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FIG. 1. *Cambridge Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Minn., as it appeared in 1978. Courtesy of R. L. Carlson.*

THE IMMIGRANT CHURCH AS A SYMBOL OF COMMUNITY AND PLACE IN THE UPPER MIDWEST

ROBERT C. OSTERGREN

There can be little doubt that the church as an institution played a major role in the organization and development of community on nineteenth-century American frontiers, especially in the Middle West. Zealous missionary activity was characteristic of American Protestantism in the nineteenth century, and a good portion of that effort was expended on midwestern frontier populations. Thus the region emerged as a locus of fierce competition between the established American denominations. In addition, the Midwest was fertile ground for the establishment of new denominations. Many who settled the region were immigrants who came directly from Europe. Their uprooting severed ties with the formal churches of Europe and created a need in America that was filled by a variety of ethnic denominations.

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The result was a heavily churchied landscape, especially in the strongly ethnic band of settlement that stretched across the Upper Midwest from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin to the eastern parts of the Dakotas and Nebraska. A map of churchied population based on county data from the 1890 federal census illustrates this religious intensity.¹ It shows that a high proportion of the population along this band of ethnic settlement was affiliated with religious organizations and that an especially high rate of church membership existed in the German and Scandinavian areas of southern Wisconsin and central Minnesota. Indeed, by the end of the century many church leaders considered the Midwest to be "over-churched" and lamented what they clearly felt had been overly competitive efforts to establish churches in the region.²

The competition among denominations in the nineteenth century has attracted the attention of scholars and a sizable literature has emerged on the organized efforts to reach and gather the unchurched souls of pioneer populations. Many of these studies focus on the denomination, chronicling the process of denominational mission work, the struggle to establish the new ethnic denominations, and

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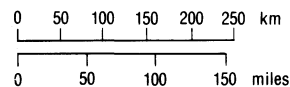
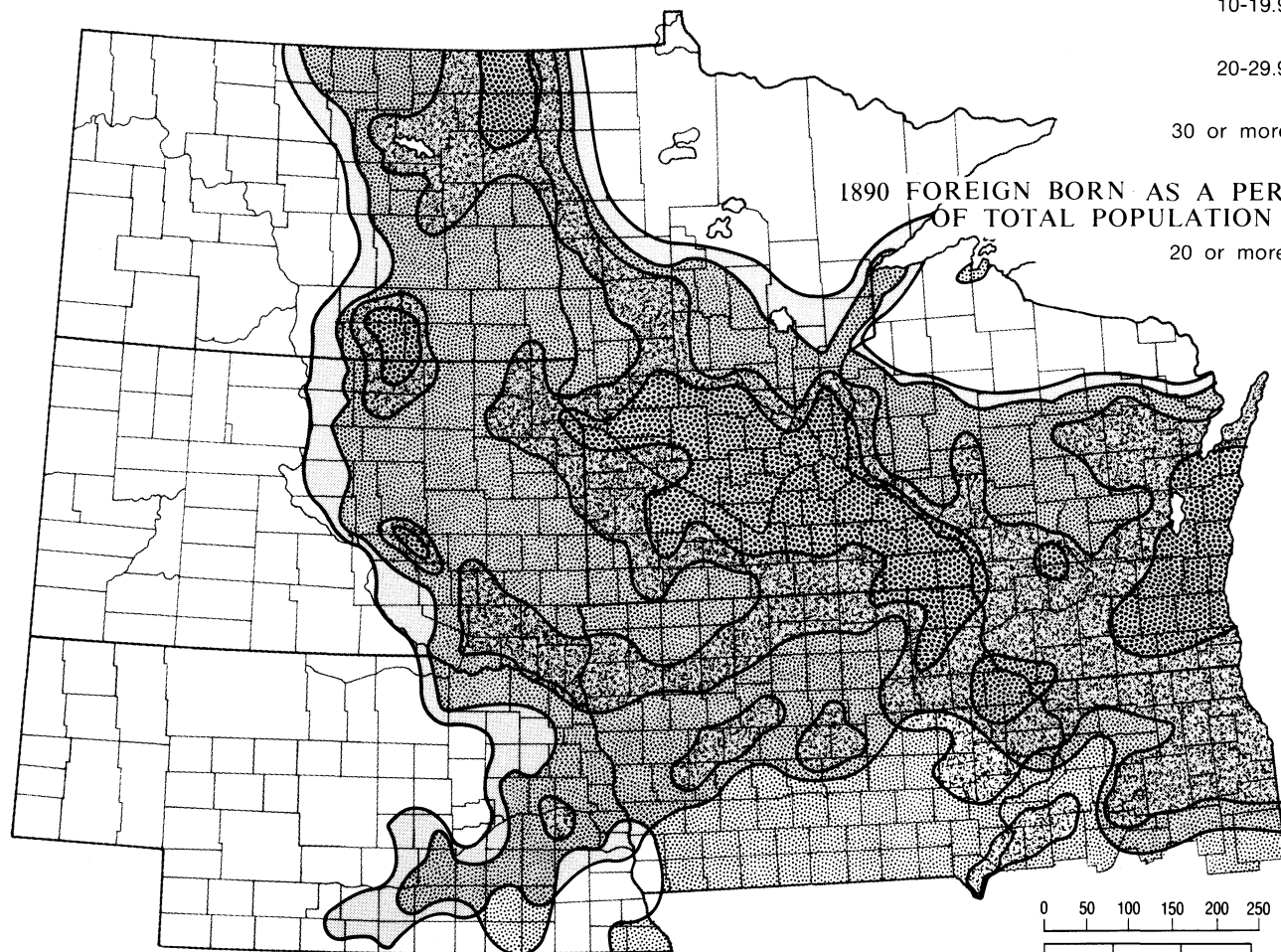


30 or more



1890 FOREIGN BORN AS A PERCENT
OF TOTAL POPULATION

20 or more



the theological issues that made the denominations distinctive and competitive.³ Less attention has been paid to the role of religious organization at the level of the individual pioneer congregation. Yet it was at this level that the church was most relevant to the new settlers. Whereas the denomination was a structural and purposive organization, dedicated to the preservation and propagation of a theological point of view, the local congregation was a social institution that fulfilled the pioneers' more immediate need for a sense of belonging and for community leadership.

My purpose here is to examine the functional roles of the immigrant church of the Upper Midwest in defining community and in preserving cultural values, with special emphasis on the way in which the physical presence and architectural style of the church may have symbolized these roles. While the functional roles of the immigrant church may be fairly well understood, its place on the cultural landscape has received only passing comment. Historians of American immigration, for instance, generally characterize the church as a symbolic place but do not define the manner in which its symbolism is evident on the landscape. Geographers who make a practice of studying religious landscapes argue that religion can make a substantial impact, particularly under conditions of low diversity. Yet they have done relatively little to demonstrate this in the United States.⁴ In his book on American cultural geography, Wilbur Zelinsky noted that the church has been "scandalously neglected" in studies of the American settlement landscape.⁵

The first part of this paper offers some generalizations about these aspects of the immigrant church for the Upper Midwest as a whole. These observations are the by-product of several years of research on immigrant settlement patterns in the region. While they are not based on a systematic investigation, they nonetheless provide a basis for discussion. The balance of the paper examines these generalizations more closely through the specific example of a Swedish Lutheran community in east-central Minnesota.

THE IMMIGRANT CHURCH IN THE UPPER MIDWEST

The Upper Midwest was a favored destination for European immigrants who hoped to establish themselves on the land. The agricultural frontiers of this region received greater numbers of immigrants than any other region during the nineteenth century. Large groups arrived in the 1830s and again in the late 1840s and early 1850s; the aftermath of the Civil War brought fresh waves of immigrants in the late 1860s and the 1880s. In other words, each forward surge of the frontier was associated with substantial waves of immigration.⁶ For the most part the immigrants came from the agricultural regions of northwestern Europe. Migrants from the industrial cities and from southern or eastern Europe were less significant because most of them arrived too late to take advantage of agricultural opportunity on the frontier, except at the western and northern peripheries of the region.

An important characteristic of the settlement pattern was a marked segregation of culture groups. In the migration process people naturally tended to seek out circumstances that were as familiar to them as possible. They relied heavily upon information that recommended settlement frontiers where their own countrymen were settling. Even more valuable was the trusted information that came back to European emigration districts from friends and relatives who had left earlier and were encouraging others to join them. Over time, communication and migration axes developed that connected places in Europe to places in America and over these axes flowed streams of migrants who shared a common cultural heritage. Thus the settlements were typically dominated by immigrants from particular areas in Europe, creating a settlement landscape that resembled an immense patchwork quilt of culturally homogeneous communities.⁷

The immigrants who settled these communities were predominantly Protestant, as might be expected, given their northwest European origins, although the Irish, some of the

Dutch, and many Germans were Roman Catholic.⁸ In most cases the church had played a central role in their daily affairs. The state church system in Europe granted the church a virtually unchallenged position in religious life. In addition, the parish, which was the basic administrative unit of the church, served as the basic unit of civil administration in most countries. Therefore the clergy often played a dual role, serving as both spiritual and civil leaders of their flocks.

The question of religious affiliation among new settlers in America was an important and emotionally charged issue. This was due to the emergence of many dissenting religious sects in the nineteenth century, which heightened religious consciousness in many districts, and to the American concept of the separation of church and state, which promoted competitive denominationalism among Protestants.

It is not surprising then that an early and widespread activity among immigrants on the frontier was the founding of churches. Organizational meetings commonly took place in someone's cabin or prairie dugout and were conducted by laymen because in all denominations there was a shortage of clergymen on the frontier. Usually a new congregation's membership grew rapidly, a permanent building was erected, and a call went out for a permanent minister. Typically it was only a short time before most immigrant communities had at least one organized religious establishment in their midst. Competition and schism often produced more than one.

From almost the beginning these churches served a territorial function. The spatial distribution of their membership defined a functional region of which the church was the nodal point. There was, in fact, no other institution on the frontier that could serve this purpose. Townships were arbitrarily defined according to the land survey and had little social significance. Granges, cooperatives, and farmer's associations came much later. Thus, depending on the cultural homogeneity of the local population, the membership field of the church often took on a rather exclusive character,

with well-defined boundaries separating it from other groups and congregations.

Since there was a physical limit to the distance people would travel to worship, given the travel technology of the day, "team-haul spacing" was a common characteristic of church location except where denominational competition or schismatic activity was present. Then competing churches could be placed side by side and the delimitation of boundaries could be less clear. Whether the situation was competitive or not, the church was the center of social activity. Not only was it a place of worship, it was also the site of picnics, socials, and meetings. It was the umbrella organization for a myriad of social and purposive clubs and associations. Even nonmembers in the community were caught up in the social network and looked to the church as the community center.

As the center of community life, the church was charged with the responsibility of upholding values and preserving continuity with the cultural past. Most churches, for instance, made extensive efforts to preserve the language. Services in rural churches across the Upper Midwest were commonly held in the Old World languages well into the early decades of the twentieth century. Church schools were established to instruct the young in the old language and congregations delayed for as long as possible the eventual change to the keeping of official records in English. The church carefully observed the old holidays and customs, singing clubs preserved the traditional music, and women's organizations carried on folk crafts. From the pulpit the clergy warned against the dangers of alcohol, loose morals, and unguarded association with outsiders. The outside world could not be held at arm's length forever, but the church functioned as the first and in some ways the only bulwark against rapid change.

How then was the church a symbolic place and structure on the landscape? Part of the answer is evident to anyone who has traveled the backroads of the region. With the possible exception of the grain elevator, the church is the dominant structure on the rural landscape.

Its presence is visible for miles. In fact, in many parts of the region, the spires of churches serving neighboring communities can be seen from points along their common boundary, which causes one to reflect on the coincidence of "team-haul spacing" and the limits of visibility in open landscapes.

The form is also familiar to the midwestern country traveler. The typical rural church in this region is a white rectangular structure with narrow clapboard siding and a forward bell tower. There are variations, of course. Some have the bell tower on the side. Some have rounded vestries, double doors, and bell cupolas on the roof instead of a bell tower. Building materials vary as well. Stone or brick veneer is not uncommon. Elements of gothic or Greek revival styling frequently adorn structures regardless of size, but the basic form persists.

One might reasonably ask whether variation on the basic form is an indication of ethnic culture. The answer seems to be that generally it is not. By the mid-nineteenth century, variation in building styles in America was more a matter of fashion or fad than an expression of folk culture and, to a large extent, the construction of churches across the Midwest was no exception to this rule. There is evidence that architectural plans and building designs for churches were widely circulated in the latter half of the century. An example is an 1852 pamphlet entitled, *Upjohn's Rural Architecture: Designs, Working Drawings and Specifications for a Wooden Church and other Rural Structures*. The availability of this and numerous publications like it help to explain the structural similarity of churches on the landscape. Upjohn made it quite clear in the preface that his booklet was intended for use in frontier areas:

My purpose in publishing this book is simply to supply the want which is often felt, especially in the newly settled parts of our country, of designs for cheap but still substantial buildings for the use of parishes, schools, etc.

Upjohn went on to point out that his plans

were "plain and practical" and that they included specifications and bills of lumber. He adds, "with these [plans] any intelligent mechanic will be able to carry out the design."⁹

The size of the structure and the choice of building materials reflected the material wealth of the congregation. As congregations grew in membership and wealth they required more spacious quarters and more ostentatious structures. A common event in the history of a congregation was the solicitation of building funds for the purpose of upgrading some aspect of the church building—a new bell tower, pipe organ, or brick veneer exterior. Damage caused by lightning and fire required many congregations to remodel or replace their original buildings. In fact, a congregation that was not forced to rebuild at least once in its history is somewhat rare.

Apparently most congregations went through a series of construction and remodeling phases. The first phase followed the establishment of the congregation and the decision to build a church, ordinarily a rather simple frame structure (sometimes made of logs) with no tower. This structure typically served for only a short time. The second building phase involved its replacement with a larger frame church of the standard variety. Then there was a third phase in which this structure was either replaced, usually because of destruction by fire or storm, or subjected to a series of renovations and redecorations. In many cases a fourth phase occurred around the late 1930s or after World War II in which extensive renovations and additions were undertaken that often radically altered the decor and structure of the building.

Although most churches varied relatively little in their basic structural characteristics and went through the similar building phases, their decoration could be unique and symbolic of a particular past or culture. Consider, for example, the case of the Opdahl church in Hamlin County, South Dakota. This Lutheran church was the focus of a community of Norwegian immigrants, most of whom came from the Trondhjem area of western Norway. Photographs of the Opdahl church taken in the



FIG. 2. *Opdahl Norwegian Lutheran Church, Hamlin County, S.D., in the early twentieth century. Courtesy of Robert Ostergren.*

early part of the twentieth century show a typical midwestern frame structure, but the exterior decoration, especially on the tower, is distinctive. If a frame church in the district of Norway from which these people emigrated is compared to the Opdahl photograph, marked similarities in the decoration of the tower are visible, suggesting that the decorative work on this church was meant to recall a particular past (see Figs. 2 and 3).

It is not surprising that some effort was made to provide a visual link between the new church in America and the mother church in Europe. The parish church, after all, was the richest and most impressive structure known to many emigrants before they left Europe. This linkage was most often accomplished in a minor way on the exterior of the American church and more intensively in the decoration and arrangement of the interior. Traditional craftsmanship, for example, was employed in fashioning altar furnishings, and pulpits and altar paintings were often copies of those that hung in parish churches in the native districts of Europe. Similarly, the painting of ceilings and walls or the location of pulpit

and altar were often reminiscent of another place.

In this way, the church was physically symbolic of its role as the keeper of culture and of continuity with the past. In the mid-twentieth century, however, many of these elements were lost in efforts to remodel and refurbish. Intricately frescoed walls and ceilings were covered over with acoustical tile; new furnishings were installed and the old ones consigned to the basement or carted away. Exterior decor disappeared in the interest of easier maintenance. The Opdahl church was no exception to this process. The distinctive decor of the early twentieth century no longer adorns the structure.

FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION AND CULTURAL CHANGE

A more detailed illustration of the foregoing generalizations can be achieved through an examination of the organizational and cultural development of a single immigrant church, the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran congregation of Cambridge, Minnesota. It is located in the east-central Minnesota county of Isanti, well



FIG. 3. *Mohult parish church, Trondhjem, Norway. Courtesy of Robert Ostergren.*

within the zone of heavily churchd population in the Upper Midwest. Whether its experience is typical of midwestern immigrant churches is difficult to say. It was selected because much detailed information is known about the European origins of the community and about the history of the congregation.¹⁰

The Cambridge church was organized in a part of Minnesota that received a large and nearly exclusive influx of Swedish settlers. As was often the case, the majority of the immigrants hailed from culturally distinctive districts in Sweden and tended to segregate themselves in the settlement process. One part of this area was settled by immigrants from the province of Dalarna and in particular by people from a single parish known as Rättvik. In 1864, not long after the settlement of the area began, a small group of settlers gathered in the cabin of one of their number and formally organized a Lutheran congregation with the assistance of a clergyman from the neighboring county. Initially the provincial background of the small congregation was mixed, but it was soon dominated by the folk from Rättvik, who began to arrive in large numbers in the summer of 1866.

The Swedish parish of Rättvik is located in the western part of Dalarna, region of large and culturally distinctive parishes. The parish dates from the fourteenth century and is organized around a church located on the shore of the northeastern bay of a large lake known as Siljan. The population, which in the nineteenth century was comprised chiefly of small freeholders, lived in villages scattered along the shores of the lake and along a small valley that leads away from the lake. Everyone was a member of the state church of Sweden, accepting its ministrations and authority in their lives.¹¹ The parish priest was the spiritual leader of the flock. He was also the king's representative, responsible for keeping civil records of the population, monitoring their movements, and providing guidance in their affairs. The church was in many ways the organizer of society. It administered the parish, providing education, welfare services, and public works.

Services at the parish church were regularly attended. Parishioners who lived in the villages near the shore of the lake were ceremoniously carried to worship in large "church boats" (Fig. 4). Those who lived in the inland villages came down to the church by horse cart. In addition to worship, the Sunday gathering at the church was a social event that lasted all day. The churchyard, after services, was the setting for socializing and informal business. Resplendent in the distinctive parish dress, people stood about and gossiped, discussing weather and crops and perhaps speculating on events in neighboring parishes. Many parishioners maintained small "church stalls" in the churchyard for the purposes of shelter and cooking during the long day.

The parish church in Europe was symbolic of the community and its traditions, and its physical image was carried with the emigrants in their minds as they left for America and remembered long after the journey was over. Its importance is illustrated by the emphasis it received in a poem written for the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the community in America. It begins with these lines:

The service is over in Rättvik's old temple
On the shores of Lake Siljan
But as is the custom all remained to
visit awhile.
Since there were no newspapers to tell
of new events
The church yard was the meeting place to
tell the news.
The stately taciturn men and ladies in
native dress
Gather together in groups.
Great curiosity is aroused as you hear—
"Have you heard that over in Boda,
Yes, even in our parish
A large group of our people are planning
to go to America?
Their own native land and beautiful valley,
Their King and Fatherland,
They plan to abandon for a strange and
foreign country.
The homes that for generations their honor-
able fathers cherished,
For them have become too small,



FIG. 4. Rättvik parish church, Sweden, in the late nineteenth century. Courtesy Dalarnas Museum, Falun, Sweden.

And their homes mean nothing at all.
The graves of their dear ones still green—
Around the church of Lake Siljan.¹²

The early years of the daughter settlement in America were difficult, but the church gradually organized and drew together the Swedish settlers in the area who retained a loyalty to the Lutheran faith. This effort was hampered by the fact that there were Swedish Baptist settlements both to the north and south, which added an element of competition to the religious organization of the region. Initially, the Cambridge church received only token assistance from the ordained ministry of the Swedish Augustana Lutheran Synod. Ministers from congregations in the next county visited the settlement on occasion and theological students were sent to do mission work in the summer, but much of the early preaching and organiza-

tional work was accomplished by laymen. The synod insisted that these persons seek authorization from the synodical president before they preached. It was not until 1869 that the congregation succeeded in calling a permanent pastor to the Cambridge community, and even then he had to be shared with a nearby settlement in the next county.

The area served by the new church was large and communications were poor. These conditions necessitated the maintenance of a number of preaching places during the early years. Later, when better roads made it possible to bring the congregation together on a regular basis, the areas served by the old preaching stations retained some autonomy. Territorial administrative units, called *roten*, or "routes," were instituted that were modeled after the administrative organization of the mother parish.

In fact, the settlers who resided in the various "routes" tended to hail from respective administrative areas in Rättvik, which meant that the new church presided over the transplantation of an old form of local spatial organization.¹³ The more distant "routes" to the west and the south insisted for a time on maintaining their own Sunday schools and holding occasional services that were separate from the main church. One of them, the "Isanti route," eventually withdrew from the parish in 1878 in order to form a separate congregation, although its membership was officially recorded in the register of the Cambridge church until 1892.

Each "route" elected members to the parish council, which was modeled after a similar body in the Swedish church. The council concerned itself with the administration of the church and the morality of the parishioners. Substantial portions of the meetings were, in fact, devoted to matters of behavior and the attitude among certain individuals in the community. The councilmen personally confronted offenders about their drinking, use of profane language, frivolous conduct, and conspicuous absence from church. The ultimate action in these cases was excommunication, which occurred with some frequency. An issue of considerable concern in the late 1880s and the 1890s was the "saloon question," which revolved around efforts to ban drinking and gaming houses in the nearby village of Cambridge. The church youth society went so far as to petition the state legislature to vote against saloons in the county.

The church also struggled with the question of preserving the language, an issue that became more significant around the turn of the century as Swedish was less frequently used in second- and third-generation homes. The church gave ground only grudgingly, allowing an English Sunday school division and English services two Sunday evenings a month in 1900, but insisting on the continuation of Swedish services on Sunday mornings, a practice that lasted into the 1920s. The church tried to combat the erosion of language and culture through the maintenance

of a "Swede School" and seriously pursued the goal of full attendance among the young. In his efforts to encourage parents to enroll their children, the pastor wrote in the church notices, "We ought to teach our children the language our fathers and mothers spoke, the first European language that ever re-echoed in the American forest and ever uttered the white man's thoughts in the land of the free."¹⁴

The church stood against more than the erosion of language. It opposed radical change in general and the influences of the outside world that were becoming more noticeable in the community with the arrival of the railroad in 1899. The 1904 history of the congregation concludes with a comment on the situation:

The old pietism is not entirely gone. However, since the coming of the railroad we have been troubled by irrelevant and foreign elements. The worldly life of the large cities have invaded our community. It seems as if one is not able to differentiate between good and evil. It is more harmful for us to be thrust into the world arena, because we are not prepared to meet the dangers and temptations. We are too credulous, separated from city life as we have been for so many years.¹⁵

In spite of the outside influences that may have affected the community, the church remained strong. It continued to have a large and loyal following in the early twentieth century, with more than 60 percent of the local population listed on the membership roles, and it continued to preserve the customs of the past. Men and women, for example, continued to sit on opposite sides of the church as they had done in Rättvik, with the exception of the newlyweds, who ceremoniously appeared together on the first Sunday following the marriage (*stata i kyrkan*). The deacons of the church were allotted privileged seating in the first pew on the men's side (*gubbabanken*). Church bells were rung twice before services, one hour before and at the beginning, according to custom. The bells were also used at the traditional "soul-ringing" at funerals, in which the bells were rung once for each year of the



FIG. 5. *Cambridge Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Minn., 1884. Courtesy Isanti County Historical Society, Cambridge, Minn.*

deceased person's life as mourners entered and left the shroud-draped church.

Thus the church strove tenaciously to maintain a cultural continuity with the past throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, even as assimilation with American culture steadily progressed and eventually began to overtake the old ideas and values. The church structure itself, as it passed through building and rebuilding or remodeling phases, symbolized the changing cultural outlook of the community.

CULTURAL CHANGE AND THE CAMBRIDGE CHURCH

The Cambridge congregation began building its first church structure in 1866 in order to accommodate an organization that was rapidly outgrowing the stage in which services could be held in someone's home. The first church was built under the direction of Jonas Norell, a local resident who was a carpenter by profession, and completed in 1868. It was a plain frame structure, 40 feet by 26 feet, without bell tower or decoration. Like other early churches in the Upper Midwest, the building

was spartan and functional, a reflection of the poor and struggling frontier community it served. In fact, its completion had been delayed for lack of material and the congregation's second permanent minister was reportedly depressed when he first saw it in 1872.

By 1877 the congregation had decided to build a new and more imposing structure. At that time there were more than three hundred communicant members, many of whom had been established in the area long enough to have accumulated some wealth. A building committee was authorized to solicit funds for a church that would be 80 feet long and 56 feet wide, with a bell tower that would rise 101 feet to the top of the cross. Norell, who eventually built several churches in the area, was again commissioned as the chief carpenter and was reimbursed forty dollars for the detailed plan he had drawn. The committee later decided to reduce the size of the building by nearly one-half, the original estimate being a bit too grand. After careful appraisal, they also elected to construct a wooden building, since brick was expensive and not readily available.

The new church, which was completed in 1884, fulfilled all expectations and was a source of pride in the community (Fig. 5). Although some local residents suggest that the church design may have had its origins in Sweden, it is much more similar to other midwestern churches constructed about the same time than it is to the mother church in Rättvik (compare Fig. 4) or to Swedish parish churches in general. While there are many unique features on this church and on other churches built by Norell in the area, the influence of contemporary church design in America is apparent.

The interior, unlike the exterior, was highly symbolic of the cultural past (Fig. 6). The furniture was hand carved by a local craftsman. The walls and ceiling were painted and frescoed in the Swedish style. There was a Swedish verse on the arch over the altar, and the arrangement of altar, vestry doors, and hymnboards resembled the arrangement in the old parish church in Rättvik. On the other

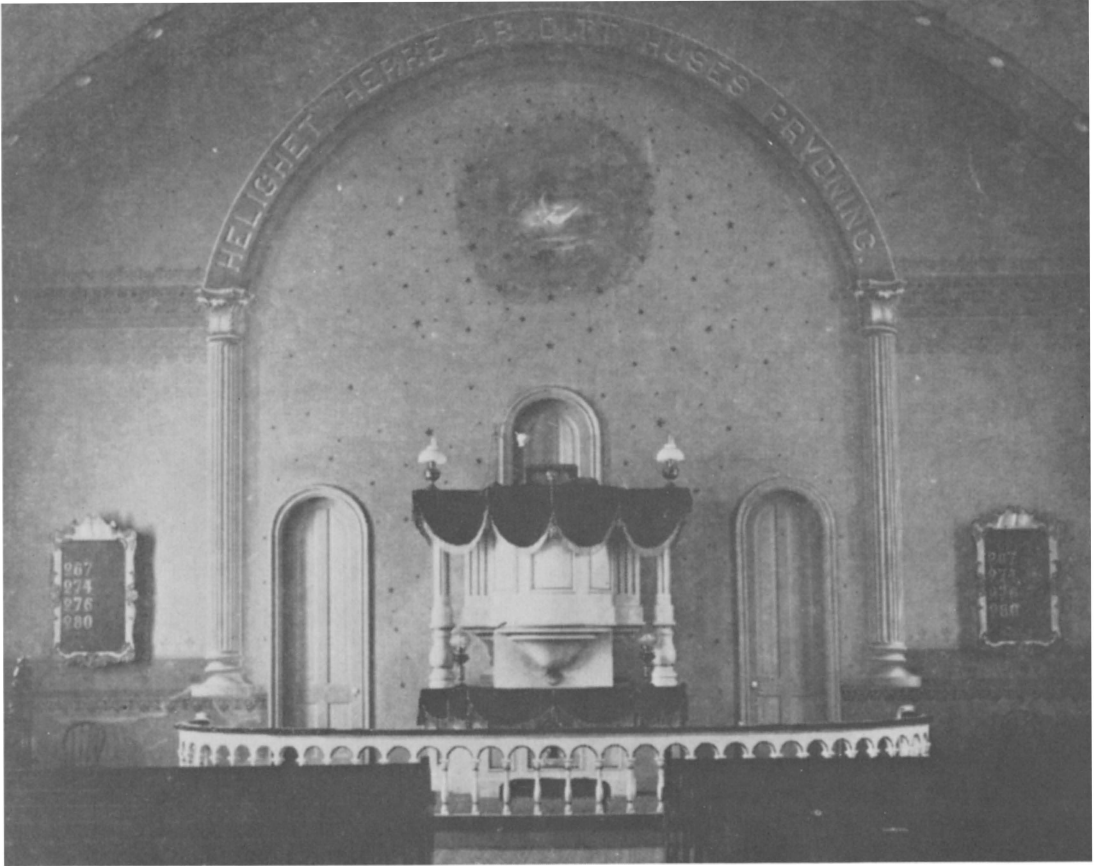


FIG. 6. Interior of Cambridge Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Minn., circa 1900. Courtesy Isanti County Historical Society, Cambridge, Minn.

hand, the interior design reveals that a careful effort was made to place some distance between this church and the state church in Sweden, whose theological and liturgical rigidity was not in line with the more pietistic thinking of many of the emigrants. Accordingly, the pulpit was located high above the altar rather than in its traditional position at the side of the nave, with a door leading to it from the vestry behind. In general the contrast between the interior and exterior decoration of the church reflected the outlook of the community—inwardly Swedish and outwardly American.

The 1890s and early 1900s were a time of

considerable prosperity and change. With this prosperity came further growth in the size of the congregation and a desire to make decorative changes and renovations. The first of these was a brick veneer covering the exterior of the church, displaying the new affluence of the congregation. At the same time, the one exterior symbol of the past—an old cross with a large sphere at its base similar to the one on the Rättvik church—was replaced by a new “Trinity cross.” A photograph taken at the time of this renovation shows workmen erecting the new cross high on top of the spire (Fig. 7). While this photograph celebrates the new,



FIG. 7. *Cambridge Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Minn., during 1892 renovation. Note "church stalls" in lower left-hand corner. Courtesy Isanti County Historical Society, Cambridge, Minn.*

it also captures something of the past. In the lower left-hand corner one can see some of the "church stalls" maintained by parishioners on the grounds of the church, as was the custom in Rättvik. In 1900 the church was wired for electricity, and in 1912 the interior was completely redone. In this remodeling the pulpit was lowered, after much discussion. Apparently the height of the pulpit and the rear entry from the vestry were offensive to some in that this arrangement allowed the pastor to appear on high without having to pass before the assembled congregation. The solution was to install steps leading to the lowered pulpit from either side, in plain view of the parishioners. Many of these changes were the subject of considerable

debate because of their symbolic nature. A youth society meeting in the 1890s, for example, was devoted in all seriousness to the issue, "Which is the most advantageous, to paint or tin panel the church?"

The fourth and longest period of major remodeling and alteration in the church's history began in the thirties. In 1931 a basement was excavated for the purpose of providing central heating, and the north end was remodeled in order to house a new pipe organ and a pastor's study. In 1938 additions were attached to both sides of the tower, and in 1948 the round-arched windows were replaced with windows with Gothic arches. At the same time the interior was drastically altered by the replacement

of the plastered vault ceiling with an acoustically tiled, beamed ceiling. A Gothic arch was placed over the chancel. In 1950 the spire was remodeled and covered with asbestos siding. Thus, by the beginning of the 1950s, the appearance of the church, both inside and outside, was substantially different from what it had been at the end of the nineteenth century, like the culture of the community it served (compare Figs. 1 and 7). The centrality of the church, however, endured through all change, and no matter what appearance it projected, it remained the most important source of identity for a transplanted people.

NOTES

1. Federal census materials on religious affiliation are known to have limitations, primarily because the information is based on the response of congregations rather than individuals. For the limited purposes of this map, however, the census figures are sufficiently reliable. For more information on the nature and limitations of census data on religion, see Wilbur Zelinsky, "An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United States: Patterns of Church Membership in 1952," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51 (1961): 141-44. It should be noted that "churched population" percentages of 30 percent or more are extremely high, since most congregations reported only adult communicant membership.

2. This was a major concern of the so-called rural church movement of the early twentieth century, which sought to combat a decline in the vitality of the rural church during this period. See, for example, March Rich, *The Rural Church Movement* (Columbia, Mo.: Juniper Knoll Press, 1957).

3. Good overviews are Sidney E. Mead, "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America," *Church History* 23 (1955): 291-320; and L. A. Loetscher, "The Problem of Christian Unity in Early Nineteenth Century America," *Church History* 32 (1963): 3-16.

4. James R. Shortridge, for instance, suggests that the northern plains, with their

relatively low religious diversity, are a potentially interesting religious landscape, but are "completely unstudied in this context." See his "Patterns of Religion in the United States," *Geographical Review* 66 (1976): 420-34. A recent exception is Terry G. Jordan, "A Religious Geography of the Hill Country Germans of Texas," in *Ethnicity on the Great Plains*, ed. by Frederick C. Luebke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 109-28.

5. Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 101.

6. For a treatment of settlement advance and the location of culture groups in the Upper Midwest, see Robert C. Ostergren, "Geographic Perspectives on the History of Settlement in the Upper Middle West," *Journal of Upper Midwest History*, forthcoming.

7. These aspects of the settlement process are treated in John G. Rice, *Patterns of Ethnicity in a Minnesota County, 1880-1905*, University of Umeå, Department of Geography, Geographical Reports no. 4 (Umeå, Sweden, 1973); John G. Rice and Robert C. Ostergren, "The Decision to Emigrate: A Study in Diffusion," *Geografiska Annaler* 60B (1978): 1-15; Robert C. Ostergren, "Prairie Bound: Patterns of Migration to a Swedish Settlement on the Dakota Frontier," *Ethnicity on the Great Plains*, ed. by Frederick C. Luebke, pp. 73-91; and Jon Gjerde, "The Effect of Community on Migration: Three Minnesota Townships, 1885-1905," *Journal of Historical Geography* 5 (1979): 403-22.

8. The Roman Catholic church was an important force in the settlement of some groups. For convenience, however, this paper deals exclusively with the more numerous Protestant churches.

9. Upjohn's booklet, which was published in New York in 1852, was actually intended for use in frontier areas of western New York State and the Old Northwest. It was immensely successful, and its influence spread across the country. Another influential booklet of this type was George E. Woodward's *Rural Church Architecture* (New York, 1876).

10. The Cambridge congregation is easily studied because of the remarkably detailed ministerial records kept by the church throughout its history. In addition, there is an excellent

history of the congregation by Jeane Johnson, *The Lighted Spire* (Cambridge, Minn.: Cambridge Lutheran Church Centennial Committee, 1964), and an architectural history of the church by Alan Bergman, *A History of the Cambridge Lutheran Church Building* (Cambridge, Minn.: Archives Committee of the Cambridge Lutheran Church, 1968). Much of the following is based on the church records and these two publications. The assistance of Randolph Johnson of Cambridge, Minnesota, and Marilyn McGriff, who directs the Isanti County Historical Society, is also gratefully acknowledged. For a treatment of the European origins and early development of the American community, see Robert C. Ostergren, "A Community Transplanted: The Formative Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Community in the Upper Middle West," *Journal of Historical Geography* 5 (1979): 189-212.

11. Dissenters were viewed with disfavor in mid-nineteenth-century Sweden, although they had the right to form their own congregations under state control. At the time of the emigration, religious dissension was not prevalent in the parish of Rättvik, but it was present in neighboring parishes.

12. Poem by Alfred Bergin, translated in Johnson, *Lighted Spire*, pp. 34-36.

13. The administrative districts in Rättvik were known as *ffärdingar*. Although they were formed for administrative purposes, they acquired considerable social significance over the centuries, as evidenced by the fact that emigrants from these respective districts tended to settle together in America.

14. Quoted in Johnson, *Lighted Spire*, p. 116.

15. Quoted in Johnson, *Lighted Spire*, pp. 120-21.