

Pioneer Missionary  
**Lars Petter Lundgren and Wife Alma**

The True Story of a Pioneer Ministry in Minnesota's Last Frontier,  
North Dakota, and Canada<sup>1</sup>  
1892 – 1923

Written and Compiled BY BRUCE WILLIAM ANDERSON (Grandson)  
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Above: Rev. L.P. Lundgren  
in his horse drawn buggy.  
Five years of his life were  
spent in this buggy (21,000  
miles), many miles in brutal  
weather conditions.

Right: Alma (Lund)  
Lundgren, the young bride  
from Beckville, Minnesota.



1. Present title. At the June 26, 2004 Augustana Heritage Gathering, the presentation title was, "Rev. L.P. Lundgren and Alma – The True Story of a Pioneer minister and his wife in

Minnesota's Last Frontier." The presentation was in slide format with informal narration. This essay has been prepared for the Augustana Heritage publication.

### **Foreword:**

In the annals of the Swedish Lutheran Augustana Synod, there is a history of a young man, Lars Petter Andersson, that needs to be told. Born in the *Essunga* parish in the Swedish province of *Västergötland* during 1851, Lars emigrated to America in 1869, and after nine years of work and travel he began to set his sights on preparing to serve the Lord as a Lutheran minister. Having adopted the surname Lundgren, Reverend Laurentius Petrus Lundgren was ordained during June, 1892 at the age of 41 years. Aware of the challenging environmental conditions that prevail in Minnesota's northwest corner, Lars nonetheless accepted the call to minister to Swedes and others who were then present and the many immigrants to come. In his 31 years of ministry, Lars organized and reorganized more congregations on the Minnesota side of the Red River Valley and adjacent regions than another other pastor. In Emeroy Johnson's book, "God Gave The Growth", he wrote: "There were few 'professional' home missionaries or circuit riders. Most of the pastors who belonged to the Conference served for longer or shorter periods on the fringes where new congregations were being started. Outstanding for length of service were S. J. Kronberg and L.P. Lundgren, each of whom spent thirty years on the mission field in the Red River Valley . . ." <sup>2</sup>

During 1896, four years after beginning his ministry, he brought his young bride Alma (nee Lund) from the small Beckville, Minnesota farming community to Hallock, Minnesota. Alma was 18 years old, Lars 45. Despite the challenges facing the young minister's wife, she became a member of God's team in the northland and was loved by parishioners of various congregations. In later years, Alma served as the first president of the Red River District Women's Missionary Society. <sup>3</sup>

### **Overview:**

It would be informative to describe the evolution of objectives that were involved in the compilation and writing of this book. At first, my focus was on a document written for family. As more information was gathered, it became apparent that this book might be of interest to a broader spectrum of persons, museums and institutions in Sweden and North America, and in particular certain descendants of pioneers in the geographic regions in which Rev. L.P. Lundgren served. As research advanced, what began to unfold were some interesting links between the early East and West Union Lutheran churches in Carver County, Minnesota; Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota; the

2. Johnson, Emeroy. *A Church is Planted, The Story of the Lutheran Minnesota Conference 1851-1876*. Published by the Lutheran Minnesota Conference, 1948.

3. Larson, J. Edor. *History of the Red River Valley Conference of the Augustana*

small Beckville Lutheran church in Meeker County, Minnesota; Rev.L.P. Lundgren; and early mission workers in northwest Minnesota, North Dakota and into Canada. Also, since many of the original documents were written in the Swedish language, I wanted to include a portion of these documents in Swedish accompanied by English translations. In this way the old and new homelands are represented. Notable in this regard are excerpts from the Red River Lutheran Church 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary *Minnesalbum* which was written by my grandfather.<sup>4</sup>

When I began this effort, I knew of none of the 17 congregations that my grandfather organized or reorganized. Most but not all have since been identified. His call to northwest Minnesota included three home base Lutheran congregations; Red River, Fridhem (renamed Grace), and Saron, the latter organized by Rev. L.A. Hocanzon. Home town for the Lundgren family was Hallock, Minnesota.

There was another objective in writing this book that I struggled with in the early stages. I wanted to accurately describe what my grandfather might have encountered in his thirty-one years of service and yet I was not sure how to achieve this. I had read books on the Red River Valley and adjacent areas, but it was not until I was able to obtain the heritage books of Marshall, Kittson and Roseau counties that my prayers were answered.<sup>5,6,7,8</sup> In the total of over 2100 pages in these books is a beautiful outpouring of histories which include family stories describing some of the early pioneers and descendants in these counties. As I read and reread many of the family accounts in these books, it was possible to gain a sense of immigrant life experiences, to feel the pride — the desire to want to share their family accounts and histories. In the Foreword of the Kittson County heritage book<sup>5</sup>, these few lines describe these works so well: “It was felt that the amazing story of our early

4. *Minnesalbum Öfver Svenska Evangeliskt Lutherska Red River Församlingen.* Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Book Concern, 1906.
5. *Our Northwest Corner- Histories of Kittson County, Minnesota.* Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Co., Texas Copyright- 1976. Kittson County Historical Society and the Red River Valley Historical Society. This book is no longer available from the publisher. Subsequent reference to this work will be denoted “Kittson 1”.
6. *Our Northwest Corner, Histories of Kittson County, Minnesota.* Topeka, Kansas: Printed by Josten’s/ American Yearbook Co., Copyright 1979. By The Kittson County Historical Society, Lake Bronson, Minnesota. Subsequent reference to this work will be denoted “Kittson 2”.
7. *Self Portrait of Marshall County.* Solum, Nancy, ed. Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Co., Copyright 1976. Marshall County Heritage Commission. This book is no longer available from the publisher. Subsequent reference to this work will be denoted “Marshall”.
8. *Roseau County Heritage.* Dallas, Texas: Printed by Taylor Publishing Co, Published by The Roseau County, Minnesota Historical Society, Copyright 1992. This book is currently available from the Roseau County Historical Society. Subsequent reference to this work will be denoted “Roseau”.

settlers should be told. We have tried to portray the scope and spirit of these people between the covers of this book. It is offered for its timely and general interest. More, it is a source book of rare value for historians.” Rev. L.P. Lundgren and Alma were a part of this history, and to some extent, my book may serve as an addendum to these fine works. With kind permission from the county historical societies and others to quote excerpts, I was able to integrate some of the stories of the pioneers who were in congregations that my grandfather served. In bringing the churches and the early pioneer members together, it was sort of a homecoming!

In the remainder of this essay, the reader will find examples of the content within the pages of my book. In a broad sense, the four chapters provide insights on the wide range of experiences of a pioneer minister and his family; the physical and demographic environments in which Rev. L.P. Lundgren served; the congregations, the pioneers, and educational institutions; historical information on the Red River District; the formation of the Red River Valley Conference; and Rev. L.P. Lundgren’s mission travels and experiences in North Dakota and Canada. In addition to the county heritage books mentioned above, both English and Swedish newspapers provided information that was invaluable. Over 400 pages of translations were included in this effort.

During his 31 years in the ministry, Rev. L.P. Lundgren traveled 21,000 miles in horse drawn buggy, 41,000 miles in a “Model T”, and 6,100 miles by train. He baptized 1,462 children, confirmed 755, married 362 couples and buried 502 people.

### **East Union, West Union, Beckville Lutheran churches, Gustavus Adolphus College, and Augustana Theological Seminary**

Upon Lars Petter’s arrival in America in 1869, he traveled to Carver County, Minnesota where a first cousin, Johannes (Svensson) Kjellgren, was a member of the East Union congregation. Three other kin were also members of this congregation; Johannes, Anders, and Petter (Andersson) Hult who arrived in Carver County during 1854. Kjellgren and the Hults had roots in the *Åstra* (East) *Bitterna* parish in *Skaraborg* County in the province of *Västergötland*, the parish in which Rev. L.P. Lundgren’s father was born. Johannes Hult is mentioned in a book by pioneer pastor Eric Norelius when describing his first visit to Carver County in May, 1857. Norelius was seeking a contact who was trustworthy and solid in the Lutheran faith, and Johannes was just such a person.<sup>9</sup>

9. Norelius, Eric. *The Pioneer Swedish Settlements and Swedish Lutheran Churches in America, 1845-1860*. Trans. Conrad Bergendoff. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1984. p. 369.

During the summers of 1879 through 1884, L.P. Lundgren taught school at the West Union congregation and resided with the Gustaf Romvall family. In 1881, he enrolled in Gustavus Adolphus College and in 1890 was the oldest member of the first graduating class. He was also the first Alumni president of this institution and served for two consecutive terms. Upon his retirement in 1923, he was awarded Doctor of Divinity honors.



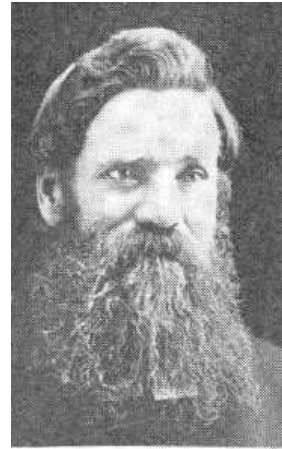
**Gustavus Adolphus College “1<sup>st</sup> Official Freshman Class”**

L.P. Lundgren in back row, 6<sup>th</sup> from left

*Photo: Courtesy of Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota*

In order to finance his way through college, he taught summer school at the Beckville Lutheran Church during the years 1885 through 1891. He was also assigned assistant pastoral duties including mission work in Cosmos, Minnesota. Many years later during June, 1919, he addressed the Beckville congregation at their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and commented: “I was also responsible for visiting Cosmos — a better name would have been ‘Chaos’, because there was no order and people there were very uninterested.” The pastor at the Beckville Lutheran Church during the period 1883 through 1891 was Lars A. Hocanzon, a friend and mentor to my grandfather. Hocanzon was no stranger to the northwest corner of Minnesota. He was the founder of the Saron Lutheran church, one of the churches Pastor L.P. Lundgren was called to serve nine years later. Rev. L.A. Hocanzon visited Minnesota northwest counties during the spring of 1883 and his challenges with wind, mud, snow, cold and damp were not unlike those which my grandfather would

encounter in the years to come. Hocanzon's mission service in northwest Minnesota and Canada provided him with first hand knowledge of the growth that the area was to experience and the overwhelming continuing demand for pastors. There is no doubt that this dedicated servant challenged and inspired L.P. Lundgren to accept a position in this most challenging physical environment. In his career, Lars organized nineteen churches and took part in the building of eighteen. One can assume that there were discussions between Lars and my grandfather on the protocol for the organization of Augustana Lutheran churches and building construction techniques. L.P. Lundgren's prior experience as a carpenter in St. Paul may have resulted in the teacher and student sharing design and construction ideas. L.P. Lundgren was also being groomed for the challenges and frustrations that often confronted mission pastors.



Rev. Lars A. Hocanzon

Subsequent to graduation at Gustavus Adolphus College during 1890, L.P. Lundgren enrolled in the Augustana Theological Seminary in Rock Island, Ill.. He was ordained June 5, 1892 with graduation ceremonies held in Lindsborg, Kansas. Of the 23 members of the graduating class, 20 were born in Sweden, 3 in the U.S.

### **First Visit to Northwest Minnesota**

My grandfather documented his travel to Kittson County during the Christmas season 1891.<sup>4</sup> It is an interesting account, but I shall only include one excerpt regarding a winter storm. The translation follows:

Another severe snowstorm and New Years's Day was here. Service had been announced for Red River at 10:30 a.m. and at Hallock 7:30 in the evening. The weather New Year's morning was windy and cold. Several persons advised me not to go to Red River, but I went anyway. I arrived there at 12 o'clock and spoke for awhile for five persons who came when they saw me coming. I had dinner at my friends J.S. Lindgren's home who also advised me not to go back to Hallock in such cold weather and condition of roads. I went anyway but did regret that I didn't heed my friends advice. I had a small and not so strong horse and the snow was hard and deep. The horse went through time and again and finally was so tired that he would stop between each rod. It got dark and I was lost on the vast prairie. I began to fear that both I and the horse would perish. The horse would stop at about every fifth step. I did not have a whip and even if I would have had one I would not have had the heart to use it on the poor tired animal. At 9:30 I finally reached town after having been on the

road for 5 ½ hours. It was very cold but both I and the horse were drenched with sweat after tramping the long distance through the deep snow.

As a result of this visit, Rev. L.P. Lundgren received his call. With the above snow storm encounter, he could have backed away from making a commitment, but he did not.

### **The pioneer pastors winter garb and winter storms**

Included in my book is a wonderful biographical sketch on my grandparents' which was written by their oldest daughter, Myrtle (Lundgren) Hollister. Myrtle tells of her father's winter clothing:

In the cold winter, the Pastor would bundle up in woolen underwear, wool sox, felt shoes, his Prince Albert suit; as the Ministers then wore; a muskrat lined broadcloth coat, covered with a dog skin coat, heavy fur mittens over woolen ones, a muskrat cap and a woolen scarf that we thought must have been a block long. This scarf was wrapped around his face, crossed in back and tied in front. Several blankets were his cushion in the cutter, fur robes covered his legs and a foot warmer was placed at his feet. I don't know how many of you know what a foot warmer is – a steel box carpet covered, with a steel drawer in one end, into which one could insert a flaming piece of charcoal. It would last quite a while, but yet when the Pastor arrived home he would be so cold that often he had to be turned out of the cutter. The older boys or the wife were on hand to care for the frost covered horses.

Despite the layered clothing, on more than one occasion the good pastor had to be literally carried from his cutter and placed by a warming stove in churches. On December 6, 1895, the *Kittson County Enterprise* newspaper reported:

Last Sunday evening while driving out to one of his charges, Rev. Lundgren's horse took fright and got beyond his control, violently pitching him out and landing him on his head and shoulders on the frozen ground. For a few minutes the reverend gentleman was unable to move from the effects of the shock, but luckily after a little while he regained enough strength to walk to the nearest house, about three miles away, or he might have frozen to death. At this place he was taken care of and afterward taken to Mr. Aug. Lindman's of this city, where he is at present, somewhat improved. Dr. Muir was called and it was found that the injuries were internal, about the chest. At last reports, we are pleased to inform our readers that he is improving nicely under the careful treatment of his physician.

More than one article spoke of his determination to meet his commitments and appointments, regardless of weather conditions. During one snow storm, only the sexton was on hand to stoke the fire in the stove. The sexton expected that services would not be held, but my grandfather reminded him that two were gathered in His name and he preached his sermon to the lonely sexton. On another occasion, caught in a snow storm, his one foot was so frozen that the doctor wanted to perform an amputation. He refused, and the rest of his days he hobbled around wearing a special felt shoe on one foot.

### **Immigrants to NW Minnesota, and Swedishness**

My grandfather and others would often cite the Swedishness of Kittson County in their writings.

*Skaffaren*, August 2, 1893; article on mission meetings in Kittson and Marshall counties:

Our energetic and good pastor in Kittson County, L.P. Lundgren is our "high priest." His city of residence, Hallock, is only 18 miles from the Canadian border. His work is obviously blessed, which was noticeable during the recent district meeting here.

Kittson County is the most Swedish county in America. All officers in the county are Swedes and this is the way it has been ever since the county was organized about ten years ago if I am not mistaken. Is there another county in America which can say the same? Not even the Swedish towns of Rockford, Moline and Lindsborg can compete with our Swedish Kittson county in Minnesota. Integrity and honesty keep the Swedes in office term after term.

Statistics from two references on the Swedes, Norwegians, and other ethnic groups are listed in the book. In brief summary, in the foreign-born category, Swedes were by far the largest group in Kittson County; Swedes and Norwegians were approximately equal in number in Marshall County; and Norwegians were the largest group in Roseau County. Out of curiosity, I carefully reviewed family accounts in Kittson, Marshall and Roseau county heritage books to examine the provinces in Sweden that the immigrants came from. The results were surprising. In Kittson County, there were Swedish immigrants from all 25 provinces in Sweden with the possible exception of *Lappland*. In Marshall County, only the province of *Öland* was not accounted for. In Roseau County, there were immigrants from at least 16 of the 25 provinces. It is probable that immigrants from all of the provinces resided in Kittson and Marshall counties since the percentage of Swedish immigrants mentioned in the heritage books is significantly less than 50



percent. In any case, these findings caused me to ponder the surprises Swedish immigrants experienced when first meeting Swedes from the various provinces. In Kittson County alone, with land area less than two-thirds of one percent of that in Sweden, immigrants from virtually all of Sweden's provinces had the opportunity to meet one another! In a 1999 Augustana Heritage Association publication, Dag Blanck wrote:

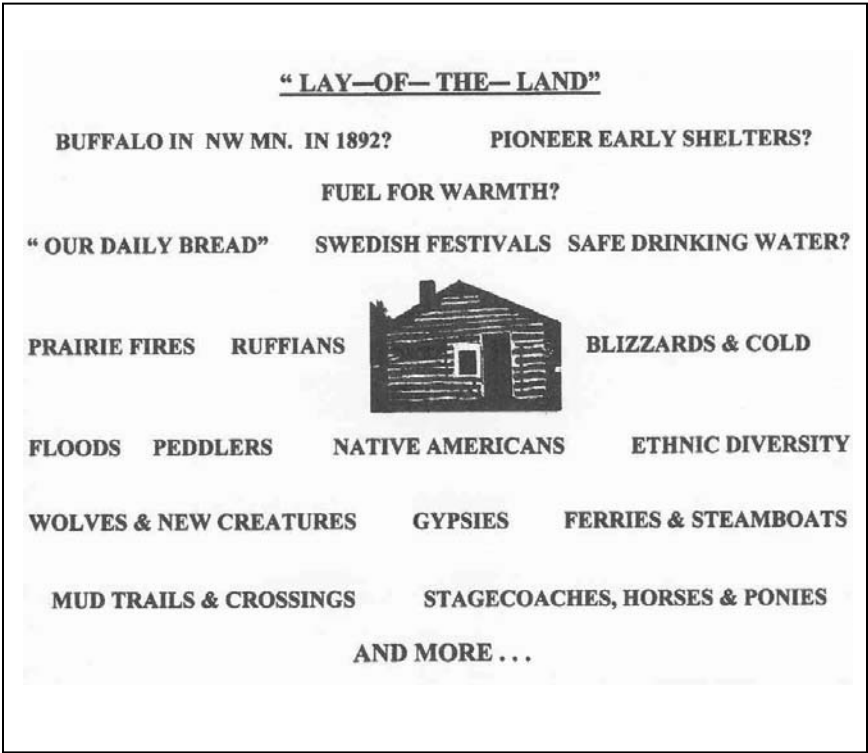
First, it must be recognized that many of the immigrants and their children who were members of an Augustana congregation, attended Augustana Synod schools, and in general were a part of the Augustana sphere in Swedish America probably had rather weak identifications with Sweden. Their loyalties lay with their home provinces, and therefore they had local rather than national, identities. . . It was in America that one became a Swede and shed one's provincial attachment.<sup>10</sup>

I agree with Dag Blanck. For the writer to define my heritage in terms of provinces and parishes, it would go something like this: Yah, I'm 3/4<sup>th</sup>'s Västergötlander (*Essunga, Jung, Vinköl, Magra and Stora Mellby*); 1/8<sup>th</sup> Smålander (*Hallingeberg*); 1/16<sup>th</sup> Öngermanlander (*Stigsjö*); and 1/16<sup>th</sup> Medelpader (*Ljustorp*)! With this mix in America, one would simply say: Yah, I'm a Swede!

### **“Lay-of-the-Land”**

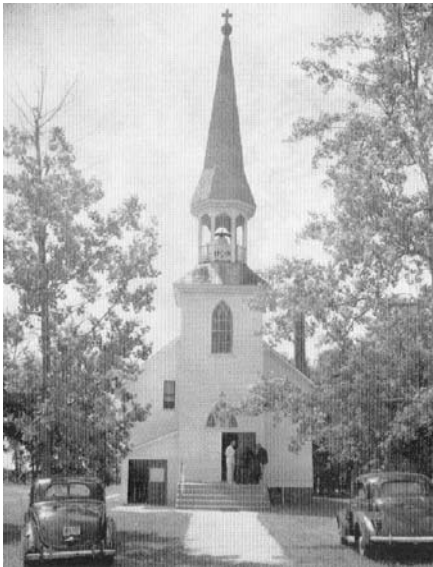
In this sub-section of my book, I have included 30 pages with photographs on a wide variety of topics that are illustrated in a graphic on the next page. Fortunately, the county historical societies and groups of dedicated volunteers had the foresight to capture some of the experiences of the pioneers. The small graphic of a log cabin shown on the next page has historical significance. This is called the Norlund cabin and is on display at the Kittson County Historical Museum in Lake Bronson, Minnesota. Mrs. Erick Norlund was the first Swedish woman in Kittson County and was a member of the Fridhem Lutheran church in Hallock.

10. Blanck, Dag. “The Augustana Synod and the Swedish-American Community,” *The Augustana Heritage- Recollections, Perspectives, and Prospects*. Chicago, Illinois: Augustana Heritage Association, 1999. p. 45



**Home Base, Organized, and Reorganized Lutheran parishes**

The histories of sixteen parishes and excerpts from the stories of some of the pioneers that were members of these congregations are included in this chapter. The beautiful Red River Lutheran church which once stood to the west of Hallock, Minnesota is shown to the right, and there is a special story associated with the tall steeple in the church. Rev. L.P. Lundgren had a dream to build a tower 83 feet high, but the builders and laymen did not believe that the tower could be attached to the church structure and yet withstand the high winds on the prairie. My grandfather was confident that this could be done, so confident that he built a prototype to convince



builder and parishioners that it was a sound design. It was a successful project and a bell weighing 1,808 pounds called the faithful to worship. Not all were faithful, which compelled my grandfather to write:

Soon its joyful tones rang out calling and persuading all hearers to come to the Lord's House. Many let themselves be persuaded and came; but some, to our sorrow, that gladly hear the bells tones do not follow her voice, but stay home thinking of, maybe occupying themselves, even on the day of rest, only with what belongs to earth. Their responsibility will be great, because they have been called, but do not want to come. Maybe the church bell will witness against them that day, when they must come before the Lord. It was in the summer of 1897 that the Red River Congregation had the joy to hear the tones of its own bell.

A few samples of the pioneer accounts with a bit of humor follow. A humorous story was written by Mrs. Wm. Anderson when writing of Axel and Hilda Rynning. Axel and Hilda were born in Norway:

Axel and Hilda were charter members of the Norwegian church in Kennedy [Minnesota]. It was six miles away so frequently they attended the Red River Church two miles away. One Sunday at the Red River church, James, two years old, must have thought the sermon too long, because to their embarrassment, he stood up and in Norwegian said the sermon was long. Hearing this, the minister agreed.<sup>11</sup>

There must have been a lot of laughs in the Lundgren home in the telling of this incident.

Or, consider the story of the Skolds who attended the Zion Lutheran church, then in Bronson, Minnesota. Joyce Boroski, a granddaughter of the Skolds wrote an interesting account on her immigrant grandparents, Jonas (John) and Anna Skold who were married in the *Föllinge* parish in *Jämtland*, Sweden. The following excerpts have been selected as another example of the determination of the pioneers and dedication to their faith. The photographs of the Skolds in their young adulthood seem to portray strength and determination.

There were no churches or schools and being of staunch Lutheran faith, Grandma began working towards building a church. They held meetings in their homes and called on Pastor Lundgren of Hallock, the only minister in the territory at that time. The first meeting was held at the John Kjellberg's in 1899. Mrs. Kjellberg was elected Secretary,

11. Kittson 1, P. 375

Mrs. John Hallgren, Sr. as Treasurer and Grandma [Anna Skold] as President, a position she held for 30 years. . . . When they bought their first car, Grandpa was going to learn to drive. He did pretty well to begin with, but when he came to the corner he became excited and hollered “Whoa! Whoa!” Unlike the horses, the car didn’t stop and he ended up in the brush . . . never drove anything but horses for the remainder of his life. My grandmother decided that if he couldn’t, she would. Being a “stubborn Swede”, she got the car out of the garage and drove around the yard several times. Knowing she could manage it, she loaded the cream into the car and went to town at top speed of 10 to 15 miles per hour. She came home again, put the car into the garage, I mean— through the garage! Grandpa just shook his head. Grandma's remark was “My mistake for the day”<sup>12</sup>

Among the many interesting stories is one of Olaf and Othelda Hendrikson who attended the Sikar Lutheran church near Lancaster, Minnesota. In an article by Richard Rynning, he wrote:

A few years later [after Olaf’s emigration] Othelda Benson boarded a Swedish ship alone to join her sister . . . . The crossing was extremely slow, as the sea was beset by dense fog and no wind. The ship stood still for 18 days, running low on food and water- the passengers became more agitated each day. . . . Section 16 also knew roses brought from Sweden by “Gramma Benson”, so famed for her flowers the King of Sweden had once visited her and eaten in her home. Her brother became a gardener for the King.<sup>13</sup>

### **Higher Education and The Educator**

In reviewing Swedish Augustana newspapers of the day, one would quickly gain a sense of the high emphases placed upon institutions of higher education by church leaders and lay people. In Red River Valley District articles, focus was primarily on three Minnesota institutions of higher education: Hope Academy in Moorhead; North Star College in Warren; and Northwestern in Fergus Falls. An excellent historical summary on these colleges is presented in Pastor J. Edor Larson’s *History of the Red River Conference*.<sup>14</sup> College pamphlets were also found at the Minnesota State Historical facility in St. Paul, Minnesota. None of the three schools exist today, perhaps in part because of the movement of populace away from the Red River Valley with increased mechanization in the farming communities. Newspaper

12. Kittson 1, p. 400

13. Kittson 1, p. 183

14. Larson, J. Edor

articles pertaining to Rev. L.P. Lundgren's participation as Secretary of Hope Academy and a member of the Board of Directors for North Star Academy are documented in the book.

The following excerpt provides an example of Rev. L.P. Lundgren's involvement in fund raising for Hope Academy.

*Kittson County Enterprise*, March 10, 1894:

In speaking of the Hope Academy meeting held at Moorhead last week, the News of that city says: "It was decided to go to work at once and collect \$5,000 to pay off outstanding liabilities. A corps of 1,000 men, women and children will be organized, promising to pay \$5 each during the present year. Rev. L.P. Lundgren, of Hallock, was appointed 'general' for this grand army, with full power to act. He is to appoint captains in every congregation and to push this work to completion. Mr. Lundgren has proved himself able in work of this kind before and the board has no doubt but that he will be successful."

Rev. L.P. Lundgren's passion for education and teaching was also evident in his congregations. During a visit to the Red River Lutheran church, I took a few moments to page through the minutes of a small Luther League book. What impressed me was the variety of exercises in which the youth were encouraged to participate. A fictitious newspaper was formed and Editor and Assistant Editor assignments were rotated among the youth to develop their individual talents. One example of a debate topic:

1904: Motion was made and seconded that we have a debate next meeting. Resolved that Intemperance caused more misery than war.

### **Red River District of the Minnesota Conference**

Rev. L.P. Lundgren was President of the District for 15 years. As senior pastor and leader, he had the charge to try to find pastors willing to serve in the northland. I would first like to mention a translated work that is in the book that may be of value to researchers, and descendants of pioneers who once resided in this district. In the Swedish Augustana Synod Minnesota Conference 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book (*Minnesskrift-pages 187 to 199*), Rev. Lundgren wrote brief histories on 33 Swedish Lutheran congregations in the Red River District. Many of these congregations no longer exist or have long ago been merged into other churches. The translation of these histories is included in my book. I should also note that over 1200 person and place names are listed in the index, many of the names entered from this translation.

The following excerpt is included in this essay to provide insight into the challenges that existed in the Augustana churches in the northland in the early twentieth century. This report was written by my grandfather.

*Minnesota Stad Tidning*, February 13, 1907:

**President's report to the Red River District.**

Give all your troubles to the Lord for He will care for you. The circumstances for poor people are often difficult and without a good friend or supporter to turn to they get even worse. Christ's church has always been in difficult circumstances and still is today, especially here in the cold and snowy North. Our trouble is not the daily bread because we have so much bread that we can share with others. But man does not live from bread alone but from each and every word from God's mouth. Is there a lack of God's word? No, God's word is in all Swedish homes and we believe it is being practiced by most people. Is there a lack of parishes, congregations, church and people? No, there are almost 4,000 members in this district and there could have been twice as many. We have 34 congregations and of these 25 have their own churches. All this is encouraging. So what is the concern? It is the lack of workers in the plentiful harvest; only 4 pastors for 8 parishes. If one considers the field's ten thousand square miles, one realizes that these four workers are like 4 farmers working 2,500 acres. The thing is that these four are bound to their respective fields and have to care for them first; and they are all big enough to be divided into two parishes each, and 8 workers would have work enough to care for them properly. Yes, our 8 parishes should be divided into two each, but what good would it do to divide them when the chance to find people to care for them is so slim! This is where our problem comes in. Several of these fields have written to me wondering, When do we get a pastor? Whom should we call? This is the situation causing sorrow and concern not only for the vacant congregations but also for us pastors negligent in our prayers for a worker in this field, and I do not know if the higher authority has reason to blame itself as well. Therefore, from now on let us pray with more confidence and eagerness that He will send us a few faithful and stable servants to our district.

In Roseau County, there is evidence that the Norwegian Lutherans were much more supportive of their congregations. During 1898, Rev. L.P. Lundgren traveled to the Roseau region and organized two churches there. Prior to these organizations, a dedicated Norwegian Lutheran pastor, Nils Askeland, supported the Swedes and Norwegians. In fact, he performed confirmation ceremonies in both Swedish and Norwegian languages. Once the Augustana congregations were formed,

the challenge was to find a pastor to fill the vacancy. Parishioners from one of the organized congregations, Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Clara Church of Spruce (now named First Lutheran) wrote a letter to the *Minnesota Stad Tidning* newspaper, dated March 4, 1903. They wrote:

#### **Letter from Roseau County**

Minnesota Stats Tidning has gained many fans here over the years. People begin to [depend on] information received by this newspaper; something we can not say about our Swedish-American newspapers.

We want to tell about this place, with the permission of the editor, our home, which is so dear to us. The areas which comprise Roseau County were very sparsely populated until 1890. This year and the following ten years saw a rather lively immigration and there are now more than 10,000 people here. More than 25 percent of them are Swedish and which many have already attained an independent position. The Swedes have made themselves known in many ways. Still, we lag behind other nations in one regard: the religious area which probably is partly due to the Augustana Synod's indifference to its native people.

The Swedish Lutherans here belonged to the Norwegian-Lutheran church until 1897, which church was led by a pastor Askeland. In the spring of 1897 the Swedish pastors Lundgren of Hallock, Mattson of Warren and Kilgren of Nilson Park arrived here and called their countrymen to a meeting. Encouraged by them, we left the Norwegian congregation, assured that the Augustana synod would see to it that a Swedish pastor moved to the area to handle the business of our church. Believing in this promise, the Swedes built a church in Roseau already the following summer for about \$1,500 and gave the synod the deed without having received a cent from the synod. However, we are still waiting for the pastor we were promised, despite many inquiries. It has been said that the synod is unable to find a pastor willing to settle down here. The Norwegians have no less than six pastors here, all good men. If the Augustana synod really is unable to take care of congregations such as ours, they should decline their requests for membership and buildings. Even a Swede's patience has an end and there is now risk that many will return to the Norwegian church. It seems to have both the will and ability to find pastors for its congregations. . .

The lay workers in Klara.

Such were the frustrations of the parishioners that were also deeply expressed by my grandfather. At least in this field, the motto for Augustana Lutherans might have best been expressed by the play-on-words, **Many were called, but few were frozen**. Fortunately, Pastor H.O. Hemming accepted the call to support the Roseau congregations.

## **Red River Valley Conference of The Augustana Lutheran Church**

The Red River Valley Conference was formed during 1912 after 14 years of debate and resistance to its formation. Early petitioning for the new conference came from the seasoned stalwart pioneer pastor, Rev. J.O. Cavallin and the next generation pioneer pastor, Rev. L.P. Lundgren. Rev. J.O. Cavallin highlighted the need for a new conference in 1896. Rev. L.P. Lundgren wrote letters to Dr. Norelius (then head of the Minnesota Conference) during 1897 describing effort that was taking place. These efforts have been described in Pastor Emery Johnson's book, *God Gave The Growth*.

Years later, Rev. L.P. Lundgren's frustration with foot-dragging within the Minnesota Conference was expressed in the February 2, 1910 issue of *Minnesota Stad Tidning*. Receipts to Augustana College and Seminary, Gustavus Adolphus College, and Missions from the Red River District were below target, and given economic conditions the district had recommended that their debt be waived. Rev. Lundgren wrote:

It [the Conference] believes that indifference is the problem. This shows that the conference is not aware of the circumstances here, because the distance is too great. The Minnesota Conference's center is now located by one side of the wheel,, and it rolls too uneven. A change is needed. We need a closer center and we hope we get it before the end of the year.

L.P. Lundgren

In the February 15, 1911 issue of *Minnesota Stad Tidnings* my grandfather wrote:

Our district has a big mission to accomplish. Swedes live everywhere and many of them could be won over to God's congregation if we had more workers and means to carry out our work. Our prayer to the conference for help has only vaguely been heard, probably more due to inability than unwillingness to listen. "The elephant" [Minnesota Conference] is strong, but too big and heavy to watch over the big area. The heart is too far away, it warms the closest parts while the farthestmost parts are freezing. L.P. Lundgren

During April, 1911 four districts broke ranks with the Minnesota Conference which finally resulted in the formation of the Red River Valley Conference in 1912.



## Mission travels in North Dakota

There are three pages in the book that describe some of Rev. L.P. Lundgren's mission trips into North Dakota. These took place during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Rev. J. O. Cavallin was the leader in the formation of Augustana Lutheran churches in North Dakota. Rev. Cavallin would have been a close friend and likely encouraged my grandfather to pay mission visits to the small groups of Swedes that were spread across North Dakota.

## Mission travels in Canada

My first attempts to find Rev. L.P. Lundgren's mission travels in Canada were unsuccessful. The archives on the Augustana Lutheran church in Canada did not have any record of his mission visits. I was convinced that his involvement was more than casual because of the following tragedy that incurred in the Lundgren family.

Of the nine children born to my grandparents, four died in childhood and are buried in Hallock, Minnesota. Their oldest daughter wrote that no one in need was turned away by my grandparents, and that down-and-out folks were housed either in the parsonage or in the barn. During 1909, one visitor was believed to be the carrier of scarlet fever. Five of the Lundgren children came down with this dread disease and three of the five died within nine days. No one in Hallock would come near the house, and yet within two days two nurses from Winnipeg, Canada came to help my grandparents.

This incident told me that my grandfather had close friends in Winnipeg who did all they could to help. My initial breakthrough on this research occurred when Canadian researcher Elinor Barr advised me of the book, "*Från Canada*" that was written by Pastor Svante Udden.<sup>15</sup>

Svante Udden was the first permanent Augustana Lutheran pastor in Canada and was a close friend of Rev. L.P. Lundgren. Svante, two years

younger than my grandfather, emigrated from the *Lekåsa* parish in *Västergötland* which was the parish in which Rev. Lundgren's mother was born. They also knew each other from assignments in the West Union congregation in Carver, County, Hope Academy, and the Red River District. Svante was also the organizer of four congregations within the Red River District. When in Canada, Svante was also editor of the Swedish newspapers *Sion Väktare* and later *Väktaren*. Once my research focused on these Canadian newspapers, and *Skaffaren* and

15. Udden, Svante. *Från Canada*. Rock Island, Ill.: Lutheran Augustana Book Concerns Tryckeri, 1898.

*Minnesota Stad Tidning* in the U.S., then the doors were opened.

My book contains 12 pages of documentation on Rev. L.P. Lundgren's mission trips in three provinces during the last decade of the nineteenth century. This information has been shared with friends in Canada.

### **Postscript**

The effort involved in research and writing in this project was far more extensive than I first imagined. My goal of better understanding the persona of a grandfather that I never knew personally has been realized. Within the SIN and GRACE disciplinarian, there was a loving and sensitive man with a sense of humor. He carved wooden toys for some of the children of parishioners, easily shed tears of appreciation when presented with small gifts, and more. These observations were derived from writings of people who knew him and expressed their admiration in newspapers, books and elsewhere.

In this brief essay, my primary focus has been on my grandfather. In my book there are many pages written about Alma, *min Mormor*. She was a part of my life through my college years. Alma, in her quiet way was a dedicated servant of the Lord. Without her support and perseverance the accomplishments of a Pioneer Missionary would have been diminished.

The opportunity to compile data that might be of interest to future researchers and descendants of pioneers has also been rewarding. It has been a pleasure to write about some of the many crown jewels that are a part of our Augustana heritage.

### **The book**

This is a non-profit project and is being shared with persons, libraries and institutions from a posterity perspective. The book consists of 282 pages, 8 ½ x 11 inches, with hard cover. It does not have an ISBN number and a limited number of copies have been ordered. Price in the U.S. is approximately \$20 including shipping. In Canada and Sweden, prices will reflect higher shipping costs. Please contact, Bruce W. Anderson, 1213 Lykins Ln., Niles, MI 49120. Tel: 269 683 5779. Email: [andersbj@mindspring.com](mailto:andersbj@mindspring.com)

