



The Creation of an Ethnic Identity: Being Swedish American in the Augustana Synod, 1860-1917

Associate Professor Dag Blanck Ph.D. B.A.

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Analyzing the development of a Swedish American identity

The Creation of an Ethnic Identity: Being Swedish American in the Augustana Synod, 1860–1917 analyzes how Swedish American identity was constructed, maintained, and changed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Augustana Synod, the largest religious-based organization created by Swedish immigrants in the United States, played an important role in establishing what it meant to be Swedish American.

In this study, author Dag Blanck poses three fundamental questions: How did an ethnic identity develop in the Augustana Synod? What was that identity? Why was an ethnic identity formed? Based on primary sources formerly unknown or neglected, *The Creation of an Ethnic Identity* examines the Lutheran Augustana Synod, Augustana College, and the Augustana Book Concern to provide insights into how ethnic identity is constructed within a major religious body, a central educational institution, and a major publishing house.

Starting from the concept of ethnicity as something created or invented, Blanck goes on to explore how it was possible for a white European immigrant group like the Swedes to use its ethnicity as a tool of integration into American society. The nature of their ethnicity, says Blanck, was both determined by their cultural origins and also the values and nature of American society as they perceived it. Becoming Swedish American was also a way of becoming American.

The volume, which is augmented by illustrations, integrates the most critical scholarship on immigration and ethnicity over the past half century and provides a strong argument about how ethnicity is shaped over time within an immigrant group.

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