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The Lord's Kitchen: Family Farms and Community Life in Rural Illinois

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Introduction

For rural communities throughout the American Midwest, the loss of farms and population is a fact of life. In many townships and counties, the population is not only declining but it is also aging. Schools are firing teachers as the incoming kindergarten class is smaller each year than the previous one. Fire and ambulance crews are desperate for new volunteers, local businesses are closing their doors, and mainline churches are struggling to survive.

In this paper I examine the impact of demographic and economic changes on a rural church in Ophiem, a village in northwestern Illinois (Lynn Township, Henry County). The membership of Grace Lutheran Church was and continues to be dominated by farm families and those whose businesses and jobs depend upon farming. Grace has its own special history - its quirks and traditions -- but I believe that it also tells a larger story.

Before proceeding, it is important that I lay my cards on the table. I was born on a small farm two miles from Ophiem and attended Grace Lutheran Church until I went to college. I never removed my name from the membership roles and still attend church with my mother when I visit. From December 2003 to July 2004, my husband (James Watson, also an anthropologist) and I spent six months living with my mother in her house in the town of Alpha, just three miles from the village of Ophiem. During our residence in Alpha, we found ourselves in that classic insider/outsider position that many anthropologists yearn for and others fear. It was fascinating, uncomfortable, at times perplexing, but never dull.

We arrived in Alpha with two plans: my husband was interested in changing

technologies of agricultural production (namely GMO soy beans and hog confinements) and I wanted to study the history of an idea – the family farm -- through searches of local libraries, newspapers, and archives. We both managed to do what we planned, but, of course, we accomplished about half the work we intended. I spent most of my time finding and reading (published and unpublished) local histories and church records. All of my previous research has been in rural Hong Kong, and many of those local histories -- with their biographies of lineage worthies and countrified style -- reminded me of China's county gazetteers. However, here the resemblance ends. In Hong Kong, it was always a struggle to find reliable population and economic data for the village communities where I worked. Henry County presented the opposite problem: There were mountains of data of all kinds. Instead of pleading for days to see a local genealogy as I had done in Hong Kong, local librarians showered me with documents and pressed web sites and research guides upon me. I could, for example, easily find out how many Lynn Township houses had telephones in 1920 or indoor plumbing in 1930, the number of Henry County farmers in 1990 as opposed to 2000, or the local chicken count for 1950.

During my six months in Illinois, I did no formal interviewing, but, in ordinary conversations (that is, in the course of being a member of my mother's household and a kinswoman to many county residents), I did discuss what I was discovering in local libraries, churches, and archives. Much of what I learned that did not originate in documents came from "hanging around" and going to community events with my mother, her neighbors, and members of our extended family. During future trips to Illinois, I intend to conduct formal interviews, but last winter I told myself: "one thing at a time, why bother people until I really know what to ask." The following, therefore, is based on documents and conversations, often with people whom I have known all my life.

Family Farms and Demographic Realities

Nearly everyone in the Midwest, whether they mean it or not, decries the decline of the family farm. It is fashionable to do so; books have been written, newspaper articles have been

published, legislation has been passed, and speeches have been made about the plight of America’s farmers. Indeed, there has been a decline in the number of full-time farmers and in the number of farms in Henry County in recent years. The number of full-time farms in Henry County has declined 13 percent from 1992 (N987) to 1997 (N857), while the average size of these farms has increased 8 percent from 316 acres to 340 acres.¹ The number of full-time farms in 1982 was just over 1300. It is worth noting that the number of all farms (including those “farmers” whose primary occupation is not farming) also declined from just over 1800 farms in 1982 to just below 1400 in 1997.² In 1999, median household income for Henry County was \$39,854 and \$46,590 for the state of Illinois.³

Until recently the population of Henry County grew steadily – except for a dip during The Great Depression of the 1930s. From 1950, Henry County’s population increased by increments of 3,000 or so each decade, reaching a peak of 57,968 in 1980. Over the next decade, however, the population declined significantly to 51,159 and again in 2000 (although less precipitously) to 51,020 (see Table I). In 2003, the estimated population -- 50,644 – continued to decline.⁴ During the period from 1990 to 2000, while Henry County was experiencing population losses, the state of Illinois increased its population by 8.6 percent.⁵

Table I Henry County Population, 1900- 2000

Year	Population
1900	40,049
1910	41,736
1920	45,162
1930	43,851
1940	43,798
1950	46,492
1960	49,317
1970	53,217
1980	57,968
1990	51,159
2000*	51,020

Source: *Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900-1990*, compiled and edited by Richard L. forestall, Population Division, US Bureau of the Census, Washington D.C. ().

*US Census Bureau: State and county QuickFacts (, 8-14/02.

The population of Henry County is also graying. In 2000, people 65 years and over comprised 16.3 percent of the county's population, but only 12.1 percent for the state as a whole. Nearly 21 percent of Henry County's population is over 60 years. Among those over 65 years, women make up 60 percent of the total. Households consisting of an individual living alone account for 25.1 percent of all households, and 57 percent of those householders are over 65 years.⁶

The reasons for farm loss and population decline are many and well studied; they include the use of new technologies requiring less labor and encouraging larger farms, changing markets, competition from abroad, government agricultural policies, a credit squeeze, economic recessions, and out migration. The cultural and social consequences of these losses, however, are less well studied.⁷ This paper is a first attempt at writing about the myths and realities of family farming and the cultures and social institutions that Midwest farmers have supported. Much hard work remains: land records, formal interviews, and first person accounts of past events are the tasks that have yet to be completed. There are many gaps in the following descriptions and analyses, but this is a beginning and it is offered as such in the hopes of eliciting comments and criticisms.

Churches and schools were core institutions in nineteenth century prairie communities and, I argue, until recently, they have played a fundamental role not only as centers of formal education and religious devotion but also as places of sociality, of entertainment, and civic practice. In short, the church has been a site of community formation and maintenance. Grace Lutheran Church has served not only as a place of worship but also as an institution of learning, of fellowship, of good works, and, on occasion, a place where disagreement and conflict were played out. Great and small events have been celebrated there, theological debates enjoined, politics discussed, gossip exchanged, religious instruction given, and much food consumed.

In 1963, the confirmed membership⁸ of Grace Lutheran Church reached a peak of 209,

but in 2004 the baptized membership stands at 98.⁹ As seen from Table II, from 1905 to 1963 Grace's membership varied by forty members or so, with a significant decline in the early 1920s.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the church's anniversary celebration booklets provide no membership figures after 1963, but based on the church's one-hundredth anniversary photograph, I estimate that Grace's confirmed membership was approximately 100 to 120 in 1989. With fewer than 100 confirmed members and 40 active congregants, no youth, and six children, how do the congregants of Grace manage to provide all the things that local parishioners have come to expect from their church? Before turning to this question, it is important to know something about the history of Henry County in order to place Grace in context and to better understand how it became what it is today.

Table II Grace Lutheran Church Membership

Year	Members	Status
1890	107	Confirmed
1897	144	Confirmed
1905	163	(Unspecified)
1913	185	Confirmed
1916	199	Confirmed
1922	179	(Unspecified)
1924	149	Confirmed
1927	172	(Unspecified)
1928	160	(Unspecified)
1930	166	(Unspecified)
1931	159	Confirmed
1939	179	(Unspecified)
1961	180	Confirmed
1963	209	Confirmed

Source: *One-Hundredth Anniversary*, Grace Lutheran Church, Ophiem, Illinois, 1989

Background: Illinois History

Before Illinois and its neighbors became states in the early nineteenth century, the prairie -- what environmental biologists call the tall grass and oak prairie -- extended for hundreds of miles. Expanses of prairie grass interrupted by tree-lined streams, river bluffs, and wooded groves of oak, maple, and walnut stretched from Indiana to the Missouri River.

Throughout the seventeenth century, Indians hunted, fished, gathered, and grew crops of corn and squash on prairie lands, but by the early 1700s French missionaries, traders, military men, and adventurers were making their presence felt especially along the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. However, in the aftermath of the French and Indian War, France was forced to cede to Britain all its territory east of the Mississippi in the Treaty of Paris. Eventually, the British also lost control of Illinois country. From status as a county of Virginia during the Revolutionary War, Illinois became part of the Northwest Territory in 1787, the Indiana Territory in 1800, and finally a full-fledged state in 1818.

In 1803, the few remaining Illinois Indians, as well as bands of Sauk and Fox, were forced to cede lands in the “Old Northwest” to the United States government and, thus, opened the way for settlement by Euro-americans who were driving north from their small farms in the South.¹¹ By 1812, the population of Illinois had shifted from an Indian majority to a Euro-american majority.¹² The final, organized resistance to the Euro-american migration into northern Illinois was offered by Black Hawk and his Sauk and Fox followers. Inspired by the charismatic Tecumseh, who created a pan-Indian movement in the Southeast and Old Northwest, Black Hawk crossed the Mississippi from Iowa in 1832. In defiance of United States authorities, they planted maize on their old territory not far from Henry County. Black Hawk was defeated in the so-called Black Hawk Wars and for the last time was pushed back across the Mississippi River.¹³

During the late eighteenth century, the Euro-american population of Illinois was transformed from predominantly French to predominantly “new Americans,” whom Billington refers to as “sturdy woodsmen” pushed by the spread of plantation agriculture from their homes in the Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky.¹⁴ At statehood, 75 percent of the population of Illinois originated from the American South, 13 percent from the Middle States, three percent from New England, and nine percent from abroad.¹⁵ Using the Kentucky Wilderness Road or the Ohio River, migrants from the South settled in southern and central Illinois where they practiced their own brand of frontier agriculture. Billington describes these

pioneer farmers, who “girdled the trees, planted corn, raised their log cabins, split rails for their worm fences, shook through regular attacks of malaria, and steadily extended their civilization over a widening area.”¹⁶ Early pioneers, it should be noted, preferred wooded areas, which they knew how to farm, and stayed clear of open grasslands, which -- because they were treeless -- were believed to be infertile.

With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, northern Illinois began to attract large numbers of settlers from New England, the Mid-Atlantic states, and eventually European immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and Sweden. Some came in groups from communities in New England, New York, or Europe, others came in extended families, and some arrived alone. Colonies (or associations) -- some for profit and some for religious or humanitarian reasons -- took up large amounts of land in Illinois. Speculative land buying was rife during the first decades of the nineteenth century. “In no other wilderness commonwealth,” Billington writes, “were so many acres engrossed by jobbers, so many ‘paper towns’ laid out, so much absentee capital invested.”¹⁷ In fact, many millions of acres were purchased by men who acquired more than they could possibly clear. Easterners and Southerners bought up soldiers’ warrants at 50 cents or \$1.00 per acre against the day when land prices would increase.¹⁸ Gates argues that the Illinois Central Railroad also played a role in encouraging large estates. “As part of its efforts to sell its land grant the railroad invited capitalists to purchase land without limit and assured them...that tenants...would bring them high returns in the form of rents. A considerable part of the early sales of the railroad was made to colony promoters and landlords who were planning the creation of huge estates or bonanza farms.”¹⁹ Writing about the settlement of Sugar Creek (Sangamon County) in central Illinois, Faragher notes that prior to 1850 over half of farm households were squatters, but gradually squatting was replaced by a combination of landowners, tenants, and laborers.²⁰

Henry County

Bordered by Rock River to the northwest, Whiteside County to the North, Rock Island and Mercer Counties to the west, Knox County to the South, and Bureau to the East; Henry

County was classic tall grass and oak prairie (see Maps I and II). Two rivers ran east to west through the county. Green River emptied into Rock River at present-day Colona and Edwards River flowed into the Mississippi south of present-day New Boston. Henry was part of Knox County until it received county status by an act of the Illinois legislature on March 2, 1837. The population of Henry County remained sparse until the 1840s when Swedish immigrants began moving into the area via Bishop Hill and Andover. Part of the so-called Illinois Military Tract, a large section of Henry County included lands that had been set aside as bounty for non-commissioned soldiers who had served in the War of 1812.²¹ Drury, in a history of Henry County, describes the confusion that early settlers likely experienced: “Some of the first settlers...had great difficulty in ascertaining the legal status of the land they had staked out; they often did not know if their piece was ‘Congress Land,’ which they were entitled to preempt, or ‘Bounty Land,’ which belonged to some veteran in the East.”²² Many soldiers’ bounties or warrants were bought in large quantities by speculators and held against the time when they believed a tidy profit could be made in re-sales.

In Henry County, for the most part, colonies (sometimes referred to as associations or companies) rather than individuals dominated landownership during the early settlement period (1835-1855). According to an 1877 history of the county, “Speculators in Illinois lands got fairly under way in 1835.” It was in that year that persons authorized to purchase large tracts for eastern companies visited Henry County.²³ Those companies or colonies, which is the term most often used in the local literature, are credited with retarding local agricultural development by pricing many early settlers out of the land market and by scaring pioneer families who feared that the colonies “were mere traps, set to inveigle outsiders into their midst, for the purpose of fleecing them.”²⁴ The Panic of 1837 also must have been a factor. Nelson notes that Henry County’s settlement rate was significantly delayed compared to its neighboring counties: “Among all seven [of these] counties, only Henry continued in the pioneer stage of settlement with less than six persons per square mile in 1850.”²⁵

As noted above, the first non-Indian residents of Henry County were migrants from the

American South and Northeast, and if other Illinois counties are guides, many were certainly squatters and tenants rather than owners.²⁶ One of the first entries (or registrations) of land in what was to become Henry County was made in 1835 by a “New York Land Company” (the Andover Colony), which registered many thousands of acres.²⁷ An entry was also made on June 8, 1835 by Giles Williams. According to a county history, Williams was “believed to have been a speculator, from the number of lots entered in his name in the following year.”²⁸ The first European-style house in Henry County was built by a Doctor Baker, who had left “The American Bottom” east of St. Louis and settled near present-day Colona in the spring of 1835.²⁹ Soon after (also in the spring of 1835) the Glenn brothers (James and Thomas) arrived and settled near Baker. The Glens have been given the distinction of turning the first furrow in Henry County when they planted their “sod crop” in 1835. A family surnamed Aldrich arrived in July of 1835 from Providence, Rhode Island and settled in present-day Phenix Township, and later secured title to their stake.³⁰ Using the Black Hawk Trail, the fourth settler family to arrive (in present-day Hanna Township) was that of P. K. Hanna, who came from Knoxville in neighboring Knox County to build a house in August of 1835.³¹ A month or two later, George Brandenburg set up a tavern and inn about one and half miles from present-day Colona at the crossroads of two stage lines (The Rock Island-Dixon- Chicago Line and the Knoxville-Galena Line); later Brandenburg laid out the town of Dayton, which is a fine example of one of Illinois’ many (fictional) “paper towns.”³²

The colonies of Geneseo, Andover, and Wethersfield were organized in 1835, followed by Morristown and La Grange in 1836. The Geneseo, Andover and Morristown Colonies were organized in New York, Wethersfield in Connecticut, and La Grange in western Massachusetts.³³ Only a few, in some cases only two or three, colony members actually took up residence in Henry County, but these associations did purchase large tracts of land which eventually were sold off in small sections or rented to American migrants from the Northeast and immigrants from Europe, especially Sweden. With the exception of Morristown and La Grange, which were “total failures,”³⁴ these colonies were led by Protestant ministers.³⁵ The

founding of Wethersfield and Andover give some indication of colony formation and early landowning patterns in Henry County. Wethersfield, according to the 1875 *Atlas of Henry County*: “originated in the efforts of Rev. Dr. Caleb J. Tenney, of Wethersfield, Connecticut...when steps were taken for its organization late in the Fall of 1835...Messr.s Pillsbury [leader of the Andover Colony, see below], Blish and Goodrich were appointed a committee to purchase lands, and they purchased ninety-nine quarter sections in [the region of present-day] Wethersfield, Kewanee and Neponset, in the year 1836. Another quarter section was purchased the next year, making a total of 16,000 acres. The lands were entered by Goodrich and Blish, who held them as trustees, and such of them as they did not convey to purchasers, they conveyed to Chester Bulkley, as trustee, and after selling many tracts, he in turn conveyed by a general deed, to Samuel Galpin, all the lands conveyed to them by Mr. Bulkley except such as he had already conveyed. A steam mill was built, and the present Village of Wethersfield laid out in 1837.”³⁶

In a local (“official”) history of Henry County published in 1968, Polson summarizes the situation that many settlers found during the mid-nineteenth century: “Unfortunately, the capitalist investment companies purchasing thousands of acres at \$1.25 per acre had the choice land; the farmer-settler who had to depend on the soil for his livelihood often found to his chagrin that he had either to accept the ‘crumbs from the King’s table,’ to avoid military tract land, or pay the Land Company a profit.”³⁷

Andover and Bishop Hill: Swedish Immigrants

The Andover Colony, organized in New York City in 1835, commissioned Rev. Ithamar Pillsbury and two other New York men (Noah Pike and Archibald Slaughter) to select a location for settlement. In September of 1835, they chose a locale and entered (claimed, purchased, and registered) twenty-four sections with a capital investment of \$40,000 (amounting to nearly 15,400 acres at just over \$2.50 per acre). Apparently, a Mr. Butler was already living on one of the sections, but Polson reports that he sold his land to the company. A section of land was platted into a town with streets, squares, and house lots, and trustees were

appointed by the company in New York with authority to “take possession of the land, supervise sales and leases, and develop a market by encouraging settlers to locate there.”³⁸ Altogether five Colony men including Rev. Pillsbury settled in Andover. Rules governing the land allocation were established: no Colony member could have more than four quarter sections (640 acres) and five acres of timber; each quarter section entitled its owner to one vote in Colony business meetings. The town of Andover, “in hopes it would be a center of learning, religion, and commerce,”³⁹ was patterned on New Haven, Connecticut, which meant, according to local histories, that buildings had to be erected no fewer than 30 feet from the street. With a current (2004) population of 620, the town’s original lay out can still be discerned in the western part of the village. Dwellings, a tavern-inn, and a mill on the Edwards River, which served the scattered settlers for miles in all directions, were built during the 1830s.⁴⁰ Early on Presbyterians dominated Andover with Rev. Pillsbury at their head. It appears that during the 1840s, however, many of the original colonists dispersed. Pillsbury lived in Andover until 1849 when Swedish migration began in earnest. He returned in 1860 and lived in the village that he had helped to establish until his death in 1862.⁴¹

Prior to 1849, only a scattering of Swedish immigrants had journeyed to Andover. The arrival of Rev. Lars Esbjorn and his fellow travelers in 1849 marked the transition of Andover from a settlement of native-born Americans with Presbyterian leanings to a community of Swedish-born immigrants with allegiance to Sweden’s Lutheran (State) Church.⁴² The detailed story of the real estate transfers (from New York Colony to Swedish immigrants) that occasioned this transformation has yet to be written.⁴³ Polson notes that the Esbjorn group was met by a committee from the Andover Colony who offered the new immigrants two lots for a church building, which induced Esbjorn to change his original plan of settling in Knox County.⁴⁴ Association buildings were bought by Jonas Anderson (a member of Esbjorn’s group), and one of these buildings became a “Colony House” – a place where early immigrants could reside while land was cleared and shelters built. After Esbjorn’s arrival, Andover became a point of entry for many Swedish immigrants who settled in Henry County.

The other destination for Swedish migrants was the Colony of Bishop Hill (also in Henry County), which was a very different community from the one Esbjorn started in Andover. Whereas, Esbjorn was a member of Sweden's Lutheran establishment; Eric Jansen, the leader of the Bishop Hill community, was a dissenter, who had suffered imprisonment in Sweden for his decidedly anti-establishment views.⁴⁵ Jansen and his followers, first called Devotionalists and later Jansenists, had broken away from the state-supported church of Sweden in the 1830s. Jansen and his followers met in members' homes where they read the bible and conducted devotional meetings.⁴⁶ In the summer of 1846, Jansen set sail for the United States with a small contingent of the faithful. Soon after, hundreds of Jansen's adherents sailed for the United States. From the port of New York about 700 set off for Henry County where in the previous year Olaf Olson, a Jansen follower, had found a site.⁴⁷

In July 1846, Olson and Jansen purchased 176 acres for about \$7.00 per acre upon which they found "three log houses, a stand of wheat, and some cattle."⁴⁸ Presumably the people responsible for these "improvements" (probably squatters) were compensated for their efforts as was the custom at the time. A wooded area called Hooppole Grove along the South Edwards River was chosen as the site of the Jansen settlement. On September 25, 1846, a further 320 acres were purchased from the government for \$2.00 per acre and given the name of Bishop's Hill (or Biskup's Kulla) after Jansen's birthplace in Sweden. In time, the Colony's lands expanded and Bishop's Hill became Bishop Hill.⁴⁹ Unlike Henry County's other colonies, Bishop Hill was organized along communal lines. Members lived in family groups but worked and ate as a community. The first years were difficult ones. Colonists lived in caves excavated into hillsides, and outbreaks of cholera during the years of 1849-52 took a serious toll on the Bishop Hill population (and on many other residents of Henry County as well). The community also suffered from internal dissension when a dispute led to Eric Jansen's murder in 1850. By 1853, conditions were improving and the colony prospered as a grain mill and brewery were set up and textile production increased; in fact, during the 1850s, the colonists were exporting their linen cloth and carpets well outside Bishop Hill. By 1860,

however, many communal practices were disappearing, and by 1862 all the Colony's assets had been distributed to individual members. An 1877 county history simply notes: "it was found that the theories of Mr. Jansen would not prevail in practical life, and a division occurred."⁵⁰

Three Illinois counties (Cook, Knox, and Henry) received large numbers of Swedish immigrants during the nineteenth century. In 1850, Swedes in Illinois accounted for nearly one-third of the total Swedish population in the United States.⁵¹ Henry County had a sizeable Swedish population as early as 1850 when "Swedes," Meyer writes, "comprised one-half the foreigners in [the] County." Bishop Hill colonists made up almost three-fourths of this number with Andover and the neighboring vicinity (including Lynn Township, see below) accounting for most of the remainder.⁵² With Esbjorn's settlement in Andover in 1849, Meyer writes, "Andover emerged as the nucleus of the Swedish Lutheran movement" in the United States.⁵³

In 1860 the population of Henry County was 20,670, and by 1870 it had risen to 35,506 of which 10,278 (or nearly 29 per cent) were foreign born. In 1870, 50 percent of Andover Township was foreign born. Lynn Township had a population of 677 in 1860 and 1,119 in 1870 of which 653 were foreign born. In 1870, with nearly 51 percent, Lynn had the highest percentage of foreign born of any township in Henry County.⁵⁴

Ophiem (Lynn Township)

In 1849, at about the same time that the Esbjorn group was settling in Andover, 224 people left Gothenburg, Sweden in Mid-May aboard the Charles Tottie bound for New York. After a crossing of seven weeks and four days, the ship docked on July 12. From New York, many of the Gothenburg passengers traveled by three canal boats to Buffalo where they boarded a steamboat for Chicago. Cholera broke out on the New York to Buffalo leg of the journey, but the Gothenburg immigrants pressed on. Some remained in Chicago, but others traveled onwards by canal boats from Chicago to LaSalle, Illinois. Again a few of the original passengers stayed in the LaSalle-Princeton area, but others continued westward by foot and nine wagons loaded with belongings (at \$18.00 per wagon it is reported).⁵⁵ Those who were

bound for Andover finally arrived at their destination on August 2nd. During their journey from New York, the immigrants suffered greatly from cholera, especially among their children. One family alone, that of Johannes and Maria Charlotta (Peterson) Samuleson, buried all of their four children along the route from Chicago to Andover.⁵⁶

Of those who left Gothenburg aboard the Charles Tottie two brothers -- Johannes and Carl Johan Samuleson from Tjarstad Parish, Ostergotland – and their wives Maria Charlotta and Carolina were among those who arrived in Andover on August 2.⁵⁷ Carl Johan and Carolina were recently married and had no children, but as noted above none of Johannes and Maria Charlotta Samuelson's children survived the journey, the last child was buried near Princeton, Illinois on the final leg of the journey. At the time of their immigration, Johannes was 34 and listed in the ship's manifest as farmer (or *brukare*). Carl Johan was 25 and listed as servant. Both brothers were born in Vastra Eneby Parish.⁵⁸ Samuelson descendants tell me that Carl Johan was married either just before embarking or aboard the Charles Tottie and was emigrating because he had been forbidden to marry Carolina “who, his parents thought, wasn't good enough for him.” Based on passenger list information, Olsson notes: Carl Johan “was not m[arried] when he left his home parish but must have been m[arried] just before departure from Sweden, inasmuch as the pp. [Swedish emigration paper] lists him and his wife as getting pps [papers] in Linkoping April 28, 1849.”⁵⁹

In a 1910 biographical sketch of Johannes's son-in-law, Olof Mattson who arrived in the U. S in 1868 and in Ophiem in 1870, we are told that Johannes and Carl Johan “first located in Andover, Illinois, but as soon as their resources would permit, they purchased a forty acre tract of land near Ophiem and began farming. At the beginning their means were limited in the extreme, but they possessed those excellent assets -- industry, thrift and a courage which refused to recognize adversity. In consequence they prospered, becoming large landowners and prominent in the affairs of the community.”⁶⁰ Whether the Samuelsons wintered in Andover or merely spent a few weeks is unclear nor do I know from whom they purchased their first acreage; answers to these questions will come from research in Henry County's land

records. The brothers and their wives settled at Hickory Grove in Lynn Township about five miles southwest of Andover and a mile south from the Edwards River. Gradually, the Samuelson brothers and the Hickory Grove area attracted more farmsteads, as Swedish immigrants and a sprinkling of eastern migrants steadily arrived from the 1850s onwards.⁶¹

In 1870, the railway made its appearance in Lynn Township and a rail station was built among the scattered homesteads near Hickory Grove. The station required a name, and, in 1870, the village of Ophiem, named after the Samuelson brothers' old Swedish home Opphem, came into existence. The village was established on land owned by Peter Johnson,⁶² a cousin of the Samuelson brothers, who had come to the Hickory Grove area from Sweden in 1857. The first village residents, aside from the Johnson family, were the station agent (said to be "of Teutonic origin" and credited with changing Opphem to Ophiem) and N. Lincoln who managed the general store, which was owned by the Samuelsons. During the 1870s, a livery stable, hardware store, grain dealer, two blacksmiths, and the Samuelsons' general store made up Ophiem's businesses. During the late 1800s, Ophiem boasted a furniture shop which also served as the local undertaker, a hardware store, barbershop, restaurant, grain company, blacksmith, and general store. A bank was added in 1909 but closed in 1928.⁶³ The village of Ophiem, which never had a population of more than 150, never had more than one church – Grace Lutheran.

From 1850 to the late 1870s, many new farms were carved from the prairie around Ophiem. The 1877 list of taxpaying farmers with an Ophiem address boasts fifty-four names.⁶⁴ Of these, 11 farmers owned 300 acres or more. The largest holdings were those of Joab Tracy (1200 acres), who was born in Indiana in 1831 and came to Henry County twenty years later, and Johannes and Carl Johan who owned 840 and 880 acres respectively.⁶⁵

Community Organizations

Churches and schools were core institutions in nineteenth century prairie communities. In most cases, one-room schools were established within relatively easy walking distances of a homestead scatter, but churches were differently situated. Until the late 1800s, religious

camp meetings were popular and in the normal course of events circuit riding preachers travelled ten or twenty miles to tend their flocks. Most clergy had a home base from which they journeyed to other congregations, which often met in peoples' homes.

During the early settlement years, Ophiem's Lutherans, who made up the bulk of the population, were members of the Andover church. Until 1852, Lars Esbjorn, the only Swedish Lutheran clergyman in Illinois, single handedly maintained a pastorate that "extended fifty miles from end to end."⁶⁶ In 1852, the arrival of a colleague from Sweden allowed Esbjorn to concentrate on the Andover area. In 1859, a congregation was formed at Swedona (previously called Berlin) and many farm families, including Hickory Grove farmers, transferred their membership from Andover. By the 1870s, however, Ophiem was taking shape and residents were beginning a process of gradual separation from the Swedona church.

In 1866, a new Swedona minister "diligently visited Ophiem and held services in various homes," but the Ophiem community "felt the growing need of more religious activity both with regard to divine service and religious instruction."⁶⁷ In 1875, Carl Johan Samuelson donated land, which became the site for a new church building, just two blocks west of Ophiem's railway depot. The church building, paid for by subscriptions, was dedicated on April 10, 1877, but independence had not yet been achieved, as Swedona's pastor continued to serve the Ophiem congregation. Eleven years later in 1888, Ophiem's congregation wishing "to put its own feet under its own table," petitioned the Swedona church to allow a further year of shared pastorate, after which the Ophiem church would become fully independent.⁶⁸ Ninety-eight people signed the petition, and in 1889 the Ophiem congregation adopted the Augustana Synod's⁶⁹ constitution and called its first pastor, Rev. Frederick Nebelius. Thus, the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ophiem, Illinois was fully formed. Thomas Mattson (Olof's brother, see above) played an important role in the drive to independence. Sited next to the church, a parsonage was built in the summer of 1889;⁷⁰ the parsonage remains a stately, wood frame house with a copious front porch. Until mid-August 2004, it served as Grace's parsonage, but it now stands empty waiting for the arrival of another pastor or the auction block

which ever comes first.

At the close of its first year, the Ophiem church had 107 confirmed members and 83 children. By 1897, when Nebelius left, the confirmed membership was 144.⁷¹ In 1904, a new church was built on the same site as the old one; the old church having been sold to Carl Johan's son, Albert Samuelson, and moved a mile west of Ophiem. Once again the building costs (\$4356.56) were raised by subscription, and the church was dedicated on January 25, 1905.⁷² At the time of the dedication, the membership had grown to 162, and the names of a new generation of leaders (C. F. Ossian, Olof Mattson, and C. S. Stephenson) were appearing in the church records as key fundraisers for the 1904 building effort.⁷³ The 1904 building still serves the Ophiem congregation.

Prior to 1877 when a regular Sunday School for school age children was formed, Ophiem children received religious instruction in peoples' homes.⁷⁴ Until 1914 when teachers began to use English in the Sunday School, teaching was devoted to "Bible History and the Catechism taught in Swedish."⁷⁵ A Swedish language day-school, which had from 20 or 35 students, was also held during the summer at Grace. The day school aimed to provide locally born children with the language skills they needed "to receive the best Christian fostering according to the view then held."⁷⁶ Like many other immigrant churches, during the early decades of the twentieth century, Grace was experiencing difficult decisions regarding language use.

Sunday School teachers may have been far more comfortable in Swedish than English, but by 1900 their students were very likely more proficient in English. The (summer) day-school was a way of improving the Swedish language skills of the young so that, as Swedish Lutherans, they could continue to worship and study the Bible in the language of their pioneer parents and grandparents. By 1916, however, the day school had to be disbanded "because so few attended," and by 1924, Swedish was no longer used in Grace's Sunday School.⁷⁷ The Sunday School curriculum, however, continued to be determined locally -- by the Ophiem congregation -- until 1935 when an educational series created by the Augustana Synod was

introduced. Bible study for adults was also part of Grace's educational programming, although these study groups, largely dependent on the energy of one or two individuals at any given time, ebbed and flowed. Sunday morning worship was in Swedish until 1933 when it was decided that all church services would be in English.⁷⁸

Church and Community

The oldest society within Grace is the Ladies' Society, which, in fact, predates the congregation itself.⁷⁹ An Ophiem unit of the Swedona Ladies' Sewing Society was formed in 1875. At their regular meeting members sewed "articles to be sold at Bazaars for the benefit of the church and donations were sent" to the Augustana Hospital in Chicago.⁸⁰ This group changed its name in 1889 to The Older Ladies' Ten Cent Society and a younger group of women started a Young Ladies' Sewing Society. The Young Ladies' Sewing Society met irregularly until 1906 when it was transformed into the Phoebe Society, which eventually merged with Grace's Ladies Aid in 1928.⁸¹ These groups met in members' homes until the 1920s when they began to meet in the church. According to a church history, "programs were of a devotional character combined with musical selections and readings."⁸² At some point, perhaps in the 1930s, the Ladies' Aid became The Willing Aid Society and operated under that name until 1958 when they reorganized as the Augustana Lutheran Church Women (ALCW). Also in 1958 two new groups -- sub-units of the ALCW -- were formed: The Dorcas Unit for older women, which met in the afternoons, and the Priscilla Unit for younger women, which met in the evenings. Meetings focused on Bible study and good will visits (six times per year) to the Henry County Nursing Home for Dorcas members and visits to the Research Hospital for the Mentally Ill in nearby Galesburg by Priscilla members. They also contributed to "various missions" (e.g., Lutheran Social Services, Augustana Home for the Aged, a missionary family in Malaysia, etc.).

In 1962, when the Augustana Synod joined with other synods to form the Lutheran Church of America, the ALCW became the Lutheran Church Women of America and eventually a further amalgamation formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and

the church women's group was renamed the ELCW (Evangelical Lutheran Church Women).⁸³ In 2004, these women's groups (ELCW, Dorcas, and Priscilla) are still operating although with dwindling and aging memberships. Not surprisingly, their activities are fewer and sparser than they were. The ELCW now meets two mornings each month for Bible study, crafts, business discussions, and coffee. From six to ten women attend regularly, and, for those women who do attend, the meetings offer both fellowship and a sense of "being useful" (as they say) on behalf of the church and community. The church ladies continue to hold their annual Fall Bazaar where they have a "very wet coffee,"⁸⁴ a bake sale, a table of "trash and treasure," and a table of craft items. Everything is donated and in recent years, they have "cleared," as their reports indicate, from \$800 to \$1200 – money, which is matched by Trivent (previously the Lutheran Brotherhood Insurance Company).

The Lutheran Brotherhood, started in 1925, was the first men's group at Grace. The Brotherhood, later The Church Men, met six times per year, sponsored the church's annual Year Book, took on special projects (e.g., church building maintenance), met for Bible study, and hosted, until recently, two suppers (a fall oyster soup supper and a spring pork chop supper).⁸⁵ In 2004, the men's group meets (in combination with other local Lutheran churches) one morning per month for coffee and Bible study. From ten to fifteen men attend regularly. Grace Church Men still sponsor a Spring Pork Chop Supper, which attracts members of Grace as well as their neighbors and friends, who each pay \$6.00 for an all-you-can-eat supper of pork chops, baked beans, potato salad, cold slaw, and homemade cake. The Church Men and their wives, who donate all the food and labor for this supper, take considerable pride in their ability to fill the church's parish hall with diners each year.⁸⁶

Youth groups were active in the church from the earliest days. A Young People's Society (*Ungdomens Foreningen*) with a membership of 33 was organized in 1889. The Society started a library (with 43 volumes), but "could not agree on accepting a constitution" and so disbanded soon after the Society was formed.⁸⁷ However, the group was revived in 1894 and a constitution adopted the following year. Programs "of a religious and literary

nature” were organized, and “[s]trictly social meetings were also held.”⁸⁸ The Society, renamed The Luther League in 1913, was very active until the 1980s when it began a decline. During its heyday, especially during the period from 1894 to WWII, Grace’s youth group conducted worship services, held ice cream socials to earn money for their work, sponsored evening services, sent delegates to church camps, and, in a period when many did not attend high school, provided key religious, educational, and social outlets for local youth. Like the women’s and men’s groups, League members also provided the labor or financial support for special church projects (including the construction of a brick sidewalk from Grace to Ophiem’s rail station, donation of the church’s organ, installation of gas lighting, etc.). Much of this aid was given during the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century.⁸⁹ Grace no longer has a Luther League, because the church has no members between the ages of 12 and 25.

Grace had an active choir (with scheduled choir practice every Thursday evening) for most of its history. There has been no regular choir since the early 1990s, but four or five parishioners -- regular Sunday morning worshippers -- enjoy singing and take it upon themselves to sit strategically in the sanctuary and sing the liturgy and hymns with care, feeling, and considerable gusto. A parishioner told me, “You know, there are two or three people who used to sing in the choir and now we don’t have a choir, they don’t come anymore. We should have a choir!” Group singing is important to the congregation, but it is one area where dwindling attendance cannot be ignored. On those Sunday mornings when attendance is down to 15 or so and one or two singers “have taken the Sunday off,” everyone, it seems, feels a little less inspired and a little more downhearted about the prospects for Grace.⁹⁰

During the early years, annual membership dues, yearly subscriptions, and donations by societies within the church met the financial needs of Grace Lutheran. In 1890, annual dues were set at \$4.50 for men and \$3.50 for women, but a year later they were increased to \$5.00 and \$4.00 respectively.⁹¹ In 1903, the congregation decided to take up a collection at Sunday morning services, which presumably were anonymous and in addition to annual dues. The

subject of “classification of membership in regard to fees,” was considered in 1900, and in again 1905, when it was decided to classify the congregation according to their ability to pay. However, at a second, extra meeting, the classification idea was re-considered and voted down.⁹² Finally, in 1915 member households were, in fact, divided into categories based on wealth. In 1916 at the annual meeting, “it was reported that the system worked well,” although it should be noted that it was necessary to hold a special subscription in order to meet operating expenses that year.⁹³ In 1920, we know that the classification system was still in effect, because we learn that fees were raised for “the different classes except the lowest class.”⁹⁴ In 1924, however, pledges replaced the differential fee system, and in 1931, weekly contribution envelopes were introduced, which allowed member households to keep a running account of their contributions.⁹⁵ This collection arrangement is still in place, although every three or four years members are encouraged to tithe (to commit a specific annual amount relative to their income) to the church. The church, which remains in the black with a tiny surplus, continues to depend on weekly offerings, special gifts, and donations from individuals, but the idea of subscriptions seems to have fallen by the wayside.

Sanctuary and Kitchen

As evidenced by many local sources (church histories, town and village histories, local newspapers, and oral accounts), until the early 1960s, churches, schools, voluntary associations, and extended families formed the organizational apparatus within which local people came together for recreation, education, mutual support, and self-improvement. It was in these organizations that people exercised their civic responsibilities and it was often to these organizations that people in financial need or emotional distress turned for support. Once people left school, churches were one of the few places where individuals thought “out loud” and together about existential issues and abstract problems. Bible study meetings were often the vehicle for this kind of thinking.

In small town schools and churches, children learned how to conduct meetings, discuss community projects, and set communal goals. These organizations created communities and

were in turn sustained by the communities that they helped to bring about. A sense of belonging to a group was created at Grace by what went on in the sanctuary (liturgy, prayer, communion, hymn singing, listening to sermons) and by what went on in the kitchen and parish hall (coffees, meetings, Bible studies, Sunday School classes, community suppers, socializing). In the former, the clergy were in charge and the congregants were recipients, but in the latter, church members themselves were in effective control.

Until the 1980s when a newly ordained pastor discouraged food in church (other than sacramental bread and wine), Grace Lutheran's kitchen and parish hall had been the site of hundreds of soup and pork chop suppers, Mother-Daughter and Father-Son banquets, bake sales, ice cream socials, pot luck dinners, "wet coffees," and, until the early 1970s, an annual smorgasbord which included food made from recipes that "came from Sweden with the original settlers of Ophiem in 1849."⁹⁶ Ophiem's smorgasbord was famous throughout the region and brought in funds for the women's groups, which sponsored it. As Sack notes in his *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture*, the sanctuary and the kitchen were both crucial to the lives of parishioners -- some might say that they were equal partners. The sanctuary took precedence on Sunday morning, but the remainder of the week belonged to the kitchen and parish hall where Bible study and prayer were combined in a less formal setting, often without the presence of the local pastor, and nearly always accompanied by coffee and cookies. Sack puts it this way: "food and food events are part of popular Protestantism, the unofficial part of church life. They are the concern not of the theologians or of the clergy but of the laity -- most often the women in the kitchen."⁹⁷

If, as I contend, rural churches have been places of community, of sociality, of intellectual engagement, and of worship, can these "services" continue as memberships shrink and congregants grow older? Must churches have 100 members, 200 members, 500 members to be "serviceable"? At its peak membership in 1963, Grace had 209 confirmed members, but by 1989, when Grace celebrated its centennial, there were fewer than 120 (see Table II). Like many mainline churches, Grace was touched by the evangelical movement that swept

America's middle class in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1988, just before the church's centennial celebration, the pastor, who discouraged food in church, left Grace. During his tenure, he had cultivated a small group of members who came to see themselves as upholders of a strict (and true) interpretation of the Bible, a belief in the healing power of prayer, and an ecstatic style of worship. Seven families (most of the people in this group) left Grace in 1988 and 1989. One family – a local businessman, his wife, and children – left Ophiem in 1987 to go on a religious mission to Haiti, financially supported by the Grace congregation, and never returned to the area. A second family – the husband became active in prison ministry -- retained their membership in Grace but rarely attend church services or functions. In total, eight families (six of them with school age children) left Grace in the years between 1987-1989.

Of those seven families who permanently left Grace, one family (a farmer, his wife, and two children) first attended a small Baptist church in a neighboring town, but after a few months joined an evangelical “storefront church” in yet another nearby community. Eventually, they stopped farming altogether and the husband became a lay pastor. He now serves a small, “new paradigm church” in the neighboring county.”⁹⁸ Another family became active in the same storefront church as the first family, but later rejoined a Lutheran congregation near their farm (the congregation that they left in order to join Grace in the 1980s). A third family moved from their failing farm so that the husband could attend a technical training school. Once his training was complete, they settled in one of Henry County's larger towns about 15 miles from Ophiem. The fourth family remained in the Ophiem area, and the wife became active in an independent and fast growing church (also a new paradigm church) in a small town about ten miles from Ophiem. Of the two “parental families,” one joined the nearby Baptist church and the second eventually returned to Grace.

The 1980s were bad years for farmers, and it is very likely no coincidence that Grace's schism occurred in a period when young farmers and local businessmen were suffering serious financial losses and considerable anxiety about their own and their communities' futures. It should be noted that all who left Grace were farmers or local businessmen who

were dependent on farmers for their income. Dudley captures the fear, anger, and pain of those years in her book *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland*. Indeed, Grace parishioners did lose farms, and, perhaps, those families who left Grace felt like a Minnesota farm wife who told Dudley that members of their Lutheran congregation “began to treat [her and her husband] as though they ‘had the plague,’” once their farm was on the ropes⁹⁹ Those who remain at Grace are retired elderly farmers and the widows of farmers; farmers, who with one exception, have inherited sizeable farms; and people who work for wages that provide them with lower middle class and, for some, middle-class incomes. Whether those departing families, who were suffering financially (and that includes nearly all the families who left), felt embarrassed by their difficulties – whether they felt unsupported and alone – or whether they were searching for a new way of practicing their religion is not yet (and may never be) clear to me. But, what is clear is that Grace never recovered from the departure of these families.

Grace is a mainline church par excellence. It is a place where traditions and community involvement matter. On Sunday mornings, church services are stately, the liturgy is complex, and the pastor is clearly marked by his regalia and his placement in the sanctuary (behind the altar railing, in the pulpit, facing the congregation). One of Grace's recent pastors, in an effort to encourage members to be more expansive – more missionizing -- pointed out to parishioners that nearly everyone at Grace is related (“everyone is somebody's cousin here at Grace” is the way he phrased it). In fact, Grace could be described as a church of cousins. Many members are descendants of the 1849-1870 immigrant founders of Ophiem. Recently, two baptisms added to the church rolls a seventh generation descendant of Carl Johan Samuelson and a sixth generation descendant of a Swedish immigrant who came to Ophiem in the 1850s. The web of kin connections is deep and complex. The idea that a community built on a set of multiplex relations (parishioners are neighbors, fellow church members, kinsmen, fellow lodge and card club members, former classmates, bowling league compatriots, sometimes co-workers, etc.) should be seen as problematic is perplexing to many at Grace.

Do rural mainstream churches have too much community? Multiplex social relations are often lauded as a positive and abiding good.¹⁰⁰ But, communities like the one at Grace are demanding of time, emotional commitment, patience, and a kind of sociality that requires the shouldering of significant responsibilities. In fact, the words “work” and “responsibility” are often heard at Grace, and one suspects as the congregation dwindles and grows older, these two words will be invoked with ever greater frequency.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), and many other established churches in the United States, continue to face a daunting set of problems. ELCA’s membership is declining. Of its nearly five million members, 1.7 million live in rural areas.¹⁰¹ Twenty-eight percent of ELCA congregations are rural (N 3,075) and of these, worship attendance for 1,244 (or 40 percent) is fewer than 50.¹⁰² The aging nature of many of these congregations, combined with problems of declining or stagnant incomes, out-migration of the young, and an urban clergy, present formidable problems to rural churches.

Grace faces some fierce competition. School spectator sports, which have long been popular in rural communities, expanded in the 1980s to include golf teams, girls’ athletics, and junior high sports. School activities of all kinds command more time than ever before. Combined with a declining population, dual-wage-earner families,¹⁰³ the call of the mall and television as well as the proliferation of new paradigm churches, one wonders at the continuing survival of small, rural mainline churches at all. Since 1980, three new evangelical (or new paradigm) congregations have grown up in nearby towns, all within a radius of four miles from Ophiem.

In his book *Reinventing American Protestantism*, Miller describes these new churches and those who go to them.¹⁰⁴ They often meet in rented spaces (without religious ornamentation), where a focal point is created by sound equipment and a single podium. Participants (including clergy) dress in casual clothes. Everyone, Miller writes, carries a Bible (many carry notebooks) and young couples with children and single adults predominate. Few people over fifty attend. “Worship is typically led by someone playing a guitar...The term

worship means singing [during which] people may stand and lift their hands in a statement of surrender to God.” The sermon (or message) is based on scripture and includes a liberal application of personal anecdotes. The worship concludes with “an invitation for individuals to commit their lives to Jesus,” an offer to which many respond by coming forward for special blessings.¹⁰⁵ Miller refers to those who attend new paradigm churches as “postmodern primitivists,” a term, which he argues, signals that while “they acknowledge and utilize many aspects of postmodern culture...they find in the biblical tradition...an underpinning for a radical spirituality that undermines the cynicism and fragmentation of postmodern theorists.”¹⁰⁶ To Miller’s description, I would add or emphasize the following. In new paradigm churches policy decisions are made locally (not by a national-level bureaucracy), practical problem solving is emphasized, expressive behavior is encouraged, members over 60 years are rare, and sermons-meditations-discussions are Bible-based but yet highly personal. The contrast with Grace is striking in nearly all respects.

Much has been made of the evangelical movement’s appeal to young families, the espousal of a fundamentalist or literal interpretation of the Bible, and the ecstatic nature of religious devotion. However, the issues of localized decision making – the anti-authority (perhaps anti-bureaucracy) stance of many evangelicals – and a focus on boundary making and maintenance¹⁰⁷ have received less attention. At Grace, members, even very elderly members, are active in many local organizations and social activities. Members of new paradigm churches, however, are said to concentrate their time and energy within their individual churches (thus far, this is born out by what I know of Ophiem’s evangelicals). Grace is closely tied to the national church, which sets all policy and commands considerable resources in the form of annual dues. The church building belongs to the national church (not to the local congregations) and church officials (the local bishop especially) play a significant, perhaps determining, role in clergy placement. New paradigm churches, by contrast, are tied only loosely, if at all, to higher level organizations.

Can a church with fewer than 100 members do what members have come to expect

and so sustain the lives of people whose confidence in themselves and their communal institutions continues to take a beating? Can Grace meet the new demands of an aging congregation and a falling membership? Today, the village of Ophiem has one business (a grain elevator owned by a company based in an adjoining county), one church (Grace Lutheran), and a population of fewer than one hundred. The post office was disbanded in 1988, the grocery store went out of business in 1982, and the handful of children, who live in Ophiem, go to school in neighboring towns.

Grace is surviving by joining with two other struggling churches to form a cooperative known as the Edwards River Ministry. Together these three churches share pastors (one full-time and one part-time). Grace has no choir, no smorgsbroad, no Sunday school, few weddings, and rare baptisms and, yet, the church meets its financial commitments¹⁰⁸ and, as many in the congregation would say, its spiritual commitments as well. For the time being, the sanctuary and the kitchen both remain key elements of the Grace community, but the small community that is Grace is under enormous pressure to grow bigger by expanding its membership or by further amalgamation with other, rural churches.

¹ *1997 Census of Agriculture County Profile*, United States Department of Agriculture, Illinois Agricultural Statistical Service, Henry County (, 8/2802).

² Ibid.

³ United States Census Bureau: State and County Quickfacts. Illinois, Henry County, 7/9/04.

⁴ Annual Estimates of the Population for Counties of Illinois, April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003, Population Division, US Census Bureau, , June 24, 2004.

⁵ , U.S. Census Bureau County quickFacts, 8/14-02.

⁶ Based on U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, DP-1. General Population and Housing Characteristics: 1990, 1990 Summary Tape File 1 (STF1) – 100 Percent data, Henry County, Illinois (<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/datanotes/erpstf190.htm>).

⁷ For exceptions see e.g., Kathryn Dudley, *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000; Paul Lasley et al, eds., *Beyond the Amber Waves of Grain: An examination of Social and Economic Restructuring in the Heartland*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995; Mark Friedberger, *Farm Families and Change in Twentieth Century America*, Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1988.

⁸ Confirmed members (usually 12 years or older) are those who have completed a course of religious instruction, usually taught by the local clergyman, and are eligible for communion.

⁹ I estimate the confirmed membership to be approximately 90.

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- ¹⁰ Grace was without a pastor from 1922 to 1924 and this may account for the membership dip during those years. One-Hundredth Anniversary, Grace Lutheran Church, Ophiem, Illinois, 1989, p. 17.
- ¹¹ For general discussion of Indian occupation of Illinois during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries see John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.
- ¹² Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 1986, p. 29.
- ¹³ Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 1986 p. 35.
- ¹⁴ Ray A. Billington, "The Frontier in Illinois History," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* Vol. 43, No. 1, pp. 28-45, 1951; see also Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 1986.
- ¹⁵ See Billington, "The Frontier in Illinois History," 1951, p. 91 (Citation page numbers refer to republished article in Clyde Walton, *An Illinois Reader*, 1970).
- ¹⁶ Billington, "The Frontier in Illinois History," 1951, p. 91.
- ¹⁷ Billington, "The Frontier in Illinois History," 1951, p. 97; see also Paul W. Gates, "Frontier Landlords and Pioneer Tenants," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 143-206, 1945, p. 175 (Citation page numbers refer to republished article in Clyde Walton, *An Illinois Reader*, 1970).
- ¹⁸ Billington, "The Frontier in Illinois History," 1951, p. 98.
- ¹⁹ Gates, "Frontier Landlords and Pioneer Tenants," 1945, p. 175.
- ²⁰ Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 1986, pp. 181-187.
- ²¹ Henry Kiner, *History of Henry County, Illinois*. Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Company, Vol. II, 1910, p. 77; Terry Ellen Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living: A History of Henry County, Illinois*. Moline, Ill.: Desaulniers and Company. (Published by the Henry County Board of Supervisors), 1968.
- ²² John Drury, *This Is Henry County, Illinois: An Up-to-Date Historical Narrative with County and Township Maps*. Chicago: The Loree Company, The American Aerial County History Series, No. 24, 1955, p. 2.
- ²³ *The History of Henry County, Illinois*. Chicago: H. F. Kett & Co., 1877, p. 116.
- ²⁴ *Henry County Chronicle* March 29, 1859 as quoted in Eugene Ronald Nelson, "The Role of Colonies in the Pioneer Settlement of Henry County, Illinois," University of Nebraska (Geography) Ph.D. Thesis, 1970, Ann Arbor: University Microfilm, Inc., p. 202. See also *The History of Henry County, Illinois*, 1877, p. 116; cf. Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 1986.
- ²⁵ Nelson, "The Role of Colonies in the Pioneer Settlement of Henry County," 1970, p. 199
- ²⁶ see e.g., Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 1986, pp. 181-7; Gates, "Frontier Landlords and Pioneer Tenants," 1945.
- ²⁷ *The History of Henry County, Illinois*, 1877, p. 117; Mike and Mary Otto, *Our Future Is in Our Heritage: Andover, Illinois, 1835-1985*, Orion, Illinois: Evans Printing and publishing, 1985, p. 9.
- ²⁸ *The History of Henry County, Illinois*, 1877, p. 117.
- ²⁹ See e.g., *Atlas of Henry County and the State of Illinois*, Chicago: Warner & Beers, 1875, p. 4; Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 18.
- ³⁰ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 21.
- ³¹ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 22.
- ³² Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 22.
- ³³ See *Atlas*, 1875, p. 4; see also Douglas K. Meyer, *Making the Heartland Quilt: A Geographical History of Settlement and Migration in Early-Nineteenth Century Illinois*, Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000, pp. 177-184.
- ³⁴ Nelson, "The Role of Colonies in the Pioneer Settlement of Henry County," 1970, p. 192.
- ³⁵ See *The History of Henry County, Illinois*, 1877, pp. 135-6.
- ³⁶ *Atlas*, 1875, p. 4
- ³⁷ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 18.
- ³⁸ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 27.
- ³⁹ Mike and Mary Otto, *Our Future Is in Our Heritage: Andover, Illinois, 1835-1985*, Orion, Illinois: Evans Printing and Publishing, 1985, p. 10.
- ⁴⁰ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, pp. 26-7.
- ⁴¹ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, pp. 27, 232.
- ⁴² A Swedish Methodist church was built in Andover in 1855 (Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 229). This congregation existed until recently; in 2003 the church building was sold at auction and currently serves as a residence.

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- ⁴³ In a brief biography of his father Charles Esbjorn provides some interesting anecdotes about this transition. See Mike and Mary Otto, *Our Future Is in Our Heritage*, 1985, p. 46.
- ⁴⁴ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 28.
- ⁴⁵ For an account of Jansen see Paul Elmen, *Wheat Flour Messiah: Eric Jansson of Bishop Hill*, (Published for the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society), Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976.
- ⁴⁶ See Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 51.
- ⁴⁷ *The History of Henry County, Illinois*, 1877, p. 145; Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 54. Olson had been encouraged to look near Victoria, Illinois, which was the home of the brother of a Swedish (Methodist) pastor whom Olson had befriended in New York (Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 52).
- ⁴⁸ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 52.
- ⁴⁹ Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 52.
- ⁵⁰ *The History of Henry County, Illinois*, 1877, p. 148.
- ⁵¹ See Meyer, *Making the Heartland Quilt*, 2000, p. 269.
- ⁵² Meyer, *Making the Heartland Quilt*, 2000, p. 271.
- ⁵³ Meyer, *Making the Heartland Quilt*, 2000, p. 271.
- ⁵⁴ *Atlas*, 1875, p. 4; Lynn's neighboring township Oxford had a population of 1,327 in 1870 of which 467 (or 35 percent) were foreign born and Weller Township, southeast of Lynn, had 50.6 percent foreign born.
- ⁵⁵ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, Grace Lutheran Church, Ophiem, Illinois, 1964, p. 7.
- ⁵⁶ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, pp. 7-8; Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York, 1820-1850*. Chicago: The Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1967, pp. 160-176
- ⁵⁷ See Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 7; Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York*, 1967, pp. 161-3.
- ⁵⁸ Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York*, 1967, pp. 161-3.
- ⁵⁹ Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York*, 1967, p. 163.
- ⁶⁰ Kiner, *History of Henry County, Illinois*, 1910, pp. 820-823.
- ⁶¹ Polson writes that "the real settlement of [Lynn] township began in the middle 1840's...By 1851 the residents felt the 'need' for a schoolhouse and erected the first house of learning," see Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 39.
- ⁶² See Polson, *Corn Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968 p. 83.
- ⁶³ See Fiftieth Anniversary, Grace Lutheran Church, Ophiem, Illinois, 1939, pp. 53-54.
- ⁶⁴ *The History of Henry County, Illinois*, 1877, pp. 388-396.
- ⁶⁵ For brief discussion of Samuelson brothers see Polson, *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, 1968, p. 263.
- ⁶⁶ Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 8.
- ⁶⁷ Seventy-fifty Anniversary, 1964, p. 10.
- ⁶⁸ Seventy-fifty Anniversary, 1964, p. 15.
- ⁶⁹ Augustana Synod was the original umbrella organization for the Swedish Lutheran Church in the United States.
- ⁷⁰ One-Hundredth Anniversary, 1989, p. 12.
- ⁷¹ All membership numbers are from One-Hundredth Anniversary, 1989.
- ⁷² Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 17.
- ⁷³ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 17.
- ⁷⁴ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 34.
- ⁷⁵ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 34.
- ⁷⁶ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 35.
- ⁷⁷ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 35.
- ⁷⁸ One-Hundredth Anniversary, 1989, p. 19.
- ⁷⁹ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, pp. 38-40.
- ⁸⁰ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 38.
- ⁸¹ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 39.
- ⁸² Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 39.
- ⁸³ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 39.

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- ⁸⁴ Wet coffee refers to coffee with food.
- ⁸⁵ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 42.
- ⁸⁶ In 2004, about 100 people attended Grace's Pork Chop Supper.
- ⁸⁷ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 40.
- ⁸⁸ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 41.
- ⁸⁹ Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1964, p. 41.
- ⁹⁰ For discussion of the relation between singing and worship see Tanya M. Luhrmann, "Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary U. S. Christianity," *American Anthropologist* Vol. 106, No. 3, 2004, pp. 518-528.
- ⁹¹ The first pastor's salary was \$500.00 per annum plus the Christmas offering, One-Hundredth Anniversary, 1989, p. 13.
- ⁹² One-Hundredth Anniversary, 1989, pp. 13-14.
- ⁹³ One-Hundredth Anniversary, 1989, pp. 16-17.
- ⁹⁴ One-Hundredth Anniversary, 1989, p. 17.
- ⁹⁵ One-Hundredth Anniversary, 1989, pp. 18-19.
- ⁹⁶ Smorgasbord Program, Nov. 2, 1967, Grace Lutheran Church Records, Ophiem, Illinois, pamphlet.
- ⁹⁷ Daniel Sack, *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture*, New York: St. Martins Press, 2000, p. 2-3.
- ⁹⁸ For discussion of "new paradigm churches" see Donald Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- ⁹⁹ Dudley, *Debt and Dispossession*, 2000, p. 134.
- ¹⁰⁰ For discussion of community – of participation in social and civic organization in the U.S. see Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.
- ¹⁰¹ *The Lutheran*, October 2004, pp. 53, 12.
- ¹⁰² *The Lutheran*, October 2004, p. 14.
- ¹⁰³ In 2000, 59.1 percent of Henry County women over 16 years were in the labor force. Source: *U.S. Census Bureau*, DP-3. Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics:2000, Census 2000 Summary File 3(SF3)-Sample Data, Geographic Area: Henry County, Illinois.
- ¹⁰⁴ See also Luhrmann, "Metakinesis," *American Anthropologist*, 2004; Susan Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- ¹⁰⁵ Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism*, 1997, pp. 13-14.
- ¹⁰⁶ Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism*, 1997, p. 24.
- ¹⁰⁷ Summarizing a sample of existing literature, Putnam writes: "Historically mainline Protestant church people provided a disproportionate share of leadership to the wider civic community, whereas both evangelical and Catholic churches put more emphasis on church-centered activities" (Source: Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2000, p. 77). George Marsden argues: "The fundamentalist churches offer far stronger community to their members than do their moderate-liberal protestant counterparts...[They] are some of the most cohesive non-ethnic communities in American" (as quoted in Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2000, p. 77).
- ¹⁰⁸ During the last two years, the national church (the ELCA) has promised to provide short-term financial help if the congregation meets certain standards (for example, an average of 30 Sunday worshippers each week).