



Donating Your Personal or Family Papers

Written records provide essential clues to the past. Through letters, diaries, unpublished writings, and electronic records, researchers have been able to study and understand much about the history of particular families, communities, businesses, and organizations. Through these records, we learn about the history of specific events, places, and broader societal trends.

Letters, photographs, and other materials accumulated over the years give vital and unique information regarding your life or the history of your family. These materials obviously matter to you, and they may be important to your community, too. Whether or not members of your family attained a degree of fame, they have contributed to the heritage of a certain place and time. When you donate your personal or family records to a manuscript repository, your family history becomes a part of your community's collective memory.

What Can We Offer You?

Swenson Center staff will manage and care for the records according to accepted professional standards.

We provide research access to the records, both to members of your family and to the public.



The Swenson Center's archival storage

What Does the Swenson Center Collect?

The Swenson Center collects and preserves diverse materials surrounding Swedish immigration to North America, Swedish-American settlements and daily life, and Swedish-American organizations from the beginning of Swedish migration through present day.

We collect papers of Swedish-American individuals, businesses, and organizations including (but not limited to): photographs depicting Swedish immigrant life in the cities (such as store fronts, people working, photographs of gatherings and festivals); diaries and journals (especially of underrepresented groups such as women, professionals, and working-class people); correspondence among immigrants in North America and between immigrants and family in Sweden; and records from Swedish-American organizations through the present.

We also collect library materials—specifically items that were published in Swedish in the United States—such as publications of the Augustana Book Concern (Rock Island, Illinois), Engberg & Holmberg (Chicago), and other small publishing houses; publications issued by Swedish-American organizations, both current and defunct, in English and Swedish; and anniversary booklets from Swedish-American congregations (Lutheran, Covenant, Methodist, etc.).

Printed family histories and genealogies are accepted if they are compiled as a book and include a title page with full title, compiler's name, date of compilation/publication, page numbering, and preferably a name index.

We generally do not accept Bibles and hymnals, duplicate items, items in poor condition, or artifacts more appropriate for a museum. Contact us if you are unsure.

We accept materials in both English and Swedish (and sometimes other languages).

What Materials are Historically Valuable?

Many types of materials can be valuable to a researcher. To be historically significant, materials need not be organized; they need not be "old"; and they need not relate to a famous individual, event, or organization. Generally, repositories are more interested in a coherent body of material rather than individual items.

Because the research value of records may be diminished if items are reorganized, records should not be weeded or rearranged before discussion with an archivist.

Some types of materials we collect (not an exhaustive list!):

- Letters/email
- Memoirs
- Diaries/blogs
- Photographs/scrapbooks
- Professional papers
- Genealogical information
- Speeches/lectures
- Articles/essays
- News stories
- Subject files
- Legal documents
- Ephemera (tickets, bookmarks, swag, etc.)
- Film, video, audio recordings
- Websites/blogs/social media
- Obituaries
- ***Digital versions of the above items too***

Also of interest are files relating to an individual's civic, business, religious, political, and social activities. An individual or family may hold the records of such a business or organization, and this material, too, may be significant.

It is helpful if you can provide contextual information, such as names of people who appear in photographs or the stories behind significant items that document personal or family history.

The Swenson Center would also prefer to collect original items rather than copies.

The Swenson Center may not accept everything that you offer. If we cannot collect your materials, we may be able to refer you somewhere more appropriate.

Donation Process

The donation process is simple:

- 1) Start a conversation with the archivist
- 2) Sign a Deed of Gift
- 3) Arrange for shipping, drop off, or pick up of your materials.

Deed of Gift

The deed of gift identifies the donor, describes the materials, and transfers legal ownership of the materials. This legal agreement is in the best interest of both the donor and repository. If you have any questions about the deed of gift, ask the archivist or consult your attorney.

Copyright

Donors are encouraged to transfer any intellectual property rights of their materials to the repository. This assists researchers in their scholarship by making it easier to quote from or publish documents. If you wish to retain some rights, you may include a provision in the deed of gift. To learn more about copyright, see www.copyright.gov, or ask your legal counsel.

Deposits or Long-Term Loans

The cost of storing, preserving, and making collections available for research is so high that repositories generally can only afford to do so for materials they own. For this reason, the Swenson Center does not accept collections on deposit or long-term loan.

Tax Deductions

You should speak with its tax accountant or attorney about the possibility of a tax deduction. Archivists cannot give tax advice, nor are they permitted to appraise the monetary value of a collection being considered for their own repository.

Monetary Donations

The Swenson Center is a nonprofit organization and any support is gratefully received. Arrangement, description, and preservation are expensive tasks. Staff time, rehousing materials in preservation quality enclosures, and maintaining a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment are just some of the costs associated with preserving materials. If you are able to make a monetary donation to help defray the costs of caring for your materials, we would greatly appreciate it!

Ready to Donate? Want more Information?

Contact the Swenson Center archivist, Janette Foss Garcia, at the address in the letterhead or 309-794-7496 or janettegarcia@augustana.edu. Thank you!