

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

Winter 2002

## The Making of Little Sweden, USA

Steven M. Schnell

*Northwest Missouri State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Schnell, Steven M., "The Making of Little Sweden, USA" (2002). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2354.  
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2354>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# THE MAKING OF LITTLE SWEDEN, USA

STEVEN M. SCHNELL

Ethnic tourism in the United States has become big business. An estimated six billion dollars were spent on various forms of “heritage tourism” (including ethnic tourism) in the US in 1995 alone.<sup>1</sup> At first glance, this desire for roots and tradition within an American public more often noted for its worship of progress and individualism may seem surprising. Yet as Americans have become increasingly mobile, wired, and rootless,<sup>2</sup> many have become disillusioned with the growing urbanization and industrialization of their society<sup>3</sup>

KEY WORDS: ethnic landscapes, ethnicity, identity, Kansas, tourism, Swedish-Americans

*Steven Schnell is an Assistant Professor of Geography at Northwest Missouri State University. His research centers on the ways in which personal identity is rooted in specific landscapes, in peoples as diverse as Swedes in Kansas, Kiowas in Oklahoma, and urban escapees moving into the countryside throughout the Midwest.*

and have begun efforts to recapture a sense of what they perceive as traditional rural community. A common means to this end is for the disaffected to try to reconnect with the ethnic folkways of their immigrant ancestors, by visiting tourist towns set up for this very purpose.

This longing for an idyllic folk culture past has had a notable impact on the American landscape as communities reinvent themselves to cater to these desires. Throughout the country, many towns (often the sort of struggling rural farm communities that are common throughout the Great Plains and Midwest) have begun to project their ethnic past to the outside world in hopes of drawing tourist dollars. Pella, Iowa, for example, has redone its town into a vision of its Dutch ethnicity (complete with windmill) while Fredericksburg, Texas extols its German background.<sup>4</sup>

Lindsborg, Kansas, is one such “imagined” place. On the outskirts of this central Kansas college town of 3200 residents, originally a Swedish Lutheran colony, signs say “Välkommen to Little Sweden, USA.” Remodeled storefronts along Main Street, the main commercial district, sport faux-Swedish fronts



FIG. 1. "An Adventure in Swedish Tradition": Hemslöjd, a successful Swedish crafts shop in a remodeled gas station, with large Dala horse to the right. Photograph by author, 1997.

on standard midwestern architecture, and Swedish-themed gift shops offer a cornucopia of Swedish-themed goods. The Swedish Crown restaurant even offers a complete Swedish menu and smörgåsbord (Figs. 1 and 2). Houses are adorned with small red Dala horses, a modified old-world folk craft that has become a ubiquitous, inescapable symbol of Lindsborg's identity. Festivals such as the biennial Svensk Hyllningsfest (honoring the Swedish pioneers who settled in the Smoky Valley), the Midsummer's Day festival, and the Lucia Festival at Christmastime all provide opportunities for visitors to sample traditional Swedish foods like lingonberries or the notorious lutefisk, to listen to Swedish folk tunes, or to watch one of the active and enthusiastic local Swedish folkdance troupes. Many residents don their

own Swedish folk costumes during these festivals to further get into the spirit of things. Surprisingly, the enthusiasm for things Swedish extends well beyond the one-third of residents who claim Swedish ancestry. Although certainly not all of the town's non-Swedes take part in the festivals, a substantial proportion do, and some even wear Swedish costumes of their own.

In this article, I examine the economic turmoil that led to the reinvention of Lindsborg as "Little Sweden, USA," the creative ways that Lindsborg residents responded to this crisis, as well as the impacts that commercialization has had on residents' own attachment and devotion to their ethnic heritage. Although my narrative is specific to Lindsborg, similar stories could be told of many of the



FIG. 2. The Swedish Crown Restaurant and the Courtyard Gallery and Bakery—redone storefronts displaying Swedish-style ironwork. Photograph by author, 1997.

towns that have imagined themselves into visions of timeless communities rooted in a misty, folk-culture ethnic past, and who have created in the process a new, distinctly (and paradoxically) modern landscape.

#### RESEARCH METHODS

For historical data, I used several archives: the Kansas Collection at the University of Kansas, the library at the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka, and the holdings of the Bethany College Library and the Old Mill Museum, both in Lindsborg. Of particular interest were back issues of the *Lindsborg News-Record*, the town's weekly newspaper from 1912 to the present, as well as selected issues of earlier newspapers. Also invaluable were the

Kansas State Historical Society's clippings files for McPherson County and Lindsborg, which consists of relevant articles culled from major state newspapers.

In addition to historical research, I wanted to explore the feelings, impressions, and ideas of current-day Lindsborgians about the interactions between commercialization and their ethnic heritage. To this end, I conducted open-ended interviews with a broad cross-section of fifty area residents, since feelings about the subjective connections between place and personal and group identity are not effectively elicited through more formal interviews or surveys. In-depth interviews also allow for a richness and texture in responses unobtainable by other means.<sup>5</sup> During these interviews, I explored how residents felt about their own





FIG. 3. *Downtown Lindsborg in the 1930s.* Photograph courtesy Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

ethnic identity, as well as the impacts of tourist development in their town, and often found viewpoints distinctly different from those promoted in the newspaper.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Despite the image the town puts forth of a land of timeless, immutable tradition, both the modern-day Lindsborg landscape and the expressions of nineteenth-century folk culture are highly conscious creations. Unlike the current-day landscape, photographs of the downtown at mid-century reveal standard midwestern Victorian-era storefronts with no outward signs of Swedishness at all (Fig. 3). Such a wholesale transformation of the downtown business district, in both visual and functional terms, is similar to that seen in dozens of ethnic-themed tourist towns throughout America.

The festivals, too, are of relatively recent origin. The Hyllningsfest is the oldest of these; the first one was held in 1941 to honor the original pioneers of the valley and to celebrate

the town's Swedish heritage.<sup>6</sup> It was also the first attempt to encourage townspeople to make and wear their own Swedish folk costumes, a defining feature of the various festivals today. Many of the other public celebrations of ethnicity—the Lucia Festival, folk dance groups, and Midsummer's Day, for example—came about in the 1960s and early 1970s as townspeople increasingly came to embrace a romanticized peasant past. While several of these traditions had scattered precedents in previous generations, for the most part they were created anew by Lindsborgians interested in reconnecting with the past.<sup>7</sup>

This is not to say that Lindsborg is not authentically Swedish. In fact, the town started in 1869 as a religious colony, founded by Lutheran pietists who deplored the stagnation and growing worldliness they perceived in the state Swedish Lutheran Church. The settlement was organized by the First Swedish Agricultural Company of Chicago, which bought over 13,000 acres from the Kansas Pacific Railroad in the Smoky Hill River valley in central Kansas and recruited Swedes to emi-

grate to their hoped-for Lutheran stronghold on the Plains. Another group from Illinois, the Galesburg Colonization Company, had similar goals and purchased land adjacent to that of the Chicago company.

Both companies set up streams of migration, some from the Illinois Swedish settlements and others directly from Sweden. Driven by overpopulation, landlessness, and poverty in Sweden, as well as by the promise of religious freedom in the United States, the Lindsborg Swedes were part of the second great wave of Swedish emigration in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Although other nationalities soon joined them in the Smoky Valley, Swedes remained far and away the dominant cultural group in the region, and for many decades the Swedish language was in common use in homes, businesses, and churches.<sup>8</sup> Lindsborg became the economic and spiritual center of the valley, and Bethany Lutheran Church in Lindsborg became the dominant congregation.

A keystone of Lindsborg's identity was put in place in 1881, when community and church leaders founded Bethany College, a small Lutheran school. From the start, Bethany emphasized art and music in its curriculum, creating in the process a community that prides itself on its artistic accomplishments. The centerpiece of this artistic identity was (and is) the *Messiah* chorus, an annual event since 1882 that has brought some of the most accomplished classical musicians in the country to perform alongside the local chorus in their Holy Week rendition of Handel's masterwork.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the town's indisputably Swedish origins, it is a mistake to view Lindsborg's ethnicity as an unchanged relic of a former time. In fact, the nature of Lindsborg's Swedishness has undergone a number of notable changes. Earlier generations, particularly those associated with Bethany College, often had hopes of maintaining a dual identity—becoming both Swedish and American. By the early twentieth century, however, Lindsborgians of the second or third generation often made a concerted effort to become as American as possible.<sup>10</sup> At this time, many

Swedish traditions—food, language, holidays—gave way to American counterparts. It was only after the pioneer generation began to fade that Lindsborgians gained renewed interest in their Swedish past.<sup>11</sup> Beginning in the 1960s as part of a national surge of white Americans asserting their ethnic heritage,<sup>12</sup> citizens made extensive efforts to revive, invent, or introduce folk customs into town life, many of which had never been practiced in pioneer times.<sup>13</sup> While tourism certainly played a role in these developments, residents also were developing genuine interest in their heritage and roots. The Swedish culture they embraced was a decidedly selective one: rural, folk, and anti-modern, evocative of the tight-knit ethnic communities that they wished for themselves. Alongside this ethnic resurgence arose a tourist economy, based around the same folk Swedishness that proved so attractive to residents.<sup>14</sup> In the process, not only the visual appearance but the entire economic base of the town was remade.

#### ECONOMIC BYPASS

In 1957 Lindsborg officials learned about a federal government plan to create a new link in the interstate highway system. The proposed interstate would run from Salina to Wichita, taking the place of US 81 (which runs through Lindsborg) as the major north-south road in central Kansas. The new road would not follow the exact route of the old highway, however, because planners felt it would be cheaper to cross the Smoky Hill River several miles east of Lindsborg. Needless to say, Lindsborg's business community believed this decision would have a detrimental effect on their livelihood. A number of highway-related businesses located along Lindsborg's "second Main Street"—gas stations, cafes, and garages—would be most directly affected, but many others would also ultimately be hurt by the reduction in traffic through town.<sup>15</sup>

Fearful of the decimation of their town, Lindsborgians actively protested the route, but their pleas fell on deaf ears. When the final

location decision was made in 1964, the route was four miles away, even farther from Lindsborg than the original plan. The first section of highway (today known as I-135) finally opened in July 1969, and the entire route between Salina and Wichita was complete by the early 1970s. The economic effects of being bypassed by an interstate can be devastating and were already well known by the time of this highway project: "By careful management, the right type of highway advertising, and community cooperation, some of these businesses might be able to continue," said the paper, "[but] it is not going to be easy . . . either for them, or for the community."<sup>16</sup>

The proposed interstate was only the most concrete manifestation of a more general economic bypass threatening Lindsborg and other Plains towns in the 1950s and 1960s, as innumerable once-prosperous agricultural communities continued their decades-long decline. During World War II, a shortage of farm labor in the United States had accelerated the already rapid adoption of mechanized agriculture. As mechanization increased, so did the costs of running a financially solvent farming operation, and the average cost of running a farm grew by 300 percent between 1940 and 1955. Farmers were pushed to expand the size of their holdings to make up for increased technology costs, and the resulting financial stress pushed many people off the land altogether. Agribusiness was beginning to supplant family farms.<sup>17</sup>

Although the percentage of farm workers nationally had been declining steadily since the turn of the century, the rate of change accelerated drastically in the 1950s and 1960s. Farm employment nationwide fell only from 13.6 million to 12.7 million between 1920 and 1935; in the next twenty years, it plummeted to 8.2 million.<sup>18</sup> Local conditions in the Smoky Valley mirrored those of the nation as a whole (Table 1).

The ramifications of this loss of farmers hit Lindsborg hard. By 1958 the last flour mill (of the five that once operated in Lindsborg) shut down. In 1965 the last passenger train left

TABLE 1  
AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT IN  
MCPHERSON COUNTY

Year	Number of persons employed	Percentage of employment (%)
1930	3404	41.4
1940	3115	39.0
1950	2792	29.0
1960	1677	18.0
1970	No data	No data
1980	1103	8.3
1990	867	6.4

Source: US Bureau of the Census.

Lindsborg station, and two years later the town lost its status as a freight stop as well.<sup>19</sup> Even long-time Lindsborg institution Bethany College threatened to leave town due to financial problems. The decline was quickened by the increased mobility offered by the new interstate, and the town's proximity to McPherson and Salina. Locally oriented businesses (those serving the needs of local people instead of outsiders) have continued to suffer up to the present day, a process further exacerbated by the advent of discount store chains such as Wal-Mart and Target, with locations in McPherson and Salina (fifteen and twenty miles away, respectively). Today, Lindsborg has no clothing stores, no general furniture stores, and only one grocery store and one hardware store. The Plaza Theater, after several closings and changes of ownership since the 1960s, closed its doors for good in 1983, and the last new-car dealer went out of business in 1986.

As agriculture and local business began to fade, Lindsborg residents became increasingly concerned about the future of their town. Agricultural heritage had been one of the most important elements in Lindsborg's self-image; it was half of its longtime slogan "Where cul-

ture and agriculture meet," which had been in use since the 1920s. But it was becoming increasingly apparent that agriculture was leaving Lindsborg behind. The title of an article in the *News-Record* in 1958 neatly summed up the townspeople's concern: "Will the Smoky Valley Provide a Future for Its Young Folks?"<sup>20</sup> Increasingly, the answer seemed to be "no."

"THERE'S NO REASON WHY WE  
SHOULDN'T HAVE SOME OF IT!"

To arrest the decline of small agricultural communities, statewide organizations such as the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and the Kansas Industrial Development Commission (KIDC) began promoting tourism to small Kansas towns as an alternative to shriveling agricultural revenues. Lindsborg was a prime candidate for such development because of the town's long history of hosting visitors with its *Messiah* Festival and the Hyllningsfest. Beginning in the late 1950s, state promoters held numerous workshops and meetings in order to explain how to implement such plans.

Part of the problem of establishing a tourist economy in Kansas, however, was the long-standing reputation of the state as a place to be gotten through as fast as possible on the way to somewhere else. According to promoters, there was a tremendous flow of cash zipping by on the highway just waiting to be tapped; all it would take was something to lure some of these people into Lindsborg. To this end, in 1957 the Lindsborg Arts Guild prepared a tourist brochure titled "Art in Lindsborg." This folder was perhaps the first local document that focused specifically on bringing outsiders to visit the town. It attempted to capitalize on Bethany College's national reputation as a center for art and music but made little mention of things Swedish. At this time, the "Swedish" aspect of retailing was in its infancy, and the only explicitly ethnic shop was Swedish Crafts.

The *Lindsborg News-Record* and the Lindsborg Chamber of Commerce also began actively pushing for tourist development. The

paper ran articles with titles such as "Tourist Trade Could Easily Mean Much to Lindsborg Area" and "Hundreds of Tourists Could Easily Be Attracted Here." The *News-Record* editor argued that Lindsborg already had much to offer; all it would take was proper publicity: "The Old World flavor of Lindsborg and of the Smoky Valley with emphasis on the rich artistic, cultural, and historic background would arouse the interest of many travelers from the eastern part of the United States on their way west if properly advertised." The potential of the Swedish background for economic development had become clear by the time of this editorial with the tremendous success of the Svensk Hyllningsfest, a tradition since 1941. A combination of artistic talent and historical tradition, it was felt, would make an unbeatable combination. The next month, the Lindsborg Chamber of Commerce acted on these ideas by organizing a Tourist Promotion Committee. "This tourist business is big business," said Chamber President Tarnstrom, "and there's no reason why we shouldn't have some of it if we hustle a little."<sup>21</sup>

Deciding to promote tourism and actually figuring out how to do it are two entirely different matters. Most of what Lindsborg people prided themselves on was, and is, quite intangible: spirituality, artistic and musical ability, ethnic heritage, intellectual accomplishment. But the bulk of tourists require some "attraction" to visit, something concrete to do or see or buy. Barney Slawson, chair of the tourism committee of the KIDC, agreed:

We'd better be getting a few more places where tourists can spend their money. My suggestion is to take the town of Lindsborg and see the fact that cultural aspects are an attraction in themselves, but there are things here that should be commercialized on besides that wonderful cultural heritage and environment. Do more of the uncovering and building up of other tourist attractions—more signs, print a brochure. . . . [T]he towns that get the most publicity put out their own brochures.<sup>22</sup>



Slawson further emphasized that “Easterners, Southerners, and foreigners” were all traveling in search of the Old West. “You ought to get a few cowboys to shoot up Main Street on Saturday nights,” he said (never mind the fact that Lindsborg never once experienced a cowboy shoot-’em-up on Main Street).

#### “SWEDISH MAIN STREET”

Thankfully, Lindsborg ignored the “cowboy” aspects of Slawson’s suggestion. But leaders did realize the need for specific attractions. Lindsborg’s tourist potential included Coronado Heights (a scenic bluff north of town with wonderful views of the surrounding valley), as well as the historical museum at Bethany College. The studios of individual artists, at least seven of which were open to the public, along with the newly opened Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery (devoted to the work of Lindsborg’s most famous artist), were perhaps even more lucrative. An observer, for example, had recently noted that the studio of Anton Pearson, noted artist and woodcarver, was drawing occasional busloads of travelers in the summer months to view his hundreds of creations on display. To add to the existing list of attractions, the chamber’s tourism committee began to look into acquiring the defunct Runbeck Mill on the Smoky Hill River. The idea was to turn this former economic mainstay of the town into an asset once again by having it house a pioneer museum. The process of fixing up the area around the mill and turning the site into a park became a popular community project. It formally opened in 1964, and by 1967 was attracting thousands of people a year.<sup>23</sup> However, the town still lacked a “hook,” or theme, to draw in passersby.

By the late 1960s the Lindsborg business community had decided to “emphasize [their] Swedish heritage as the theme of future growth,”<sup>24</sup> as this would provide the desired thematic unity for the tourist experience. However, promoting a town that looked pretty much like any other small midwestern town as distinctively “Swedish” would be difficult. The

relative ordinariness of the town’s look presented a dilemma. The reaction of Clarice Cunningham, writing about Lindsborg for the *Haldeman-Julius Quarterly* in 1927, underlines the problem of image and perception faced by the town. In her article, she recalled her disappointment upon first arriving:

Was this Lindsborg? There was a wooden depot, a disinterested station agent, one car (not a taxi). Three blocks away was Main Street, with all the usual stuffy cafes, girls with pretty legs, farmers, square brick store-buildings, and a typical small-town hotel. It didn’t look Swedish, or musical, or artistic. It didn’t look *anything* especially. “Why, Lindsborg is just—America,” I was forced to admit after I had looked about for half an hour. . . . I saw nothing, with the exception of the college campus, which could not be found in any small town.<sup>25</sup>

In such key respects, the downtown of the 1960s was little different from the downtown of the 1920s. Residences, businesses, and churches all looked pretty much like those in any other midwestern small town, with no signs of Swedish influence. The initial homes of settlers had been similar to those in hundreds of other immigrant settlements—dugouts and stone houses—and these were eventually replaced by national styles of homes culturally indistinguishable from those in other settlements. The few structures that did have clear architectural influence from Sweden, most notably the sixteen-sided Ling Auditorium and the onion-domed Mission Covenant Church, had long since been torn down in favor of more modern replacements. Many of the earlier churches in the valley had also featured Old Country architectural precedents, but they too had been replaced with newer Gothic-American designs. In fact, the only building in 1960s Lindsborg that could be said to be genuinely Swedish in design was the Swedish Pavilion, a replica of a Swedish manor house originally built to house the Swedish national exhibit at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair and

later given to the community by the Swedish government.<sup>26</sup>

Local leaders thus decided to give local facades a facelift, to make Lindsborg as Swedish in appearance as it was in ancestry. The initial impetus behind the transformation came, curiously, not from Main Street merchants, but from the artistic community. Among the first to attempt a new look was local artist Lester Raymer. When in 1946 Raymer planned to build a new studio and house, he decided to build it in “Swedish peasant style.” “Lester Raymer says he can not understand why people of Lindsborg have not built some houses of Swedish architecture in the community,” reported the *News-Record* in a front-page feature. “He says they are much more beautiful than are so many of the houses here, some of which he says are downright homely. He says that some Swedish houses would [further carry] out the traditions of the valley.”<sup>27</sup>

It was not until two decades later, in the 1960s, that the campaign to put Swedish storefronts on downtown businesses started in earnest. The idea was originally that of Anton Pearson, another local artist, who envisioned the downtown remade as a Swedish village. He prepared a model of the entire business district, including proposed modifications for individual buildings, and he personally aided several businesses in the remodeling process. By the time of his death in 1967, at least six businesses had completed new storefronts, and eight or ten more had plans in preparation.<sup>28</sup> In some cases, businesses followed Pearson’s model; in others, they created their own look. The most common modifications have been peaked-roof fronts, flowerboxes, metalwork, pastel colors, and half-timbering (Fig. 4).

After Pearson’s death, the Chamber of Commerce took on his vision as their own. Their beautification committee met with eighty business and property owners in 1967 and put together a master plan. By all accounts there was substantial enthusiasm for this “Swedish Village.” Two local banks, Prudential Savings and Farmers State, agreed to offer special financing to any business owner who



FIG. 4. *Lindsborg Realty*, another remodeled storefront. Photograph by author, 1997.

planned facelifts, and four local artists offered planning help to anyone in need. Within two years the project was well enough underway for townspeople to begin promoting their “Swedish Main Street” to passersby. The actual process of conversion was a gradual one, however, and occurred more slowly than expected, but by the early 1970s the new Swedescape “look” was obvious to any visitor.<sup>29</sup>

The first significant new building built in the new style was the Viking Motel, built in 1971.<sup>30</sup> As with the remodeled storefronts, the “traditional Swedish architecture” basically consisted of some half-timbering and a neon Viking ship added to an easily recognizable, distinctly American architectural form. In 1977 the Farmers State Bank, locally owned since early settlement days, decided to take the ethnic design concept one step further.

The bank's officers decided to construct their new building in "Old Country Swedish Traditional" style (Fig. 5). They studied any printed sources they could find about architecture in Sweden, as well as pictures taken by local residents during trips to the Old Country:

The design that resulted created an "Old-Country" look. The exterior incorporates authentic "street-paver" bricks and rough-hewn cedar slabs to give the walls a look of majestic solidarity. Keeping with the long, elegant roof-line which is so prevalent in country Swedish architecture, the designers carefully scaled the structure to coincide in height with surrounding buildings on Main Street, maintaining architectural harmony with existing businesses. The overall exterior is stylishly completed with the roof of "Scandia design" smooth red tile, a durable material which has since been discontinued by American building material producers, making it a rare commodity. Highlighting the bank's main entrance are two magnificent hand-carved doors of dark South American Rosewood. . . . Sculptured Viking-head profiles are inlaid into the center of each door, enhancing the Scandinavian ornamental carvings. Carvers in Massachusetts are now preparing carved "Swedish Crowns" which, when finished, may be substituted for the Viking heads in the doors and will be displayed on special occasions.<sup>31</sup>

Swedification found its way into unexpected places as well. When Pizza Hut opened up on Highway 81 in the early 1990s, they even agreed to forego their trademark red roof in favor of more subdued brown shingles. Even businesses not directly tied to the tourist trade obliged; the local farmers' co-op, for example, got into the act in 1988, dubbing themselves a "Koopervativ."<sup>32</sup>

Not only the look of the downtown but also the nature of the businesses there changed as well. Only a few businesses with Swedish themes existed in Lindsborg prior to the

makeover of downtown. "The Little Swedish House," painted red and adorned with Swedish flags, had operated for a number of years on Highway 81 as an outlet for local arts and crafts. The most notable early ethnic store, however, was Swedish Crafts, which opened in 1957 and is today the longest-running business on Main Street.<sup>33</sup> A few other businesses soon followed suit, including the Swedish Crown restaurant (1966), the first restaurant to boast a full Swedish menu.

The majority of Swedish businesses, however, did not come about until well after the remodeling project. Then, within the space of five or six years in the early and mid-1980s, the entire complexion of the business district changed. More and more tourist-oriented shops opened their doors to capitalize on "Swedish Main Street." In 1984 Hemslöjd, a Swedish craft store, opened in an old gas station (Fig. 1), as did The Courtyard, a combination art gallery and coffee house (Fig. 2). Anderson Butik, another Swedish import store, soon followed suit with an 80-ton Swedish timber cottage that had been constructed in Sweden, dismantled, and shipped to Lindsborg; this building now houses Anderson Scandinavian Tours. The 1980s and 1990s also saw a spate of old, out-of-business hotels being reopened as bed-and-breakfast establishments. The Carlton Hotel became the Swedish Country Inn in 1986, and the Brunswick Hotel opened bed-and-breakfast rooms above its restaurant in the mid-1990s.

The remaking of the downtown was accomplished entirely through the initiative of individual businesses. Unlike places such as Santa Fe, Lindsborg has never had an official building code to keep a particular "feel" to the downtown (though members of the business community doubtlessly must have placed pressure on nonconforming businesses). The one exception has been regulations on signage imposed by the city council in the late 1970s.<sup>34</sup> They set up a review board to approve any new signs that would be installed, and banned anything that flashed, moved, stood, glared, rolled, or hummed. Businesses also were urged

# A building to reflect your heritage...



# and respond to your full-service banking needs.

When the time came to serve you with the convenience and thoroughness we feel you deserve, we put a lot of thought and planning into a greatly expanded and modernized facility.

And we decided that with the splendid Scandinavian influence in this area, our building should reflect the special style and atmosphere of our heritage.

We captured the unique blend of charm and boldness that characterizes Scandinavian architecture.

The design features handsome brick, distinctive beams, and roofing tile reminiscent of the magnificent Scandinavian buildings.

Inside, we did everything we could to make banking with us pleasurable and comfortable, including a fireplace to add warmth and coziness on crisp winter days.

Farmers State Bank opened its doors October 1, 1980, situated on the corner of Lincoln and Main Streets.

In every way, our goal in providing a new bank for you was to greatly increase our opportunities to serve you efficiently and at your convenience.

With the grand opening July 24, 1977, our bank facilities include two drive-in lanes so we can help you conduct your banking business from your car, or use our enclosed walk-up window which is open extended hours.

Our spacious lobby includes five friendly, helpful tellers to serve you, and private offices so you can discuss your financial matters with our officers in uninterrupted privacy.

Other improvements include additional safety deposit boxes. We're particularly proud of the community room, large enough to comfortably accommodate 40 people, and complete with a kitchenette, and it is available to civic groups at no charge.

For over 90 years, the Farmers State Bank has served the Lindsborg community with pride. We at FSB are looking forward to providing many years of excellent service.



FIG. 5. Farmers State Bank advertisement announcing their new building, 1981. (Lindsborg News-Record, 27 March 1981).

to use indirect lighting, earthy or pastel colors, and either wood or metal materials, so as to better portray the image of a humble, old-fashioned town.

#### SHIFTING SELF-PERCEPTIONS

The reborn downtown was more than just a vision of Swedishness; in many ways, it was indicative of a more general shift in Americans' attitudes toward small towns. Once the symbolic embodiment of what it meant to be American, by the time of World War II, small towns nationwide were increasingly seen as irrelevant, not only in the eyes of outsiders but in their own as well.<sup>35</sup> However, in subsequent decades, as increasing numbers of Americans moved to urban areas, a hint of nostalgia began to permeate their opinions.

One illustration of this shift came when the city council proposed paving over the bricks on Main Street with asphalt in 1966. Main Street merchants and many other residents protested, and eventually prevailed. One Lindsborg merchant put the argument this way at the time:

We're one of the few towns remaining unique. I think it is worth preserving. We want to keep those neon signs out of here. It's easy to go along with every other town and just pour asphalt and cover everything up, but I don't think we want to do that. . . . The bricks are unique and lend themselves to the effort being made in the downtown area to change store fronts to reflect Bavarian [sic] authenticity.<sup>36</sup>

Antipavers realized that the nascent attempts to develop tourism depended, in part, on the creation of an "old world" feel. Whether or not brick streets are found in actual small Swedish villages (or Bavarian ones, for that matter) was not really the issue; the bricks added a general sense of being somewhere *different*, and this was the goal of the entire Swedescaping project. What's more, these old streets were a part of Lindsborg's past. By hang-

ing onto them, and bucking the prevailing small-town paving trend, Lindsborgians hoped to set the town apart by embracing their past instead of hiding it.

The motivations of the antipavers were not purely commercial in nature. The objections actually were a mix of financial, practical, and emotional attachments. By the start of the 1970s, the sentiment of a substantial part of the population seems to have turned against traditional notions of progress, in which it was felt that Lindsborg had to follow big-city trends to avoid being thought of as small-time. Many people found themselves enjoying the relics of times past.

This desire to appear "small town" was a sharp change from just thirty years earlier. In the mid-1940s, at least fifteen "notably progressive" downtown merchants had neon lights that were "dressing up Lindsborg streets to such a degree that they vie in color and brightness with those of larger cities."<sup>37</sup> Neon, like the installation of the "white way" several decades earlier, was perceived as a symbol of progress, a statement to passers-through that Lindsborg had moved beyond the much-denigrated small town of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* and into the big time.

Today, however, virtually all of the residents take pride in the total absence of neon along Main Street. It is not so much the connotations of neon that have changed (although I suspect it has indeed lost some of its earlier allure), but rather Lindsborg's perception of itself, as well as the image it wishes to portray to the outside world. Other notions have changed as well. Small townishness, once a liability, has undergone a vogueish renaissance among disaffected urbanites.<sup>38</sup> And none of the positive things that small towns were supposed to stand for—community, rural and folk virtue, timelessness, rootedness, heritage—would be enhanced by neon's garish brightness. By the time the marquee of the Plaza Theater was torn down in the mid-1980s to make way for the building's rebirth as The Courtyard, few mourned the passing of this last neon holdout.



## A NEW THREAT

Much of the growth in Swedish development in Lindsborg obviously stems from economic pressures placed on local businesses. Whereas the late 1950s and early 1960s found Lindsborgians concerned with the decline in the farm economy, the early 1980s brought a new economic threat. This one, however, was largely of Lindsborgians' own doing: the growing dominance of shopping malls and of Wal-Mart, Target, and other large discount stores. These retail alternatives to Main Street are located in both Salina and McPherson, and Lindsborgians increasingly chose to do their shopping there. As a result, the already-hurting downtown business district declined even more. "With the growth in mall-building so close to us on all sides, we need to be thinking of every detail to keep our community solvent," argued the newspaper editor.<sup>39</sup> "We all know there is little use in trying to out-price the malls and discount stores, thus an alternative plan must be designed to make people want to come here to shop, as opposed to being indifferently treated by the electric eyes and checkout people in the popular stores in the big cities."<sup>40</sup>

Shop-at-home campaigns were always a part of Lindsborg economic life, but they took on a new urgency in this period. "With the farm economy at an all-time low," said one appeal, "our merchants are finding they have a doubly hard time keeping their doors open. . . . The merchants are not looking for sympathy gestures, they are struggling to keep alive. . . . Please consider Lindsborg first [when doing holiday shopping]. Help keep Lindsborg alive."<sup>41</sup>

The turn to tourist business in the 1980s and 1990s partly filled this economic void. By 1981, twelve of fifty-four retail, professional, and service businesses downtown were directly tourist related, and another ten were at least partially reliant on visitor dollars. That same year, a report commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce optimistically estimated that \$2,185,000 had been spent by tourists in the

previous year and argued that the number conceivably could be doubled. When the *News-Record* printed its annual overview of the year's events in early 1984, the focus was almost exclusively on tourist-related development.<sup>42</sup>

A sense of urgency brought about by the almost total disappearance of basic stores in Lindsborg and the number of empty storefronts there (four in 1991,<sup>43</sup> two in 1997) led to increasingly shrill attempts to get residents to support the tourism cause. During the last two decades, the *News-Record* has regularly printed articles extolling the economic benefits of tourism, with titles like "Tourism Benefits Everybody" and "Rededication to the Tourism Cause." The tone and purpose has been consistent: to urge everyone to get involved, to say hello to strangers, and to act as unofficial hosts. As always, the predictions made for tourism were grandiose. One mid-1980s article argued that the "critical mass of tourist attractions" could soon put Lindsborg in a league with Frankenmuth, Michigan; New Glarus, Wisconsin; Ashland, Oregon; and Fredricksburg, Texas, all highly successful ethnic tourist towns.<sup>44</sup> At a "hospitality workshop," Dr. John Riggs pushed residents to play along with the game. "You might have to wear your knickers and bonnets [a reference to the Swedish costumes often worn by residents at festival times] four times a year, but that should be no big deal." Riggs went on to explain that even though some throw a tizzy about wearing the costumes, they are a part of the image-building assets of what is now an essential industry in Lindsborg.<sup>45</sup>

## CREATING A CARTOON?

There is no question that tourism has brought many benefits to Lindsborg, both cultural and economic. Still, statements like that of Dr. Riggs infuriate some residents active in Swedish cultural activities because they feel that an attitude like Riggs's (and most mass tourism) reduces their culture to little more than a sideshow attraction or a Disney caricature.

Other people are increasingly weary of the effort required to put on a constant happy, dancing, flaxen-haired appearance for outsiders. The tourist push, in short, has not been without its share of detractors.

This editorial in the *News-Record* in 1980 (in the wake of the Mount Saint Helens eruption) provides a satirical view of the current developments:

With the current emphasis on turning Lindsborg into another tourist "Mecca on the Great Plains," I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if in the next few weeks or so, an industrious promoter sets up camp in a Winnebago next to Coronado Heights. Carnival banners will be strung among the hedges, proclaiming the Heights to be the next long-dormant volcano in North America scheduled to erupt. Of course, we all know that an eruption couldn't be possible, the only hot things in Kansas are the summer sun and Prohibitionists. But the idea could be enough to make the promotion "click" (in promotional parlance). There would be a tremendous demand for souvenirs for the tourists to pack away in their handbags and station wagons. The abundant sandstone could be carved into miniatures of the Heights. Or crumbled into grit and combined with home-made soap. . . . And with the discovery of a carved rock near the now famous mountain to the immediate north of Lindsborg, an offshoot could be in the making as well. The carved rock was discovered by the pipeline crews going through the county recently. The State has looked at the rock and said that it should be preserved. Why not get some archaeologist to create a story about the rock complete with pagan rituals and deities? Then a whole village of ancient druids could be recreated on the site as a tourist attraction.<sup>46</sup>

Such cynicism, while not the dominant attitude, is definitely a factor that worries tourism advocates. Tourism and tourist promotion

in Lindsborg is still, like the festivals, largely a grassroots affair that would collapse under its own weight were it not for the hundreds of people and organizations who donate their time and resources to the cause. For example, there is a group of about fifty hostesses organized by the chamber of commerce who volunteer to dress up and meet summer tour buses, and to talk with visitors about the town's culture and history. But as tourism has grown, so has the strain put on the community's volunteer base, and many are beginning to decide that more growth is not necessarily a good thing. They feel that the focus should be on quality, not quantity. Said one letter to the editor in 1994:

Instead of a "Let's-have-a-lot-of-fun-doing-this" community, we seem to be turning into a "How-can-I-make-a-buck-outta-this?" community. Our warm-blooded, talented, egg-coffee volunteers are turning into harried, harassed, "shingles-ridden," haggard-looking people who wonder where all that fun went. Well, it went that-away. . . . The American Dream would seem to be disappearing fast, and a kind of pseudo-culture is replacing it.<sup>47</sup>

Similar sentiments were expressed by one of my interviewees, a former downtown business owner:

They always get in a snit because we're not increasing the number of bus tours that are coming here by three times. But that's fine with me. We should encourage tourism, but some people want there to be dancing in the street every weekend. But we're mostly a town of volunteers, and nobody's going to do that. Nor should they. I don't know, maybe I'm just weary of the whole thing.

Another criticism often raised is that ethnic tourism has been so highlighted that other significant elements of Lindsborg life are ignored. The principal casualty in the process has been the art and musical heritage of the

community, a heritage that results from Bethany College's long-time emphasis on the fine arts. Balance among all elements is key to maintaining authenticity, according to many. One woman described Lindsborg to me this way:

I've looked at Lindsborg as a three-legged stool; you have the Swedish element, you have the visual arts, and you have the performing arts; and all of them are very, very important to this town; without any one of them, the stool couldn't stand. To just have one without the other, Lindsborg would totally lose its identity.

This is a balance that many feel the town has not achieved in its tourism promotions. Some are quite blunt in their assessments: "It's become a gimmick," says one. Says another: "I won't have anything to do with this tourism development. I really don't like this pseudo-thing that's come along. It's the shutting off of everything else about this town that is the worst thing." One long-time resident expressed her displeasure this way:

Lindsborg used to have a slogan that was "Where Culture and Agriculture Meet," and I think that's nice. Because it was an agricultural center; you used to be able to buy jeans and underwear in town. But then they discovered that they could sell their Swedish heritage, could sell heritage for a mass of pottage, which is what they did when it comes right down to it. There were and are some genuine traditions in the families, but it's not the sort of thing that sells, you can't bring tourists in with it.

Some of the people I interviewed felt that the local emphasis on art and music has declined since the 1960s. In the 1970s and early 1980s in particular, when the "Little Sweden" push was at its most intense and most monodimensional, the *Messiah* festival (once the keystone event in Lindsborg's annual calendar, and one that brought the town national

attention) no longer garnered as much news coverage as it had in earlier decades. Today, promotion of arts and culture has increased again. Nevertheless, many feel that city officials have neglected the artistic area of Lindsborg's identity and reputation. One local visual artist describes the falling off he's seen in his field:

It's really been at a low ebb the last fifteen years, and we're still trying to get beyond that. We've formed an artists' group again, and we're working on trying to bring art awareness back to the town. We have a reputation and people come to see us because of it, but in many ways we're living off our reputation alone rather than what actually exists here today. We're trying to get people to come and look at all kinds of work, to interest people in art and bring it back to the forefront of this town. And it's really the Chamber of Commerce that has let much of that aspect slide; they haven't done much to encourage it.

For those seeking balance, there are encouraging signs that Lindsborg is trying to move away from its pure Swedish emphasis. For example, in recent years a hotly contested rails-to-trails proposal has worked its way through the public debate. By giving tourists a wider variety of things to do, at least some Lindsborg people hope to move away from an overriding dependence on festivals and to create a more steady flow of visitors. "The Swedish thing," as some put it, also is not drawing as large a crowd as it used to. As one interviewee put it, "Thirty years ago, there wasn't an autumn festival in every little town, a corn-silk day or a pumpkin days festival, or whatever, so ours was pretty unique. But now there's a million of them," both ethnic and nonethnic. Many residents hope that this broadening of the tourist base will also return Lindsborg to the balance many are seeking.

Some residents also feel that tourism has interfered with the religious heritage of the town. Religion has always been a key part of

Lindsborg life; the town began as a religious mission colony. Promoters have been attempting since the late 1970s to convince local businesses to stay open on Sundays. Until relatively recently, such a practice in this highly religious town would not have been tolerated, but attitudes are changing. Partly, this promotion is the result of economic necessity. Travelers who are drawn off the interstate by billboards, only to be confronted with a downtown of closed shops, are not going to be impressed. And partly it is the result of a (relatively) increasing secularism. However, not everybody agrees with the practice. As one former shop owner put it:

I love this town, but it's supposed to be a Christian community. Once, a lady came into my shop one day during Easter Week. And she said that "You've got a lovely town, it's very friendly, it's very neat, but there's really nothing here that tells me that this is a Christian community. There's six churches, but there's nothing on Main Street that tells me." And that really bothered me. So I made a point to have scripture up in the window all the time. I never opened on Sunday, though there was a lot of pressure to do so. I got some criticism for not opening, probably more than I heard. We ought to be proud of our religious heritage. And if we're not making it, one more day isn't going to help.

Despite complaints, however, most residents speak favorably about tourist development in Lindsborg. They see no contradiction in having a culture for yourself and sharing it with outsiders in a sort of performance. Certainly, there is no basis for assuming that anything directed toward outsiders is necessarily phony. Lindsborgians, after all, have been performers and hosts all along; the *Messiah* festival and the artistic background of the town have ensured this. "Marketing Lindsborg as a place of Swedish heritage was a very natural thing to do. There's really been tourism here

for over a century," points out one town leader. There is no doubt that the interest residents show in their Swedish heritage is genuine—much of the revival or introduction of folk customs and festivals dates from the 1960s and has origins independent of the tourist industry that would later take advantage of it.<sup>48</sup> And overall, residents (Swede and non-Swede alike) are positive about the effects it has on the town, or at least resigned to it as the best possible alternative. Says one, "The biggest change since I've been here [about thirteen years] is in the people's attitudes toward welcoming tourist-type businesses, and their enthusiasm toward the tourist trade in general. Some people were really skeptical about it at first. But they now see it as an alternative to the farming and oil economy that we just don't have anymore."

#### KEEPING A COMMUNITY

The biggest challenge faced by Lindsborg is to maintain a sense of community amidst its tourism development, and to keep downtown as an arena of interaction for local people as well as for visitors. Otherwise, the small-town atmosphere that so many crave would be severely hampered, a prospect that has a number of town residents worried. Said one businesswoman:

A big part of why people come here, why we've been successful with the tourism, is that people still enjoy walking up and down a *real* Main Street, with real shops on it. It still is a real Main Street, but how long we can keep it going I don't know. There's kind of been a changing of the guard all at once; people are retiring now. Just in this block, two or three businesses have changed ownership recently. . . . We used to have many shops on Main Street that had been here thirty, forty years. . . . The new businesses will change the town, though, and in my mind, not for the better. Maybe people on Main Street will make more money, I

don't know. But the loss is going to be in what is the community, what gives a sense of community. That's always been one of the treasures of this place, it's been a community. If you have been into a shop and forgotten your checkbook, and the store owner trusts you to come back and pay later, and if that sense of community goes, that affects all of us. Because the people you buy groceries from are the same people you see in church, and that's increasingly not the way it is anymore.

In some cases at least, the fear of negative impacts from newcomers on the downtown is unfounded. One couple I spoke with had recently moved to Lindsborg and bought a downtown business. Both were interested in giving up their suburban life and in doing their part to make a small-town economy work. The wife of the couple expressed their concern for and dedication to the town:

I think we will face a crisis as we become more and more a bedroom community. People here need to support the local stores. We want to be able to buy groceries here, and we need to work very hard on how to keep our dollars at home. Because when you're spending money within the community, one dollar becomes seven dollars pretty fast. My goal is to keep the Wal-Marts of the world away. I'd go out of business before I would go to Wal-Mart to buy supplies for this place. And all of that will require a lot of work. It will require finding people to open up different kinds of stores here, stores for the people of the community as well as tourist-oriented shops. It may take help, too, with loans of various kinds to get people started. You always see how bigger towns give huge financial incentives to lure companies to locate in their towns. And we may need exactly that; not necessarily on as large a scale, but we need someone here running smaller stores, not the big firms, and we need to make it financially possible for them to do that.

The above quotation points out Lindsborg's biggest obstacle to maintaining a town that is for locals as well as tourists. For the "big city ways" most harmful to Lindsborg's future have nothing to do with drugs and delinquency that are often mentioned by residents; they involve what one of my interviewees termed "that Wal-Mart mindset, that idea that you want everything as cheap as possible." With huge discount stores located in both McPherson and Salina, the fight to keep Lindsborg a viable downtown for townspeople as well as tourists is an uphill struggle.

## CONCLUSION

Despite fears about how tourism has affected their culture, Lindsborgians on the whole are reasonably content with it. They realize that this business has allowed the town to keep much of its identity intact, and allowed downtown to remain a viable, if utterly altered, commercial district. The added business brought in by tourists (along with the growth of the town as a bedroom community for Salina and McPherson) has also staved off the population decline that has afflicted so many small towns; the number of residents remained relatively steady throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, residents feel that they are aware of the perils that commercialization entails and are therefore careful to avoid excesses. Says one local businessman:

There is a line with our tourist trade here, and no one person can decide exactly where that line is. Individuals all have to decide on their own as to how much is too much, what are the appropriate kinds of development here, and so forth. Commerce is vital to all communities, however. It's the way of life we're in. We're not a pure capitalist society, but we are a capitalist economy in many ways and we have to act within that framework, because the people here have to sustain their families and their life. And how do you do that with your heritage and not sell yourself out?



Another local had this to say about the tourist trade: "We always have to be on guard. We won't ever do away with it, I know that. As the town grows and changes, there's other dangers too. Fifty or sixty years ago, Yosemite was more beautiful than it is today. But then people started walking in it all the time."

This discussion of reinventing Lindsborg highlights many of the prospects and problems faced by towns that turn to cultural tourism as a way to escape the long, slow death that has enveloped innumerable agricultural communities. In my conversations with residents, I have found that, contrary to the common academic view of such towns as phony pseudo-cultures, the Swedishness proffered by Lindsborgians to outsiders stems from a genuine attachment and commitment to the ethnic roots of the town. That's not to say that ethnic tourism has been an unambiguously positive force or that it is without its critics. Lindsborg and other towns like it represent creative, and notably successful, attempts to weather the crises that have decimated so many other similar Great Plains and midwestern towns, and to preserve, by maintaining the economic vitality of the town, a cohesive community identity and spirit.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Lisa Schnell and James Shortridge for their extensive comments on earlier versions of this paper, and the residents of Lindsborg who gave freely of their time and ideas.

#### NOTES

1. National Public Radio, *Weekend All Things Considered*, 10 August 1996.
2. Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States*, rev. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, [1973] 1992).
3. Bret Wallach, *At Odds with Progress: American and Conservation* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991); Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

4. See Steven Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), and Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), for detailed case studies of this process.

5. John C. Western, *A Passage to England: Barbadian Londoners Speak of Home* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

6. In its blending of themes of progress, celebration of hard-working virtue, and the evocation of a timeless community, the Hyllningsfest is similar to the public expression of Kansas history shown in Cathy Ambler, "Small Historic Sites in Kansas: Merging Artifactual Landscapes and Community Values," *Great Plains Quarterly* 15 (1995): 33-48.

7. Steven M. Schnell, "Little Sweden, USA: Ethnicity, Tourism, and Identity in Lindsborg, Kansas" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1998), pp. 168-239; Larry W. Danielson, "St. Lucia in Lindsborg, Kansas," in *Creative Ethnicity: Symbols and Strategies of Contemporary Ethnic Life*, ed. Stephen Stern and John Allan Cicala (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1991), pp. 187-203.

8. Emory Lindquist, *Smoky Valley People: A History of Lindsborg, Kansas* (Lindsborg, Kans.: Bethany College, 1953); Robert C. Ostergren, *A Community Transplanted: The Trans-Atlantic Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Settlement in the Upper Middle West, 1835-1915* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); James R. Shortridge, *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); D. Aidan McQuillan, *Prevailing Over Time: Ethnic Adjustment on the Kansas Prairies, 1875-1925* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

9. Emory Lindquist, *Bethany in Kansas: The History of a College* (Lindsborg, Kans.: Bethany College Publications, 1975).

10. For parallel developments in another Swedish-American community, see Ostergren, *A Community Transplanted* (note 8 above), pp. 244-65.

11. Schnell, "Little Sweden, USA" (note 7 above).

12. Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, [1981] 1989); Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Richard Alba, "The Twilight of Ethnicity among Americans of European Ancestry: The Case of Italians," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 8 (1985): 134-58; Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

13. Schnell, "Little Sweden, USA" (note 7 above); Larry R. Danielson, "The Ethnic Festival

and Cultural Revivalism in a Small Midwestern Town" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1972), p. 133.

14. Note also that the Swedishness embraced by Lindsborgians is a backward-looking one, employing a selective past. An oft-used phrase to describe the town is "more Swedish than Sweden," an oxymoron that highlights the disconnect between the constructed Swedishness of Lindsborg and current-day Sweden.

15. *Lindsborg News-Record* (hereafter *LNR*), 8 April 1957.

16. Henry Moon, *The Interstate Highway System* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Geographers); *LNR*, 8 April 1957; 5 March 1964; 2 March 1967.

17. *LNR*, 5 May 1958; Fred Bentley, "The Future of Agriculture and Rural Communities," in *Kansas Revisited: Historical Images and Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Stuewe (Lawrence, Kans.: Division of Continuing Education, University of Kansas, 1990), pp. 341-47; Anthony L. Redwood, Charles E. Krider, and Gary R. Albrecht, "The Kansas Economy: Past, Present, and Future," in Stuewe, *Kansas Revisited*, pp. 321-40; Paul Lasley et al., eds., *Beyond the Amber Waves of Grain: An Examination of Social and Economic Restructuring in the Heartland* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), esp. pp. 1-50; Kathryn Marie Dudley, *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

18. *LNR*, 5 May 1958.

19. Danielson, "Ethnic Festival" (note 13 above), p. 133.

20. *LNR*, 18 December 1958.

21. *LNR*, 8 April 1957; 6 May 1957.

22. *LNR*, 26 March 1962.

23. *LNR*, 12 May 1958; 19 June 1958; 7 August 1958; 19 October 1967.

24. *LNR*, 1 February 1968.

25. Clarice Cunningham, "Lindsborg, Kansas: The Prairie Town Whose Art and Music Have Given It Fame," *Haldeman-Julius Quarterly* 1 (1927): 17-18.

26. Elizabeth Jaderborg, "Swedish Architectural Influence in the Kansas Smoky Valley Community," *The Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* 32 (1981): 65-79.

27. *LNR*, 10 October 1946.

28. *LNR*, 6 April 1967.

29. I am indebted to Steven Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage* (note 4 above), for this term; Hoelscher dubbed the similarly remade buildings of New Glarus, Wisconsin, a "Swisscape."

30. *LNR*, 24 June 1971.

31. *LNR*, 21 July 1977.

32. *LNR*, 14 April 1988.

33. *LNR*, 7 March 1957.

34. The law was later amended in 1990 and again in 1994; see Lindsborg ordinances 3525 and 3590.

35. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), pp. 39-66; John A. Jakle, *The American Small Town: Twentieth Century Place Images* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982).

36. Quoted in Danielson "Ethnic Festival" (note 13 above), p. 313.

37. *LNR*, 21 March 1946.

38. Richard V. Francaviglia, *Main Street Revisited: Time, Space, and Image Building in Small-Town America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996).

39. *LNR*, 9 January 1986.

40. *LNR*, 18 July 1991.

41. *LNR*, 5 December 1985.

42. *LNR*, 21 May 1981; Planning Development Services, Inc., *A Tourism Development Plan: Lindsborg Kansas, June 29, 1981* (Wichita: Planning Development Services, Inc.), p. 45; *LNR*, 5 January 1984.

43. *LNR*, 18 July 1991.

44. *LNR*, 16 May 1985.

45. *LNR*, 21 May 1981.

46. *LNR*, 22 May 1980.

47. *LNR*, 3 March 1984.

48. For a much more detailed discussion of personal expressions of ethnicity and identity in Lindsborg, see Schnell, "Little Sweden, USA" (note 7 above).