History of Scandinavians in New Hampshire Communities

- Swedish stone masons and cutters came to West Concord to work in granite quarries; others worked in car shops of B&M Railroad; also at Durgin’s Silverware Factory; some ran steam baths for families and friends;

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