

## I Go to America: Swedish American Women and the Life of Mina Anderson

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der to piece together the second requirement: *discovery*. Too few of the books mentioned earlier offer readers much in the way of discovery. *Communities* provides new insights and perspectives that are fundamental to its primary objective. Scholarship also demands *dissemination* for the review, critique, and benefit of the larger community of similarly focused scholars. Last, a scholarly product demands clear and accurate *documentation* so the work can be evaluated and, more important, carried forward by future researchers.

If the author accomplished his stated objectives and no more, this would be a welcome addition to the ever growing Wright repository. But *Communities* manages to achieve another vitally important, but unstated, objective. Scholars who choose to probe into the genius that was Frank Lloyd Wright invariably arrive at the same frustrating conundrum. *What made him tick?* How did he justify his reckless and often self-destructive attitude regarding societal ethics and morals, his reluctance to grant credit (and payment) to his colleagues and employees, his propensity to revise even the basic truths of his life? We may never know the answers to these questions because it is unlikely that Wright knew the answers or even grappled with these questions to any degree. Marty's book, through its detailed exploration of the communities that Wright carefully orchestrated to achieve his purposes, inches us ever closer to an understanding of the mind of this most contradictory genius.

*I Go to America: Swedish American Women and the Life of Mina Anderson*, by Joy K. Lintelman. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009. vii, 294 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Paula M. Nelson is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. She is the author of *After the West Was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900–1917* (1986) and *The Prairie Winnows Out Its Own: The West River Country of South Dakota in the Years of Depression and Dust* (1996).

On November 7, 1913, Hilda Burgeson, an 18-year-old immigrant from Frillesas, Halland, Sweden, crossed the Canadian border into Minnesota. Accompanied by her two younger sisters, she was headed to Hector, in Renville County, where a large population of Swedes, including some of her family members, had settled south of the town. Hilda was my grandmother. Although she does not appear in Joy Lintelman's book, it is her story, as well as the story of the quarter-million Swedish immigrant women who came to America between 1880 and 1920 in search of something better than they had. The author has taken

the memoir of Mina Anderson, an immigrant from Dalsland, Sweden, and skillfully incorporated it with the letters, memoirs, autobiographies, interviews, and other writings Swedish immigrant women produced to create this thorough, detailed, informative, and uplifting account of the Swedish female immigrant experience throughout the United States.

Most historians begin their work with a research question. For Joy Lintelman, that question arises from the novels of Vilhelm Moberg, whose Swedish immigrant stories about Kristina and Karl Oskar Nilsson have become celebrated classics of the genre. Moberg's *Kristina* did not want to immigrate, longs for her home in Sweden, and never makes a complete adjustment to life in Minnesota. Karl Oskar is the force in the books, the one who acts to make things happen. Lintelman's research indicated that Swedish immigrant women were actors in their own right, women who chose to immigrate, who made their own circumstances as much as human beings can, and who adjusted as well as men did to the new country. Because fiction can establish tropes that linger in the public consciousness in spite of their misrepresentations, Lintelman's goal was to tell the story of real people in all of their complexity, and to challenge the fictional structures of man as forward looking, woman as backward looking, that immigrant novels have often supplied.

The first chapters reveal the wealth of Lintelman's careful research. Using Mina Anderson's memoir to provide structure, Lintelman tells the story of life in Sweden for young women whose families were of the poorer classes. Such women were independent of their families by age 16 and often worked as domestic servants in the homes of those who were better off. Lintelman explains the economic circumstances of rural Swedes, the types of homes they had, the family arrangements, the work patterns, and the legal structures that shaped young women's lives. The details are clearly explained and the photos of Swedish rural homes, people, and work highlight the circumstances under which they labored.

Mina Anderson, like so many other Swedish women, believed that immigration to the United States would improve her circumstances in life. She wanted better wages, improved working conditions, and more respect. She found those things in northern Wisconsin, where she first moved to live with an uncle, and improved her situation further when she migrated to St. Paul, Minnesota, in search of even better wages. Lintelman argues that Swedish immigrant women made rational economic decisions in their choice of work and living conditions. She uses the story of Evelina Mansson, my grandmother's cousin, to illustrate the stories of those who did not work in domestic service and who, in

Evelina's case, returned to Sweden to find economic and personal fulfillment. Swedish immigrant women were not passive but active in pursuit of better lives.

Mina Anderson married a tailor, and together they bought land in Mille Lacs County and raised their family. The final chapters of the book are devoted to the story of family, farm, and community building. Again, Lintelman skillfully weaves Mina's story with those of other Swedish women who chose marriage and the farm.

*I Go to America* is a valuable contribution to the history of immigration, American women's history, and the history of the upper Midwest, especially Minnesota. The writing is accessible to general readers, while the research will satisfy the most particular scholars. Anyone with an interest in the American immigrant story or in women's history will enjoy this book.

*Lights on a Ground of Darkness: An Evocation of a Place and Time*, by Ted Kooser. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. xii, 60 pp. Illustrations. \$10.95 paper.

Reviewer Terrence J. Lindell is professor of history at Wartburg College. His research interests include immigration and ethnicity, Populism, and the World War II home front.

In this slim volume, Ted Kooser, 2005 Pulitzer Prize winner in poetry and U.S. poet laureate from 2004 to 2006, takes readers back to the summer of 1949 in Guttenberg, Iowa, where his mother and her two children — including ten-year-old Ted — are spending time with her parents. From that point Kooser's narrative flows backward and forward in time, telling the stories of his mother's family, the Mosers and Morarends, who settled in Clayton County in the 1850s.

These are Kooser's childhood memories of scenes observed and stories heard as the youth watched and listened to his elders as they went about their daily tasks, entertained family in the evening, and reminisced about times gone by. Interspersed with such recollections are more recent events as an older Kooser revisits places of the past and carries the stories of his relatives to the end of their lives. The work was prompted by the approaching death of his mother; she lived long enough to read the manuscript but died in 1998 shortly before the work's initial publication in the *Great River Review*.

Beautifully written, this work will evoke for many readers memories of their own childhood, when the world moved more slowly and when conversations over a card game held the attention of old and young alike.