

1981

Nordic immigrants in Portland, 1870-1920 : the first fifty years

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<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.3090>

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Janet Lynn Baisinger for the Master of Arts in History presented July 20, 1981.

Title: Nordic Immigrants in Portland, 1870-1920: The First Fifty Years.

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Portland, Oregon had the potential in the 1870s to become the center of Nordic immigration to the Pacific Northwest. It was the primary urban center of the area, and the headquarters for Scandinavian mission work. In the 1870s, Nordics began to establish churches,

clubs, lodges and newspapers. After the first fifty years, however, Portland's Nordic ethnicity was not as evident in the city's character as mere numbers might warrant.

Both the character of the Nordic immigrants and Portland molded the history of the Nordic community. History, pride and a language gap hindered any lasting cooperation among the five Nordic nationalities in establishing lodges and churches. Portland's changing neighborhoods created a lack of continuity in settlement patterns, and the city's homogeneous attitude coupled with suspicion of all things foreign generated during World War I discouraged ethnicity in church, club and home. While few Nordics made a dramatic "rags-to-riches" rise in social and economic position, they and their descendants continued to improve their material and social life over the years; much of this was achieved through absorption and acceptance of American culture.

Nordic ethnicity did not fade away entirely in Portland. Many lodges and churches maintained remnants of ethnic culture. The core of the new ethnic revival of the late 1970s and 1980s, centered around these institutions, was established during the formative years of Nordic settlement in Portland, 1870-1920.

NORDIC IMMIGRANTS IN PORTLAND, 1870-1920

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

by

JANET LYNN BAISINGER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

HISTORY

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

1981

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INTRODUCTION

During the first fifty years of Nordic immigration to the Pacific Northwest, Portland, Oregon was a center of trade, travel and settlement, known as the capital city of the Pacific Northwest until the 1890s.¹ The 1870s mark the beginning of Nordic immigration to the vicinity, when Portland became the headquarters from which the Scandinavian missionaries rode out to found congregations. By the 1880s, areas of Scandinavian settlement were recognizable. The first half century of Nordic settlement in Portland was an era of Nordic ethnic activity unmatched until recent years. Nordic immigrants collectively became one of the largest foreign-born groups in Portland. Dozens of Nordic social, fraternal, benevolent and political organizations appeared on Portland's horizon, and dozens of Nordic congregations of various denominations and synods were scattered throughout the city. Yet, Portland's Nordic ethnicity was never as apparent in the city's character as mere numbers might warrant.

Unlike many other towns and cities in the Pacific Northwest, Portland maintained throughout its history an outward character of homogeneity despite various ethnic and racial influences. Ethnic settlements, including the Nordic community, tended to gradually disperse throughout the city. Most ethnic clubs and societies had little

¹Gordon Carlson, Seventy-five Years History of Columbia Baptist Conference (Seattle: Columbia Baptist Conference, 1964), p. 12.

influence outside their own nationality. Nevertheless, the First World War and the resulting suspicion of everything foreign was a major factor in the Americanization of many aspects of Portland's Nordic community. By 1920, Portland's Nordic population was still growing, but its ethnic identity could not overcome the city's homogeneous character. Therefore, Portland was not able to maintain a Scandinavian tinge such as remains in some of the other Pacific Northwest cities.

The story of Nordic people and their descendents in Portland is but a footnote in the overall epic of Scandinavian and Finnish immigration to America, but it is in many ways a typical one. The Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns and occasional Icelander who arrived in Portland between 1870 and 1920 were continuing a westward migration usually begun years before in a search for a better life: fertile untouched fields, social and religious freedom, personal freedom, or, simply, adventure. The lives of Portland Nordics mirror the lives of any number of fellow immigrants throughout the United States. From the Old Country the Nordics brought their beliefs, their culture and their dreams, and integrated these aspects with American life.

CHAPTER I

WESTWARD MIGRATION

The five northern European countries which share the collective term "Nordic" also share a tightly related heritage and history. There are very few points in the histories of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland which do not relate directly to one or more of the other Nordic countries. Iceland was colonized by Norwegians in the ninth century A.D., and ruled first by Norwegian and then Danish kings while Norway itself was under Danish rule from 1387 to 1814. Iceland remained a possession of Denmark until 1914 when it became a separate kingdom, gaining total independence in 1944. From 1397 to 1523, Norway, Denmark and Sweden were temporarily united under the Kalmar Union. Norway was later ceded by Denmark to Sweden in 1814, remaining under Swedish rule until 1905. Swedes began settling the coastal region of Finland in the twelfth century vacated earlier by the natives during the turbulent Viking Era. These Swedes evolved into the ethnic group known variously as Finlandssvenskar, Finno-Swedes or Swede-Finns, a people who have "their native country in common with the Finns, their language in common with the Swedes and their national history in common with both."¹ Sweden ruled Finland for over five hundred years until the latter was ceded to Russia in 1809. Swedish

¹Carl J. Silfversten, Finlandssvenkarna i Amerika: Deras Materiella och Andliga Strävanden (Duluth: Interstate Printing Co., 1931), pp. 53-54.

was and remained the language of the upper-class and official and scientific publications in Finland, well into the twentieth century.

In contrast to the geographical and historical definition of "Nordic," the term "Scandinavian" is properly applied only to those countries of the extreme north of Europe whose languages have a Germanic origin. The Finns, while being Nordics are therefore not Scandinavians, since their language is of Finno-Ugric stock rather than Teutonic, resembling Estonian or Hungarian rather than Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or Icelandic. This Finno-Ugric stock also encompasses Turkish, Japanese and Korean; because of this fact and the slightly Oriental cast to eye and cheekbone of many Finns, they were sometimes referred to as Mongolians.² At the turn of the twentieth century, political leaders in some parts of the United States seriously accepted the Mongolian theory, and attempted to deny the right of citizenship to Finns in America on the basis of their Asiatic origins.³

Geography and history interwove the five Nordic countries throughout time; it would be difficult to find another set of nations so similar, and at the same time so diverse. The great migration to America was but another binding factor, for the Nordic immigrants tended to put aside the animosities of the Old Country in the new land, preferring to settle near one another. America itself confused the

²Reports of the Immigration Commission, Vol. 5: Dictionary of Races and People (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), pp. 5, 236-238.

³John Wargelin, The Americanization of the Finns (Hancock, Mich.: The Finnish Lutheran Book Concern, 1924), p. 166.

issue. Ethnic Danes from North Schleswig were listed in immigration records as Germans. Finns were listed as Russians, Icelanders as Danes, Danes as Norwegians, Norwegians as Swedes and Swedes as Danes, often because immigration officials did not know distinctive European ethnic groups, or care that there were any differences to be made.⁴

Nordic immigration to America began as early as 1638, when a small group of Swedes and Finns arrived to colonize the New Sweden settlement in what is now Delaware. The great exodus from Denmark and Sweden did not begin, however, until the 1840s; from Norway in the 1860s and from Finland in the 1880s. Common reasons account for the emigration from each of the five Nordic countries, making them part of the vast worldwide population movement of the middle and late nineteenth century.

Some of the Nordic immigrants sought religious freedom in America, freedom from the Lutheran State Church, to which one was required to pay support regardless of one's belief, practice or attendance. Other denominations had begun to spread their influence in the Nordic countries during the early nineteenth century. Quakerism reached Norway in the 1820s through those who had been converted while prisoners during the Napoleonic Wars. Unlike the Lutherans, Quakers do not baptize, confirm or take communion, and for these reasons, Quaker meetings were banned under the Conventicle Acts. A handful of Norwegian Quakers emigrated to America in 1825, followed by

⁴Kristian Hvidt, Danes Go West: A Book About the Emigration to America (Copenhagen: Rebild National Park Society, Inc., 1976), p. 66.

trickles of immigrants through the next decade when religion ceased to be the dominant factor in Norwegian emigration. Similarly, Baptist and Methodist missionaries were very active in Denmark and Sweden during the 1840s, and many of these converts emigrated to found New Zions in America. While the Conventicle Acts had been repealed in Norway (1845) and Denmark (1849), the rigid walls of orthodoxy did not fall in Sweden until 1860. After that time, religion virtually ceased to be a catalyst in Nordic emigration to America.⁵

Draft dodging was another motive which drove Nordics to America. In each country, military training had been compulsory for all males between the ages of twenty and twenty-five from the early nineteenth century. As the century wore on, training time was slowly increased and resentment grew in direct proportion. In the 1870s, many ethnic Danes in North Schleswig fled to America to avoid conscription into the Prussian draft.⁶ Finnish males left to avoid the Decree of 1878 that required three-year compulsory military service. Emigration from Finland became wholesale when the Tsar's Conscription Law of 1901, part of an overall plan to "russify" Finland, required Finnish males to fight in the Russian rather than Finnish army anywhere within the borders of the Russian Empire rather than strictly within the borders of Finland. In that year, sixty percent of the draftees failed to

⁵ Franklin D. Scott, Sweden: The Nation's History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 359.

⁶ Hvidt, Danes Go West, p. 157.

report for duty.⁷

Social factors were major catalysts for emigration. The Nordic countries were extremely class conscious in the early nineteenth century, with behavioral expectations and patterns adhered to strictly. There were thousands of informal social mores: a man or woman below a certain class level was never honored with the title "Mister," "Missus," or "Miss." Only the upper classes of women were allowed to wear bone corsets or hats; others wore head scarves.⁸ Social mobility was rare, and each class was very aware of their position in the social hierarchy: nobles, clergy, burghers, bönder (landowning farmer), share-cropper, statare (landless laborer).⁹ Eventually, social transformation and revolution throughout Scandinavia overthrew rigid social boundaries, and Scandinavian countries developed a middle class. With that link between the upper and lower classes, the "upper brackets" became open "for anyone with the proper combination of background, ability and will."¹⁰ It would have taken a person with infinite foresight, patience and faith to identify the trend and wait for its

⁷Reino Kero, "The Background of Finnish Emigration," The Finns in North America, ed. Ralph J. Jalkanen (Hancock: Michigan State University Press, 1969), p. 58.

⁸The series of immigration novels by Vilhelm Moberg give an excellent portrayal of these social rules of dress and behavior, and how the immigrants' views changed in America. See The Emigrants, Unto A Good Land, The Settlers and Last Letter Home.

⁹Scott, Sweden, p. 334.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 338.

occurrence; the average person saw only what was immediately before him. If he felt the Old Country was stagnant, he had the opportunity to pick up and leave for America: new, free and allegedly classless. As one immigrant wrote home:

I feel thoroughly at home with the Americans. They are not proud and do not slander their fellow-men, neither are they jealous of their neighbors' success. They are not mammon worshippers who think only of their own welfare. The spirit here is to rejoice in the good fortune of others as well as in one's own, and we are all happy.¹¹

The overwhelming factor in the immigration saga was economic. Many of those who emigrated were unemployed and close to starvation. Early in the nineteenth century, "peace, vaccine, and potatoes"¹² caused a population increase throughout Europe. Between 1800 and 1900, for example, the population of Sweden doubled despite losing 1,200,000 emigrants,¹³ while Finland's population increased three-fold.¹⁴ Nineteenth century Scandinavia was overwhelmingly agricultural until the last few decades when the Industrial Revolution was firmly established. A Swedish farmer frequently divided the land among his sons; within a few generations, the farms became too small to support a family. In Norway, the eldest son inherited the land, leaving the younger sons to

¹¹George Stephenson, "Typical 'America' Letters," Year-Book of the Swedish Historical Society, vol. 7 (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Veckoblad Publishing Co., 1922), pp. 60-61.

¹²Scott, Sweden, p. 339.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Kero, "Finnish Emigration," p. 55.

go into trades or the ministry. These inheritance traditions coupled with nineteenth century population growth soon swelled the ranks of tradesmen and clergy. In each Scandinavian country there was rapidly developing a rural proletariat of sharecroppers and landless laborers which had not before existed. Urban centers were totally inadequate to handle those fleeing overpopulated rural areas until the last few decades of the century when Scandinavia's industrial revolution began, creating a vast need for labor. Further complicating the situation were a series of economic crises, crop failures and famines beginning in the 1860s. In Finland, for example, a famine in the early 1860s was so severe that in three years there were 107,000 more deaths than births.¹⁵

Across the ocean, however, was a vast land inviting immigrants with the promise of cheap land. Even if the immigrant did not have the funds to purchase land immediately, there supposedly were jobs on the railroads and in mines or lumber camps that offered wages that boggled the peasant mind. Even the average servant girl in America, unskilled and usually fresh off the emigrant ship, earned more than six times the amount in wages prevailing in Finland.¹⁶ Many Nordics came to hold the same opinion as did one immigrant Dane: "I did not care to live such a life of drudgery and poverty as my parents lived;

¹⁵ John I. Kolehmainen, The Finns in America: A Students' Guide to Localized History (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p. 6.

¹⁶ Kero, "Finnish Emigration," p. 60.

I can't do worse in America, and I may do better."¹⁷ Those who left for America only confirmed the tales of fabulous America in their letters home, be they truthful accounts or a matter of pride. The folk dream of the immigrant was one day to own a successful farm. While in the Old Country this had become an unattainable dream, in America it was a reality,¹⁸ a reality that spread a few acres of European farm into 160 acres of donation land claim. One immigrant wrote home from Iowa in 1860:

There is such an abundance of pasturage and prairie that we could have as many head of cattle as we could desire . . . There is such an abundance here that if I attempted to tell you about it, many would doubt my word -- and I would not blame them . . . God's blessing rests upon everyone who is willing to work.¹⁹

Many emigrants had no intentions of actually settling in America. They planned to reap America's bounty for five years or so, then return with all their expected wealth to their home parish in Sweden, Norway or Denmark, buy a farm and live a comfortable life. Meanwhile, the Old Country did not yield up the emigrants without protest. Ministers preached from the pulpits of slavery, sin and thievery in America. Those who emigrated were labeled recreants, traitors and

¹⁷ John H. Bille, A History of the Danes in America, Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, vol. 11 (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1971), p. 8.

¹⁸ Jon Wefald, A Voice of Protest: Norwegians in American Politics, 1890-1917, Topical Studies, vol. 1 (Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1971), p. 8.

¹⁹ Stephenson, "Letter," pp. 59-60.

defiers of God who had placed them in the Old Country. In Sweden, many of the upper-class claimed America was the paradise of all rogues and rascals, and that those who emigrated were fit only for such society.²⁰ They seemed to resent that many of the poor flourished so well in the new land.

Although many immigrants arrived and remained in one of the great American seaports such as New York or Boston, most continued their westward migration to the Great Lakes states. Farmland was the foremost bait that lured the Nordic immigrants to America. The Old Northwest was open to agricultural development in the middle of the nineteenth century. Emigration companies advertised Minnesota, Wisconsin and the other Great Lakes states with the intention of moving the European immigrant out of the bustling city by luring him onto unoccupied lands in the Midwest, land usually owned by the company.²¹ By 1860, the Midwest was connected to the Eastern seaboard by canals and railroads, making travel easier and markets closer, while the Civil War virtually cut off Nordic immigration south of the Mason-Dixon line. Few of the immigrants knew any English, and the new groups sought out older Nordic settlements. If the immigrant did go to urban centers such as New York or Chicago, he often plied trades

²⁰ Hans Mattson, "A Swedish Immigrant in His Old Home," Historical Aspects of the Immigration Problem: Select Documents, ed. Edith Abbott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926), p. 167.

²¹ Ibid., p. 162.

learned at home, such as carpentry and shoemaking, usually on a temporary basis until he accumulated the capital to purchase land.²² The majority of the Nordic immigrants settled in rural areas or small towns, even as late as 1910.²³ There, they lived much the same life they had in the Old Country on a better material scale.

While most of the "America Letters" tell of the large farms, livestock, prices, wages and the ecstasy of the successful immigrant, some found that America was not the paradise as advertised. A few immigrants wrote home about the Midwest's severe winters and long, hot summers, about the droughts and "millions, trillions of grasshoppers in great clouds, hiding the sun . . . eating up everything . . ."²⁴ In Scandinavia, a farmer generally tended a subsistence farm, raising some grain, a small orchard, a vegetable garden, a few sheep for wool, a few head of livestock. In the American Midwest, wheat was the dominant crop. A good crop of wheat with good market prices could make a man reasonably wealthy in one season. The virgin soil of the Midwest and the prairie loam of Kansas and Nebraska usually took several seasons before it began producing in quantity and quality

²²A. William Høglund, Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), p. 60.

²³Howard B. Furer, ed., The Scandinavians in America, 1846-1970: A Chronology & Fact Book, Ethnic Chronology Series Number 6 (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1972), p. 69.

²⁴H. Arnold Barton, ed., Letters From the Promised Land: Swedes in America, 1840-1914 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), p. 154.

proportionate to the labor invested. Several months of work could be demolished with a few minutes of hail storm or swarming grasshoppers. Many farmers fell heavily into debt during the lean years, and were forced to foreclose on their property before success could be realized. Many Nordic immigrants grew discontented with the gently rolling hills of Minnesota or North Dakota's "treeless and monotonous flats."²⁵ They grew homesick for the mountains, valleys and rivers of Scandinavia. As a result, some returned home; others looked westward.

In the 1870s, Nordics such as the Reverend A. E. Fridrichsen began writing in Midwest Nordic language newspapers of the glories of a new land, a land of trees and mountains with a climate quite similar to that of Scandinavia. It was a land that not only resembled home, but one where the familiar occupations could be pursued, those of fisherman and sailor, as well as farmer, carpenter and shoemaker: the Pacific Northwest. The center of travel, commerce and politics in the Pacific Northwest of this era was the dignified little town of Portland, Oregon.

²⁵Jorgen Dahlie, "Old World Paths in the New: Scandinavians Find Familiar Home in Washington," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 61 (April 1970): 68.

CHAPTER II

PORTLAND

When the Nordic people began looking towards Oregon as a base of culture and religion for the Pacific Northwest in the 1870s, Portland had existed as an entity for barely twenty-six years. For all its pride in possessing the august role as the region's most important port, Portland was still endeavoring to throw off the indignity of its early nickname: Stumptown.

Oregon City, a few miles upstream on the Willamette River, had been the largest town north of San Francisco and seemingly destined to become the trade center of the Oregon Territory, when William Overton and Asa Lovejoy filed claim to 640 acres at "the clearing" in 1844. Portland struggled for existence until the 1849 California Gold Rush helped make the fledging town a supply center for agricultural and lumber products, thus bringing in coinage and cash, rather than barter and script, and steadying Portland's floundering economy. "Interurban warfare" sprang up among the various hopeful sites on the Willamette River, including Portland, Oregon City, Milwaukie and St. Johns.¹ Portland emerged triumphant in 1851, by successfully linking Oregon's major wheat belt, the Tualatin Plains, to the Willamette-Columbia water

¹Eugene E. Synder, Early Portland: Stump-Town Triumphant (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1970), p. 54.

route via a crudely graded road.² The interior Indian wars picked up sagging trade when the California Gold Rush began to fade in this same decade.³ In 1854, Portland secured the terminus for contract mail boats, and "the clearing" was ushered into the coveted position as the capital port of the Pacific Northwest.⁴ Regardless of these honors, Portland could have still faded into obscurity without the formation of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company in 1860, which provided an efficient mode of transportation into the interior just in time for a series of gold rushes in Idaho, Montana and eastern Oregon. The combination of these factors coupled with and backed by the determination and shrewdness of Portland's prominent leaders, helped secure Portland's supremacy as the "capital" of the Pacific Northwest until the turn of the twentieth century.⁵

Gold and wheat made Portland "a rather rich little town" in the 1870s.⁶ Portland was also a remarkably homogeneous little town. The Chinese were the largest ethnic group, followed by the Irish and Scots,⁷ but there was a prevailing aura of the small New England town

²Gordon B. Dodds, Oregon: A Bicentennial History (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), p. 73.

³Terence O'Donnell and Thomas Vaughan, Portland: A Historical Sketch and Guide (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1976), p. 9.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Dodds, Oregon, pp. 74-75.

⁶O'Donnell, Portland, p. 15.

⁷Ibid., pp. 22-23.

about Portland. In the 1870s, historian John Fiske saw similarities between Portland and a New England town, between Portland residents and "New England folks." The most influential people in Portland tended to be small-town New England-type folks, with English, Scottish and German-Jewish backgrounds.⁸ Portland "seemed old even when it was young, respectable when it was still crude."⁹ There was never the riotous extravagance of San Francisco, nor the foot-stomping bawdiness of Seattle; at least, none to which Portland's leaders would admit.

When the Nordics began looking westward to the Pacific Coast, the first lure had been the California Gold Rush. As the impatient and often disillusioned miners drifted out of the gold fields, some wandered up to the lush Willamette Valley. After the Civil War, the Pacific Northwest also received attention in the Midwest, especially among hard hit farmers. One of the few first-hand accounts of the West Coast written especially for the Nordic audience by a Norwegian was the writing of the Reverend A. E. Fridrichsen.¹⁰

In Midwest Scandinavian language newspapers, the colorful and highly controversial Fridrichsen waxed enthusiastic of the glories of the Pacific Northwest in general, and Portland in particular.

⁸ E. Kimbark MacColl, The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1885-1915 (Portland: The Georgian Press Company, 1976), pp. 3, 5.

⁹ Earl Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), pp. 136-138.

¹⁰ Kenneth Bjork, "A 'Leatherbreeches Minister' in Portland, Oregon," Lutheran Herald 37 (16 June 1953): 571.

Portland, Fridrichsen claimed in 1871, was much prettier than San Francisco. The town was so prosperous, its businessmen lived in "little palaces surrounded by large fruit and flower gardens."¹¹ As a result of his boosterism, Fridrichsen was bombarded with letters from the Midwest inquiring about conditions and prospects on the Pacific Coast. He replied by relaying all the good and skipping lightly over the bad, writing of good crops and the fine climate, of easier travel now that there were railroad connections between the East and San Francisco, and steamer connections north to Portland.¹² Fridrichsen does not seem to have dwelt much on hard times or disasters, perhaps because he feared of discouraging people from migrating to an area where he himself had property interests.

Fridrichsen glided over the secondary post-Civil War economic depression (1873-1878) which struck Portland just as hard as it did the Midwest. Instead, he emphasized the resulting spiritual conditions of the Scandinavians in Portland. "For surely external hard times, when they prevail year after year, have an unnerving effect," he wrote to a church periodical. "Certainly one is sorely tempted by many disheartening thoughts when one looks over his work."¹³ Fridrichsen

¹¹Fædrelandet og emigraten (La Crosse, Wisc.) 8 June 1871, quoted in Kenneth O. Bjork, West of the Great Divide (Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1958), p. 307.

¹²Skandinaven og Amerika (Chicago) 8 July and 19 August 1873, quoted in Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 335.

¹³Ibid., p. 495.

does not seem to have mentioned the 1871 Flood, or fires in 1872 and 1873. While the fire of 1872 burned only two and one-half blocks, the Great Fire of 1873 consumed twenty-two city blocks, and many feared the calamity would have a permanently damaging effect on Portland's prosperity.¹⁴ A mere three years later, the Great Flood of 1876 promised to destroy all the effort Portland had put into rebuilding. As the flood rose, merchants on Front Street weighted down the wooden sidewalks with kegs of nails and scrap iron to keep them from floating away. These events were not prominent in Fridrichsen's letters to the Midwest.

Fridrichsen did mention the employment situation; this would have been one of the most pointed questions originating from his audience. A cautious reply of 1877 admitted employment was scarce, except for housemaids.¹⁵ General promotional literature on Oregon in the 1870s warned that employment tended to be seasonal for artisans and laborers, and advised that only those with capital should resettle in the Pacific Northwest.¹⁶ Reflecting this attitude was a letter to another Midwest paper written by immigrant John Hanson, explaining that during the wet winter season in Oregon, there was very little

¹⁴The fact Fridrichsen did not mention the fire is interesting, since it originated in the large furniture manufactory of Hurgren & Shindler, owned in part by A. Hurgren, a Swede, and employed several Scandinavian cabinet makers. Portland City Directory, 1873 (Portland: S. J. McCormick, 1873), pp. 45, 229; and Percy Maddux, City on the Willamette (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1952), p. 73.

¹⁵Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 318.

¹⁶Dorothy O. Johansen, Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest, 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 373.

work to be had, and what jobs were available were done by Chinese.¹⁷ Ole Mikkelsen, a Norwegian resident of Portland, also found the employment situation tenuous. After spending a winter doing carpentry work for perhaps twenty-five cents an hour, he warned people in a blunt letter to a Midwest newspaper not to migrate without thoroughly investigating conditions.¹⁸

The majority of Nordic immigrants who came to Portland between 1870 and 1920 were second-stage immigrants, those who had resided in a New England or Midwest state for a period before continuing the journey westward. Although railroad access reduced the cost and hazards of the transcontinental journey, few immigrants newly arrived on the shores of America had sufficient funds to continue the journey. Many, unable to accumulate the necessary funds, had been supplied with a ticket by a relative already residing in the United States. Because of a sojourn in the East or Midwest, many Nordics were already acclimated by the time they reached Portland. These immigrants were familiar with American ways and usually had at least a rudimentary knowledge of English. A few threw off their Nordic ethnicity and became totally Americanized, refusing to participate in any ethnic activity. Those who arrived in Portland directly from the Old Country found Portland was no easier than any other urban center for the bewildered immigrant. Usually the newly arrived immigrant had to work long hours,

¹⁷ Nordisk folkeblad (Minneapolis) 24 June 1874, quoted in Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 329.

¹⁸ Norden (Chicago) 25 January 1877; and Tillæg til Skandinaven (Chicago) 6 March 1877, quoted in Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 334.

and did not have time to go to night school and learn English. As a result, the Americanization process was often slow and painful.¹⁹

The Nordic community in Portland never had the impact which Finns had in Astoria or Norwegians in Ballard, where as identifiable ethnic groups they shaped the towns and their history. Neither the individual nationalities nor the total Nordic population ever grew to the vast portions of the total urban population so apparent in towns such as Aberdeen, Astoria and Seattle, where the Nordic proportion ranged from 8.0 percent to 25.1 percent as late as 1920.²⁰

As can be seen in Table I, none of the Nordic nationalities constituted a very large percent of Portland's population, but the Nordic population still reflected Portland's growth trends. Although, collectively, Nordics were the largest foreign-born group in Portland by 1910, the Nordic community never participated in any organization or acted as a single unit for more than a few short years. Churches as well as fraternal, benevolent and political societies which began

¹⁹ Henrietta Henrikson Johnson, Portland, Oregon, interview by Audrey Brown, 16 April 1976, transcribed by H. Duff, Oregon Historical Society Library, Portland, Oregon, p. 2.

²⁰ Seattle's Nordic population was 8.0 percent of the total population, and Aberdeen's was 17.4 percent in 1910. Astoria's Nordics (predominantly Finns) numbered 25.1 percent of the total population and 78.1 percent of the total foreign-born population in 1920. U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. 3: Reports by States with Statistics for Counties, Cities and Other Civil Divisions (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 970, 994, 1005; and U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. 3: Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), p. 845.

TABLE I
 PORTLAND POPULATION
 1870-1920

YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION		WHITE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION				POPULATION BORN IN NORDIC COUNTRIES				% TOTAL FOREIGN-BORN
	NUMBER	% INCREASE	NUMBER	% INCREASE	% TOTAL POPULATION	NUMBER	% INCREASE	% TOTAL POPULATION	% INCREASE	% TOTAL POPULATION	
1870	8,293	-	2,578	-	31.1%	69	-	0.8%	-	0.8%	2.7%
1880	17,577	112%	6,312	145%	35.9%	317	359%	1.8%	359%	1.8%	5.0%
1890	46,385	164%	17,323	174%	37.4%	2,316	631%	5.0%	631%	5.0%	13.4%
1900	90,426	95%	25,876	49%	28.6%	3,073	33%	3.4%	33%	3.4%	11.9%
1910	207,214	129%	43,780	69%	21.1%	9,671	215%	4.7%	215%	4.7%	22.1%
1920	258,288	25%	47,114	7%	18.2%	10,734	11%	4.2%	11%	4.2%	22.8%

SOURCES: U. S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1870, Multnomah County, Oregon, pp. 172A-276A; Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1880, Vol. 3, Multnomah County, Oregon, pp. 222A-436B; Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Vol. 3: Population (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Office, 1901), p. 637, 800-803; Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. 3: Reports by States with Statistics for Counties, Cities and Other Civil Divisions (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 520; Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. 3: Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), pp. 837, 843; and Paul Gilman Merriam, "Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Oregon, 1971), p. 45.

as Scandinavian either dissolved or broke up along national and language lines. Even Swedes, the largest Nordic group throughout the years between 1870 and 1920, never ranked higher than third in foreign-born population. In 1910, Swedes were outnumbered by Germans and Chinese, and in 1920 by Germans, Chinese and Russians.²¹

Regardless of hard times, the 1870s did see a general growth in Portland's population, and particularly in the Nordic community. True to Ole Mikkelsen's warning, many Nordics who had been lured to Oregon by the promises printed in Midwest newspapers found that work on Oregon farms was irregular and that Portland offered little more. Living in Portland was relatively cheap, however, and a family could survive on six dollars a week.²² Wages, meanwhile, ran from one dollar per day for seamstresses to six dollars per day for masons, representing better wages than could be had in the Midwest.²³ In this one decade, the Nordic community increased over three and a half times (see Table I).

The 1880s belonged to the railroads. By the end of the decade, four railroads ran in Portland. On 11 September 1883, the first transcontinental train arrived in East Portland. The economic and population boom which resulted from the advent of the railroad was

²¹Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census, 1910, p. 510; and Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census, 1920, p. 837.

²²Norden 14 November 1887, quoted in Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 353.

²³Ibid., p. 312.

not to be equaled until after 1920. The opening of thousands of acres of farmland in eastern Oregon and Washington due to the building of railroads along the Columbia River increased agricultural production, and grain exports from Portland reached an all-time high in 1885. Prosperity brought population growth, and one in five Oregon immigrants settled in Portland; the Nordic community grew by an astonishing six hundred percent. In turn, commerce and industry responded to the rise in population; over \$54 million were invested in construction in 1889.²⁴

In the 1890s, however, hard times returned. The stock market began falling in Europe and the eastern United States. As a result, English speculators withdrew invested capital from the American market, and slowly, the structure of speculative credit unravelled. In Portland, the "gay nineties" was a period of economic panic, unemployment and breadlines.²⁵ As can be seen in Table I, Portland's population growth slowed dramatically in comparison to previous decades.

The 1897 Klondike Gold Rush brought economic recovery to the early 1900s, resulting in increased immigration and thereby steadying the consumer market; it also hastened Portland's demise as the capitol city of the Pacific Northwest. While Portland's growth registered an increase of 129 percent, Seattle's growth was even greater at 194 percent.²⁶ The Nordic population in Portland, however, rose by two

²⁴Johansen, Empire on the Columbia, pp. 328-330; and MacColl, Shaping of a City, pp. 47, 52-53, 71-80.

²⁵MacColl, Shaping of a City, pp. 100-108; and Johansen, Empire of the Columbia, pp. 360, 369-370.

²⁶Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census, 1910, p. 970.

hundred percent (see Table I). In other states, Scandinavian immigrants were among the least urban-oriented of all America's immigrants; in the Dakotas, for example, only 5 percent of the Scandinavians lived in cities and towns. In Oregon and Washington, however, most of the Scandinavians became urban rather than rural dwellers.²⁷ As early as 1880, Portland's Nordic population was within five percent of national Nordic immigrant proportions, both urban and rural (see Table II). By 1910, the margin had narrowed to approximately one percent. Gradually, the rural trend changed nationwide, and by 1910, 60.6 percent of Swedish immigrants, for example, were living in urban centers.²⁸ Central to the urbanization of Scandinavians in America was the fact that immigrants were themselves coming from urban backgrounds in greater numbers than in previous years. In the early stages of immigration, rural immigrants outnumbered urban on a ratio of 3.5 to 1. By 1910, the ratio of rural to urban had evened to 1:1.²⁹ The later immigrants also tended to be poorer, and their movement to cities and industrial areas reflected the location of employment opportunity.³⁰

The next decade (1910-1920) was a mixed period of declining

²⁷ Furer, Scandinavians in America, p. 69.

²⁸ Sture Lindmark, Swedish America, 1914-1932: Studies in Ethnicity with Emphasis on Illinois and Minnesota (Uppsala: Wretmans Boktryckeri, 1971), p. 30.

²⁹ Lars Ljungmark, Swedish Exodus, trans. Kermit B. Westerberg (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), p. 29.

³⁰ E. P. Hutchinson, Immigrants and Their Children, 1850-1950 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1956), p. 65.

TABLE II
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF NORDIC POPULATION
 ACCORDING TO COUNTRY OF BIRTH FOR
 PORTLAND AND THE UNITED STATES
 1870-1920

YEAR	DENMARK*			FINLAND**			NORWAY			SWEDEN		
	PORTLAND		U.S.	PORTLAND		U.S.	PORTLAND		U.S.	PORTLAND		U.S.
	NUMBER	% OF NORDIC POPULATION	% OF NORDIC POPULATION	NUMBER	% OF NORDIC POPULATION	% OF NORDIC POPULATION	NUMBER	% OF NORDIC POPULATION	% OF NORDIC POPULATION	NUMBER	% OF NORDIC POPULATION	% OF NORDIC POPULATION
1870	20	29.0%	12.5%	1	1.4%	-	8	11.6%	47.2%	40	58.0%	40.3%
1880	59	18.6%	13.8%	6	1.9%	5.6%	107	33.8%	38.9%	145	45.7%	41.7%
1890	300	13.0%	14.2%	-	-	-	704	30.4%	34.6%	1,312	56.6%	51.2%
1900	414	13.2%	13.5%	98	13.4%	5.6%	850	27.7%	29.6%	1,711	55.7%	51.3%
1910	1,196	12.4%	13.1%	948	9.8%	9.4%	2,726	28.2%	29.3%	4,801	49.6%	48.2%
1920	1,365	12.7%	14.2%	1,394	13.0%	11.3%	2,915	27.2%	27.4%	5,060	47.1%	47.1%

SOURCES: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1870, Multnomah County, Oregon, pp. 172A-276A; Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, Vol. 3, Multnomah County, Oregon, pp. 222A-426B; Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Vol. 1, Population (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Office, 1901), pp. 800-803; Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. 3: Reports by States with Statistics for Counties, Cities and Other Civil Divisions (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 520; Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. 3: Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), p. 837; E. P. Hutchinson, Immigrants and Their Children, 1850-1950 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1956), pp. 295, 333; Paul Gilman Merriam, "Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1971), p. 45; and John Wargelin, The Americanization of the Finns (Hancock, Mich.: The Finnish Lutheran Book Concern, 1924), p. 56.

*Includes Iceland.

**Finland was included with Russia in the censuses until 1900.

European immigration, urban growth and construction, and war-time boom. In Europe, emigration to America was declining even before war broke out in 1914. Emigration from Sweden and Finland, for example, decreased by 12 percent and 16 percent respectively between 1910 and 1914. The First World War cut immigration by a further one-third until the United States entered the war in 1917, virtually halting immigration until the 1920s.³¹ As a result, the foreign-born population in Portland grew very little (see Table II). By 1920, however, Portland alone boasted 40 percent of Oregon's total Nordic population, and Astoria had an additional 13 percent.³² Portland's growth was further affected by the slowing of frantic expansion and the "pace of progress" which so marked the development years of the American West. Manufacturing, urban growth and construction declined throughout the Pacific Northwest until the outbreak of war in Europe increased demand for agricultural and lumber products. In addition, while Portland had been the chief banking center for the Northwest since the early years of settlement, by 1920, other financial centers had emerged in the other states, and Portland lost dominance.³³

A major factor in the failure of any lasting Nordic influence in the shaping and growth of Portland was the lack of continuity in the

³¹Harald Runbloom and Hans Norman, eds., From Sweden to America: A History of the Migration (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1976), pp. 117-119; and Carl Ross, The Finn Factor in American Labor, Culture and Society (New York Mills, Minn.: Parta Printers, Inc., 1977), p. 59.

³²Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census, 1920, pp. 837, 845.

³³Johansen, Empire of the Columbia, pp. 434-440.

centers of Nordic settlement. The residential patterns shifted from decade to decade during the years between 1870 and 1920, as the Nordics moved to other areas and were replaced by different ethnic or racial groups. In contrast, the independent town of Ballard, Washington, grew along with its Nordic population (primarily Norwegian), retaining the same ethnic population well into the twentieth century and the town's incorporation into Seattle, thereby creating a Norwegian flavor which is evident today. As Portland's Nordic community moved they also dispersed, aiding assimilation into Portland's mainstream population.

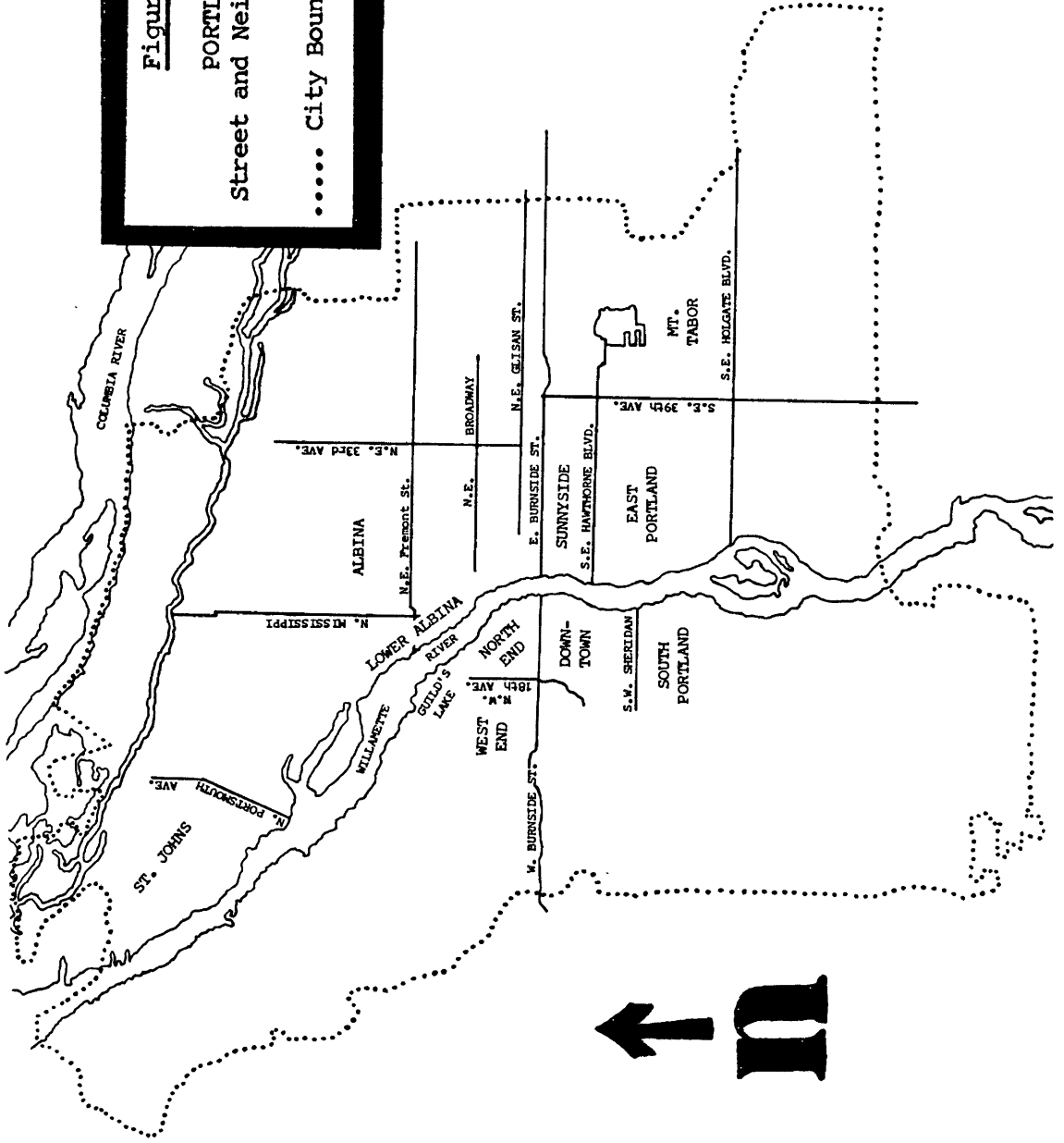
There were no discernable patterns of Nordic immigrant settlement for the first fifteen years, 1870-1885. The Scandinavian population was very small during this time and the Finns could be counted on one hand. Furthermore, Portland's population was still itself concentrated in the downtown district. By 1885, however, the Nordics were beginning to congregate in the North End, north of Burnside Street from the river front to about Eighteenth Avenue. The area west of Eighteenth Avenue, known as the West End, was to become the fashionable district of town, full of impressive homes, graceful architecture and the "New England tradition."³⁴ The North End was undeniably the working class area of Portland and Nordics who lived there were generally working class folk. Many of the homes closer to the West End, however, were attractive dwellings, until the turn of the century when the area began turning into a slum.

³⁴Henrietta Henrikson Johnson, interview, p. 2.

Figure 1.

PORTLAND
Street and Neighborhood Map

..... City Boundaries, 1980



The independent town of Albina was the other center for the Nordic population during this period. From the moment the first transcontinental train steamed to a halt in East Portland, the town of Albina was guaranteed prosperity. Nordic workers, many of them railroad laborers, moved into Albina. Essentially a company town, even after its merger with Portland in 1891, the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company, and later the Union Pacific Railroad, controlled Albina.³⁵ Before the turn of the century, Albina was "primarily a working class community," whose workers lived in "small cheap homes" usually close to the railroad tracks.³⁶ Although the upper portion of Albina grew into an attractive residential area, Lower Albina, in the 1890s, was a "tough, brawling town."³⁷

In the decade between 1900 and 1910 there remained a heavy concentration of Nordic immigrants in the North End, but it was becoming less and less desirable as a residential area. By the turn of the century, the red light district was encroaching upon the residential district, as it ran north on Fourth Street from Oak Street, spreading out around Davis and Everett Streets.³⁸ Families in the North End resided farther north, closer to Guild's Lake, while the single person tended to board in the area between Guild's Lake and Everett Street.

³⁵ E. Kimbark MacColl, The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915-1950 (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979), p. 44.

³⁶ MacColl, Shaping of a City, p. 133.

³⁷ Dodds, Oregon, p. 125.

³⁸ MacColl, Shaping of a City, p. 258.

There were a few scattered Nordics in East Portland and Sellwood, but Albina had the largest Nordic concentration by 1900, with the largest percentage of families.

The years between 1910 and 1920 saw the beginning of the trend which was to disperse the Nordics into the Mainstream population. Newer immigrants, such as Irish, Croatians, blacks and Finns, began to replace the North End population of the 1890s and early century. Although there was still a heavy concentration of Nordics in the area, most were single people rooming with families or in boarding houses. In 1910, the majority of Finns resided in the Guild's Lake region, followed by the North End and the Northern section of Albina between Portland Boulevard and Fremont Streets. Danes and Norwegians lived on the east side of the river, in Albina between Fremont and Burnside Streets, and in the southeast area between Burnside Street and Hawthorne Boulevard, known as Sunnyside. Norwegians also spread south to Holgate Boulevard. The Swedes were most heavily represented in Albina, southeast Portland, and the Guild's Lake area.³⁹ Many of these neighborhoods, especially the North End, Sunnyside and Albina were working class districts.⁴⁰ In the latter part of the decade, Nordics began to move. Albina and the North End became industrial centers, and population dropped accordingly.⁴¹ A serious low-cost housing

³⁹ Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census, 1910, p. 523.

⁴⁰ MacColl, Shaping of a City, p. 460.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 462.

shortage developed by 1918, and dense slum conditions appeared, particularly in the North End, where run-down hotels and residences mingled with commercial and industrial enterprises.⁴² The southern section of the North End, bordered by Burnside and Glisan Streets, Fifth and Twelfth Avenues, was considered by one policeman of that era to be one of the toughest districts in the city.⁴³

By the end of the first fifty years of Nordic settlement in Portland, the immigrants and the second-generation Nordics were leaving the older sections of settlement and spreading north into St. Johns and eastward with the city boundary. The Finns left the North End and Guild's Lake to move east across the river, until they were strung out "for a mile" along North Mississippi in Albina.⁴⁴ Within a few more years, Albina would revert to the "shabby commercial, industrial, lower income residential area" of its early years.⁴⁵ Geographic community never played an important role in fostering strong ties among the members of the Nordic nationalities or the five nationalities themselves. The main organs for unity -- and diversity -- within the community were the churches and ethnic clubs and lodges.

⁴² MacColl, Growth of a City, pp. 38-39.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁴ Walter Mattila, ed., Finnish Lutherans in the Melting Pot, Finnish Emigrant Series, vol. 7 no. 4 (Portland: Finnish American Historical Society of the West, 1972), p. 42.

⁴⁵ MacColl, Shaping of a City, p. 47.

CHAPTER III

CLASS, STATUS AND COMMUNITY POWER

From the very beginning of immigration to America, one of the major factors in the decision to leave all the immigrant had ever known was the gleaming hope of striking it rich in America. Probably every immigrant who stepped off the ship onto American soil harbored the Horatio Alger belief that with a little hard work, he, too, could become another Jay Gould or Andrew Carnegie. This "rags-to-riches" myth of the poor immigrant working his way up the business and social ladder has since been studied by historians such as Herbert Gutman and Stephan Thernstrom, and found to be little more than a pretty fairy tale, perhaps with a bit of bravado. Both Gutman and Thernstrom discovered that while the immigrants and their children did move up the occupational and social ladders, few made a dramatic leap from poverty to wealth.¹ Portland was no different.

Surely the "rags-to-riches" myth had some basis in fact. By working the same or similar occupation in America, the immigrant was generally no worse and usually better off materially than he had been in the Old Country. Land was cheap and available through the end of

¹For further reading on this topic, see Herbert G. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), and Stephan Thernstrom, "Immigrants and WASPs: Ethnic Differences in Occupational Mobility in Boston, 1890-1940," Nineteenth Century Cities, ed. Stephan Thernstrom and Richard Sennett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 125-164.

the century, and wages were higher; of course, the cost of living was also higher than in Europe. For those immigrants who thought themselves wealthy with two cows, five steers, a calf, nineteen hogs and countless chickens,² by having all the bread, milk and eggs they needed,³ by having one room specially for sleeping or several new dresses, America was a fine enough place and they were content. For those immigrants who expected easy riches, America was a disappointment.

With a few exceptions like lumberman Simon Benson, the majority of Nordic immigrants began their lives in Portland as blue-collar workers and remained blue-collar workers. Even the types of jobs which Nordic immigrants found changed very little over fifty years. In 1870, 43 percent of the occupations employing Nordics were of the manufacturing and mechanical category, such as carpenters, fishermen and shoemakers. Of the entire employment picture, 14.9 percent were cabinet makers, 12.8 percent were laborers, and 8.5 percent were servants and cooks.⁴ By 1920, very little had changed. In 1880, the three highest ranking occupations in terms of the Nordic labor force were laborer (27.6 percent), carpenter (12.6 percent), and servant (10.0 percent).⁵ These occupations remained among the top of the

² Stephenson, "'America' Letters," p. 65.

³ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴ U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1870, Multnomah County, Oregon, pp. 172A-276A.

⁵ U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1880, Vol. 3, Multnomah County, Oregon, pp. 222A-436B.

employment list for the next forty years. What is interesting about the 1880s was how many Nordics became saloon keepers; enough for the occupation to rank in the top ten employment positions by 1890, when at least twenty Nordics were listed as saloon keepers. In the 1880s, a man with a small amount of ready money could get sufficient credit and backing from the beer and wine companies to open his own establishment.⁶ Therefore, by 1890 the two hundred or so saloons listed in the city directory included August Carlson's and John Beck's Northwest Saloon, Bernhard Egan's, Hans Hansen's, Axel Schwartz's, and the most famous saloon in Portland's history, August Erickson's.

Within the national groups, the Portland Nordic immigrants tended to follow the national trends. In 1900, for example, on the national level, Swedes were more inclined towards tailoring, Norwegians towards carpentry, and Danes towards blacksmithing than other Nordic nationalities.⁷ In Portland, Norwegians had the highest percentage of males employed as carpenters, followed by Danes. Swedes had the highest percentage of tailors. Swedes and Finns had the highest percentages of their working force employed as laborers and in the sawmills, while Swedes and Norwegians ranked highest as railroad workers.⁸ Here again, Portland Swedes exhibited the national trend;

⁶Scrapbook 257, Oregon Historical Society Library, Portland, Oregon, p. 187.

⁷Hutchinson, Immigrants and Their Children, pp. 176, 179, 180.

⁸U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900, Vols. 10-13, Multnomah County, Oregon.

Swedish immigrants were so helpful in constructing the Great Northern Railroad, its president, James J. Hill claimed, "Give me Swedes, snuff and whiskey, and I'll build a railroad through hell."⁹

The Nordic immigrant was strongly identified with domestic work in this era, both in Portland and on a national level. Few occupations were considered acceptable employment for women: servant, laundress, and cook for the unskilled, dressmaker, seamstress and milliner for the skilled. The majority of Nordic working women were single, and between the ages of nineteen and thirty-four. Portland overall had 19.3 percent of its female population working outside the home in 1900; these women made up 15.1 percent of Portland's total working force.¹⁰ In the Nordic community, 17.4 percent of the total workers were female. By nationality, Finns had the highest percentage of women working outside the home (43.2 percent), followed by Swedes (24.7 percent), Norwegians (23.9 percent), and Danes (15.7 percent). Of these Nordic women, 61.3 percent were domestics.¹¹ Nordic nationalities were strongly stereotyped in the servant role, and legend has it that either President Calvin Coolidge or New York Governor Al Smith made the apt, if rather simple-minded, remark that "I, personally do not know much about Norwegians, but my wife says they made the very

⁹Furer, Scandinavians in America, p. 64.

¹⁰MacColl, Shaping of a City, p. 226.

¹¹Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900.

best domestics."¹²

For the married woman or widow, keeping boarders was a common occupation nationwide. In Portland, twelve out of seventeen boarding or lodging houses run by Nordics were run by women in 1900. For wives such as Maria Hansen or Stella Norby,¹³ keeping boarders was a method of earning an income within the home. For widows such as Mary Muller, Margeret (sic) Sandy or Matilda Bell, who all had children under the age of sixteen,¹⁴ keeping boarders afforded them the opportunity to remain independent and maintain their own household rather than moving in with relatives.¹⁵

Nordics were not confined to certain occupations because of some sort of prejudice; they were more inclined towards certain occupations due to their own background and experience. Many trades that are connected with the Nordic stereotype such as shoemaking, carpentry and tailoring were among the most common trades learned in the Old Country. Farmers often learned carpentry or shoemaking for their own convenience. Without an inheritance of land, younger sons of Norwegian farmers, for example, had little choice but to seek a trade or enter the ministry. Nordic immigrants as a whole were slow to enter professions such as

¹²Norse to the New Northwest: Norwegian-American Anniversary Commission Sesquicentennial, 1825-1975 (Seattle, 1975), p. 12.

¹³Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900, 10:98A, 11:55B.

¹⁴Ibid., 10:43B, 156A, 11:207B.

¹⁵John Modell and Tamara K. Hareven, "Urbanization and the Maleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, ed. Michael Gordon, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1978), p. 60.

physician, teacher or lawyer. As Bergmann has suggested, because Norway was poor and industrialization came later than in Sweden or Denmark, an independent professional and intellectual class developed slowly. In all five Nordic countries, only the wealthy could afford the schooling necessary to become a lawyer or physician. Most immigrants in America had only the rudiments of education, and the idea of social advance was based on land ownership. If one held any further ambition, it was to become a minister.¹⁶ To an extent this was true; most of the Norwegians as well as the other Nordic immigrants did not come from professional backgrounds, but they were also greatly hindered in America from entering the professions because of the language handicap. Very few immigrants spoke more than a word or two of English when they landed, and had little opportunity for study. It would therefore be those who emigrated as children and thereby had the advantage of an American education in the English language who would advance into the professions.

In 1900, for example, the second-generation of Nordics were approaching the Portland Norm. As can be seen by Table III, fewer of the immigrants' children were in agricultural services than their parents. The percentages for the professional services doubled for the males and increased four-fold for women within a single generation. It was usually second-generation Nordic women, for example, who became

¹⁶ Leola Nelson Bergmann, Americans from Norway, ed. Louis Adamic (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1950), p. 235.

TABLE III
OCCUPATIONAL PROPORTIONS
PORTLAND
1900

SERVICES	PORTLAND		NORDIC STOCK			
			IMMIGRANTS		AMERICAN BORN	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agricultural	3.8%	0.3%	3.7%	0.3%	2.6%	0.0%
Professional	5.7%	12.3%	2.2%	2.0%	4.2%	8.6%
Domestic and Personal	30.5%	42.7%	23.4%	84.9%	23.1%	48.6%
Trade and Transportation	32.3%	22.0%	25.5%	2.7%	39.0%	18.8%
Manufacturing and Mechanical	27.7%	22.7%	45.2%	10.1%	31.1%	24.0%

SOURCES: E. Kimbark MacColl, The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1885-1915 (Portland: The Georgian Press Company, 1976), p. 226; and U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900, Vols. 10-13, Multnomah County, Oregon.

school teachers. Unless the person emigrated as a child, as did Matilda Olson and Jennie Cole,¹⁷ the immigrant did not have the opportunity to learn English and American history at the level necessary to obtain a teaching certificate. Of the thirteen Nordic teachers listed in the 1900 Census, ten were American born and the other three had emigrated by the age of twelve. The second-generation females were less prone to go into service than the immigrants, a phenomena noted in several immigrant novels such as Willa Cather's My Antonia and O Pioneers! An increase in the second-generation trade and transportation occupations was largely due to the tendency for second-generation Nordics to work in the clerical and retail trades, also largely

¹⁷ Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900, pp. 13:67A 119A.

dependent on a knowledge of English.¹⁸ In manufacturing and mechanical services, occupations included carpenter, painter and miner. Miscellaneous laborer and servant were the occupations represented by the most workers of both immigrant and second-generation status. For immigrants, the next most popular jobs were carpenter, sawmill laborer and longshoreman; the second-generation, however, realized the change to store clerk, dressmaker and office clerk.

There were few enterprises geared especially for the Nordic community between the years 1870 and 1920. A series of hotels sprang up boasting names such as Scandia House (1877), Scandinavian Hotel (1880) and Stockholm House (1890), but none lasted more than a year or two, and the Scandinavians did not necessarily stay in any of them. Charles Peterson, for example, boarded at the Europe Hotel, while F. M. Hansen lived at the St. Charles Hotel rather than the Scandinavian Hotel. Two Scandinavian pubs, the Scandinavian Beer Hall, run by David Lundblat, and the Scandinavian Saloon, run by L. Perman, also disappeared within a year or two. Many of the Nordics who owned stores specialized in Scandinavian food, as did N. G. Wingren (1890) with lutefisk, herring, and German sausage,¹⁹ or Fred Waxborn's Swedish Delicatessen.²⁰ The early century saw the Scandinavian Book

¹⁸Hutchinson, Immigrants and Their Children, p. 180.

¹⁹Ernst Skarstedt, Oregon och Washington (Portland: Bröstrom & Skarstedts Förlag, 1890), p. 329.

²⁰Portland City Directory, 1917 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., 1917), p. 118.

Store & Bazaar, and there was both a Norwegian Importing Company and the New Scandinavian Importing Company.²¹ A Scandinavian-American Bank, offshoot of those in Seattle and Ballard, was organized in January of 1908,²² but faced the major problem of all the ethnic oriented services: there simply weren't enough Nordics to support them, or more specifically, Nordics who maintained their ethnicity. In 1917, the Scandinavian-American Bank became the State Bank of Portland.²³

According to most theories, the Nordics ought not to have had much difficulty in moving up in social and economic position. The fair-complexioned Nordic physically conformed to the "ideal" type of American; they were culturally similar to the "core culture" of Anglo-Saxon America;²⁴ they were not handicapped, as were other groups, by color or religion. Contemporary accounts claimed that Scandinavians had a passion for individual freedom, bold venturesomeness, caution and conservatism, steadiness, patience, firmness, determination, thrift, health, religion and a sense of family.²⁵ From high on this

²¹ Oregon Posten (Portland) 8 May 1912, p. 8; Portland City Directory, 1917, p. 856; and Ernst Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning (Seattle: Washington Printing Co., 1911), pp. 180-181.

²² Portland City Directory, 1909 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., 1909), p. 155.

²³ Oregon Posten 27 June 1917, p. 5.

²⁴ Noel Judson Chrisman, Ethnic Influence on Urban Groups: The Danish Americans (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1975), p. 20.

²⁵ Dubuar Scrapbook 79, Northwest Collection, University of Washington Suzallo Library, Seattle, Washington, p. 26.

noble pedestal, Scandinavians were thought to be unusually assimilable because they would fit in so well with the general populace.

In Portland, the Nordics "fit in," but those who possessed social and economic standing within the city were generally those who had emigrated as children or youths, married an American or someone of another ethnic background, or were second-generation. William and Andrew Friberg of Friberg Brothers, for example, emigrated from Sweden at the ages of two and five, respectively; their company built forty-two buildings in Portland including the Hotel Seward and the Elks Building.²⁶ Johan Poulsen of Inman-Poulsen Lumber Manufacturing Company married a German.²⁷ Conrad P. Olson, a lawyer, was born in Wisconsin.²⁸ N. J. Blagen, the Danish lumber manager, emigrated at the age of twelve; he owned the Blagen Block. The family was wealthy enough to afford a live-in maid, a Finnish immigrant girl.²⁹ Simon Benson married an American. August Erickson married a German. Each of these men fit the pattern of Nordic immigrant mobility in Portland. Because the Nordic population was small, ambitious Nordics had to reach out to the general populace outside the Nordic community; this

²⁶ Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, pp. 176-177.

²⁷ Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900, 12:231A.

²⁸ Joseph Gaston, Portland, Its History and Builders. 3 vols. (Portland: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911), 3:400-403, 435-436; and Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, p. 144.

²⁹ Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900, 11:184B.

entailed some form of adjustment, which was easier for those who were already acculturated to some degree, by early immigration, non-Nordic marriages, or second-generation Nordic descent.

The best-known Nordic immigrant in Portland history, Simon Benson, was born Simon Bergerson in Norway,³⁰ the son of a carpenter. After emigrating at age sixteen, Benson and members of his family changed the family name to Benson. In 1879, Benson and his first wife came to Oregon, where Benson proceeded to go broke three times in the logging business before becoming a multi-millionaire.³¹ He built the Benson Hotel in Portland, managing it himself when it began losing money. In a short time he made the hotel a success, and sold it in 1913 for about \$1 million.³² Among his civic activities was the donation of \$100,000 to the Portland School District, which enabled the foundation of Benson Polytech.³³ Benson, a strict prohibitionist, was so incensed over his loggers' "Blue Mondays," he donated ornamental brass streetside water fountains to the city because there was no place to get a drink of water other than in store, restaurants or saloons.³⁴ He bought up the land around Multnomah and Wahkeena Falls, and donated

³⁰Benson's birthplace is listed as Washington State in the 1900 Census. See Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900, 12:145A.

³¹Bergmann, Americans from Norway, p. 121.

³²Stewart H. Holbrook, "Simon Benson, The All-Steam Bunyan," Oregonian (Portland) 12 May 1935, magazine section, p. 4.

³³Bergmann, Americans from Norway, p. 121.

³⁴Holbrook, "Simon Benson," p. 4.

the property to the public as parks.³⁵ Benson not only backed the proposed Columbia River Highway, he donated a mile of paved road from the Multnomah County line to Cascade Locks.³⁶ Opinions vary on Simon Benson. For his many acts of philanthropy and leadership in Portland, 17 August 1915 was set aside as Simon Benson Day at the Pan American Fair in San Francisco, and Benson was honored as Oregon's First Citizen.³⁷ While some people hailed him as "Portland's multi-millionaire capitalist, philanthropist, good roads apostle and hotel owner,"³⁸ others felt Benson used his wealth and power to control public officials.³⁹

The second of Portland's famous Nordics was never honored for his deeds, but he grew quite wealthy in a true American Dream fashion. August Erickson owned the most colorful and notorious saloon of Portland's entire history. Born in Finland, Erickson went to sea at an early age. In 1876, the eighteen-year-old jumped ship in Astoria, was briefly engaged in the saloon business there, and later came to

³⁵ Fred Lockley, History of the Columbia River Valley From the Dalles to the Sea, 3 vols. (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1928), 3:92.

³⁶ Scrapbook 45, Oregon Historical Society Library, Portland, Oregon, p. 34.

³⁷ Lockley, History of the Columbia River Valley, 2:93; and Scrapbook 45, p. 182.

³⁸ Scrapbook 60, Oregon Historical Society Library, Portland, Oregon, p. 93.

³⁹ Scrapbook 45, p. 33.

Portland.⁴⁰ His original establishment of the 1880s was small, but there was nothing modest about the grandiose saloon on Second and Burnside Streets. It covered nearly a city block and boasted a horse-shoe shaped, 684 lineal foot bar, a concert stage and a grand pipe organ.⁴¹ There was a women's orchestra, protected by an electric-charged railing; the entire second floor was a gambling hall.⁴² In its early days, Erickson's once hosted one of "the most sensational religious meetings ever staged in the city," because it was the only available place large enough.⁴³ When the 1894 Flood inundated the saloon, Erickson chartered and stocked a houseboat, moored it to the center of Burnside Street, and opened business. Men rowed, rafted and even paddled big fir logs to get to the floating saloon, and some never left until the waters receded.⁴⁴ Erickson's was big, it was bawdy, but it was also more than just a saloon to the transient population of all nationalities who frequented the place. The saloon offered "A Dainty Lunch" big enough to satisfy the hungriest customer. Roast beef, slices of bread an inch and a half thick, homemade mustard and sausage were all familiar to American clientele, but true to his

⁴⁰ Scrapbook 45, p. 33.

⁴¹ Stewart H. Holbrook, "The Longest Bar," Far Corner: A Personal View of the Pacific Northwest (New York: Ballantine Books, 1952), pp. 73, 74.

⁴² Scrapbook 257, p. 186.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Holbrook, "The Longest Bar," p. 77; and MacColl, Shaping of a City, p. 170.

Finnish heritage, Erickson's Dainty Lunch also offered knäckebröd (Swedish hardtack), Scandinavian cheeses, pickled herring, and lute-fisk at Christmas. The lunch was free.⁴⁵ The deed was splendid advertising for Erickson's, but it also had a certain humanitarian angle. One could address letters to foot-loose friends in care of Erickson's, because generally that person would eventually turn up there. The establishment often held hundreds of letters waiting to be claimed.⁴⁶ Erickson's business and wealth were ruined in the 1920s with the advent of prohibition, and the Finn served frequent jail terms for selling liquor surreptitiously until his death in 1925. At the time of his demise, a contemporary paper wrote primly, "At best the place August Erickson kept was a brothel, and at its worst it was an inspiration to rage and crime."⁴⁷ What the paper overlooked was Erickson's aspects as a post office, free lunch counter and "Working-man's Club"⁴⁸ for Portland's waterfront population.

Politics was another field in which a man could become prominent, and in Portland, politics was a field in which the Nordics assimilated quickly. Prior to 1850, many Scandinavian immigrants, especially Norwegians, followed the Democratic Party. The Civil War and slavery issue moved them to the Republican Party until well after the turn of

⁴⁵Holbrook, "The Longest Bar," p. 75.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 74.

⁴⁷Scrapbook 257, p. 188.

⁴⁸Holbrook, "The Longest Bar," p. 77.

the century.⁴⁹ Many Norwegians who came from the Midwest during the period of agrarian unrest in the 1890s brought with them strong Populist sympathies. The second-generation Scandinavians tended to support Progressivism and liberalism at the turn of the century.⁵⁰

In the 1870s, Fridrichsen complained that Oregon Scandinavians had two notable shortcomings -- they were weak in church attendance and too many of them were Democrats.⁵¹ By the 1880s, Portland was Republican; between 1885 and 1915, Portland was over 80 percent Republican in registration. The city had a long tradition of "personalized politics," where decisions made were often based on personal relationships rather than the merits of the issue.⁵² Most of the prominent Nordics such as Emil C. Jørgensen, owner of Miller & Company and the Hotel Lennox, and Carl E. Swanson, superintendent of Portland Linseed Oil Mill, and second-generation Nordics such as Herbert J. Anderson, president of the H. J. Anderson Lumber Company, were Republican. One of the few Nordic Democrats was Gustaf Wilson, an 1844 immigrant Finn who served as Russian vice-consul in Portland from 1883 to 1901; but even Wilson joined the Republicans after McKinley became

⁴⁹ Laurence M. Larson, "The Norwegian Element in the Northwest," American Historical Review, 40 (October 1934): 77.

⁵⁰ Bergmann, Americans from Norway, p. 213.

⁵¹ Skandinaven (Chicago) 15 May 1872, quoted in Bjork, West of the Great Divide, pp. 311-312.

⁵² MacColl, Shaping of a City, p. 7.

president.⁵³ By the late 1880s, there was a Scandinavian Republican Club in Portland, with C. F. Pearson as its president.⁵⁴

As with the professional occupations, most of the Nordic politicians had emigrated as children, were second-generation, or married to non-Nordic spouses. Iver Fretland, a Norwegian married to an American, had at one time been a fisherman. In the 1870s, Fretland was a member of the State Legislature.⁵⁵ F. W. Hanson was born in Wisconsin of Danish parents; in 1898, he represented the Ninth Ward in the Portland city council.⁵⁶ Conrad P. Olson, a lawyer born in Wisconsin, was a member of the State Legislature in 1912, and ran for State Senator in 1916.⁵⁷ Olaf Laurgaard emigrated from Norway at the age of five months. A consulting engineer, Laurgaard was city engineer of Portland in 1917, and a representative in the Oregon legislature 1917-1918.⁵⁸ The exception was Johan August Allman, who emigrated from Sweden at the age of twenty-seven. He went into the real estate business in Portland in the 1880s and ran for county assessor of

⁵³ Lockley, History of the Columbia River Valley, 2:74, 3:499; and Portrait and Biographical Record of Portland and Vicinity, Oregon (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1903), pp. 303-304.

⁵⁴ Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, p. 191.

⁵⁵ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 319; and Martin Ulvestad, Nordmændene i America, deres historie og Rekord, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: History Book Company's Forlag, 1907 and 1913), 1 (1907): 228.

⁵⁶ Portrait and Biographical Record, pp. 847-848.

⁵⁷ Oregon Posten 13 December 1921, p. 3; and Oregon Posten 25 October 1916, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Lockley, History of the Columbia River Valley, 3:292-297.

Multnomah County in 1889.⁵⁹

The rags-to-riches dream so inherent in American history had its base, and often was realized if the immigrant did not take the ideal literally and precisely. The average immigrant generally achieved a better scale of living in relation to the conditions in Europe. But it was usually the next generation who saw a rise in their social and economic position. The immigrants who came as children and second-generation Nordic-Americans had the advantage of language, culture and education all rooted in America and American ideals.

⁵⁹ Skarstedt, Oregon och Washington, pp. 215-216.

CHAPTER IV

FAMILY, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The Americanization process for the Nordic immigrant in Portland tended to be swift and relatively easy. By the time Nordic immigrants reached the West Coast, the majority had already acclimated to American life in the Midwest, and had decided to stay in their new homeland. Through the succeeding years, traditions carried from the Old Country tended to become a bit nostalgic as the immigrants and their descendants blended the old and the new.

The nuclear family was one of the most vital perpetrators of ethnic culture in America. Within the private confines of home life, traces of ethnic culture remained long after the individual or family was outwardly Americanized. The assimilation process varied: some children of European parentage never learned their heritage language; others spoke their parents' native tongue only in the home; still others learned English only when they came of school age. Many traditional Nordic holidays were celebrated in the new land: Misdummer's Festival, St. Lucia's Day, Norwegian Consitution Day. Traditional recipes were handed down through the generations long after all other aspects of ethnicity had vanished.

Very little in the way of Nordic ethnicity could be found in Portland until the 1870s. Mostly single men lived within the city boundaries; families tended to settle on farms in outlying areas. Throughout the first fifty years, Nordics tended to be older than

those newly arrived on the shores of America, falling between the ages of thirty and thirty-four rather than twenty-one to twenty-four. Like other European immigrants, Nordics tended to work their way west, spending time in the various states and territories. Portland's entire foreign-born population had the greatest number of people in the ages twenty-four to thirty-four bracket.¹

Like other European immigrants, Nordics tended to marry within their own nationality. The language barrier slowed intermarriage between the immigrant and American. The greatest tendency to intermarry, therefore, came from office workers, store clerks and tool-makers, because their occupations required a ready knowledge of English.² Strangely enough, the 1870 Census for Portland shows the greatest number of Nordic immigrants had American-born spouses. These people were probably very early immigrants, before the male to female ratio from the Nordic countries began to even out. By 1880, however, the pattern of mutual nationality marriages was established; 53.6 percent of married Nordic immigrants married spouses of their own nationality, and another 11.3 percent married people of one of the other Nordic countries. Among the 21.7 percent who married Americans, A. Oleson was a blacksmith, Iver Fretland owned a hotel, E. H. Anderson's husband was a notary public and Carrie Jones' husband was a physician.³

¹Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, p. 510.

²Ljungmark, Swedish Exodus, p. 126.

³Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1880, pp. 229D, 231A, 266B, 283D.

The census record for 1900 is even more marked: 71 percent married someone of their own Nordic nationality, while only 8 percent married Americans.⁴ Throughout the first fifty years, Germans were the most likely group to which Nordics married, in Portland as well as nationwide. Marriage patterns for the second-generation were more balanced than those of their immigrant parents. In 1900, for example, 30 percent of the Nordic stock married Nordic immigrants, 19 percent married others of Nordic stock, and 42 percent married Americans.⁵ If a person-by-person study could be done, many of these marriages might reflect how "ethnic" the Nordic spouses had been raised by their immigrant parents.

Decade by decade, even the names of the Nordics and Nordic stock became more and more Americanized. Inadvertently or by choice, immigrants often changed their names to an American equivalent. Haakon became Hawkin, Karl became Charles, Peder became Peter and Johan was changed to John. While names like Sarah, Mary, Hannah and John remained popular, Oscar, Mathias, Andreas and Soren were gradually replaced by more "American" names such as Wilbur, George, Sidney and Sterling. The Alvidas, Christines and Sophias gradually gave way to Myrtles, Claras and Julias. By 1900, there were few children of Nordic parentage listed in the census with very Nordic names such as Hjalmar, Odin or Ingeborg.

⁴Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1900.

⁵Ibid.

Once the Nordic community in Portland reached a more sizeable number and families predominated, more ethnic social events and organizations occurred. The earliest social event of a Nordic persuasion was the 1873 Scandinavian Society Ball.⁶ By 1890, there was a sufficient population of Norwegians to generate a Seventeenth of May celebration in honor of Norway's constitution.⁷ Miscellaneous forms of culture were constantly arriving in Portland, although much of it may have been unappreciated outside the Nordic community. In 1893, Miss Eugenie Wohlmuth, "the noted German reader" gave two readings from the works of Henrik Ibsen.⁸ Two Swedish opera singers arrived in 1909 to perform numbers by Swedish composers as well as Verdi and Mozart.⁹ The Norwegian Captain Roald Amundsen lectured on the discovery of the South Pole in 1913, complete with moving pictures.¹⁰

The Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905 not only brought a marked prosperity to Portland, but also recognized the Scandinavians. Each day of the Exposition was dedicated to one or two famous people, clubs

⁶ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 333.

⁷ Nordvesten (St. Paul) 17 April 1890, quoted in Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 617.

⁸ Oregonian 5 March 1893, p. 1.

⁹ Oregon Posten 14 July 1909, p. 8.

¹⁰ Oregon Posten 2 April 1913, p. 5. Amundsen commanded the Norwegian sloop Gjøa, which completed the legendary Northwest Passage in August of 1905. He planted the Norwegian flag at the South Pole in December of 1911. See Larsen, A History of Norway, p. 515.

or states, and 29 July was Scandinavian Day. Like so many of the "special" days, Scandinavian Day was little more than a name. Besides a speech of welcome given by the governor of Oregon who "spoke eloquently on the great part the Scandinavian people had played in the development of the northwest," only a concert in the evening celebrated the day.¹¹

The establishment of fraternal, benevolent, political and ethnic organizations was a sign of growth within the Nordic community. Not only did the ethnic club or lodge provide a means of recreation, a continuation of tradition and a sense of belonging for the immigrants, it served to blend and unite the older and newer immigrants.¹² Portland had a number of Nordic fraternal, benevolent, political and ethnic organizations, but few had much strength within the community and many disappeared altogether within a few years. In this way, Portland was somewhat unusual: due to the city's homogeneous character few of the foreign ethnic and national organizations remained potent forces within the city for more than a generation.¹³ In addition, the different Nordic nationalities were reluctant to work together despite their cultural and geographic similarities. Old World animosities lived on in the United States. As the Oregonian remarked in 1905:

¹¹Oregon Journal (Portland) 29 July 1905, p. 1.

¹²Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 544.

¹³Dodds, Oregon, p. 117.

. . . the Norwegians consider the Swedes too aristocratic, the Swedes have a tendency to look down upon the Norwegians as a race of fishermen who are without distinction, while the Danes, despite their own virtually dependent national position, regard both Swedes and Norwegians with amused tolerance.¹⁴

Language also posed difficulties in communication between the Nordic nationalities. Although Norwegians and Danes sometimes joined in efforts to establish organizations on the basis of their similarities in history and written language, they were an exception. Swede-Finns often dropped out of Finnish organizations because of the language barrier, yet were still regarded as being different from the Swedes, who insisted they were Finns.¹⁵ Portland's Nordics, however, could not afford to indulge in the various differences among the Nordic nationalities, if there were to be any organizations at all; especially in the early years, there simply were not enough people.

The purposes of the various Nordic organizations differed. Music and literary societies were popular throughout the American West, and considered signposts of culture and refinement in what were often raw, rough towns. For the Nordic immigrants, music and literary societies brought beloved authors and composers to the new land. Temperance and political groups, and fraternal and benevolent societies were also popular products of this era. Although Prohibition did not

¹⁴Oregonian 23 July 1905, p. 39.

¹⁵Anders M. Myhrman, "The Finland-Swedish Immigrants in the USA," Old Friends - Strong Ties, ed. Vilho Niitemaa, et al. (Turku: Institute for Migration, 1976), p. 186.

go into effect until 1920, temperance societies had been active in America since early in the nineteenth century. Ethnic political groups connected the immigrant to American politics. Ethnic fraternal and benevolent societies, often patterned after the Masonic order and other secret societies, provided a sense of community and companionship, as well as any necessary aid in the form of sick benefits or in case of calamity. Portland had examples of all these groups.

Few of the dozens of Nordic fraternal, benevolent, political or ethnic societies existed for more than a few years, be they Scandinavian oriented or established by a particular nationality. As can be



Figure 2. Graph showing growth and decrease in number of Nordic societies in Portland. Based on data collected from Portland City Directory, 1870-1980.

seen in Figure 1, the number of Nordic societies grew dramatically until 1910, when the total began to drop until the 1940s. Scandinavian groups, both secular and non-secular, tended either to dissolve or split along national and language lines. The handful of clubs and lodges that survived several decades were without exception sub-lodges of national organizations.

The first secular society organized by Nordics was the Scandinavian Society of Portland, established about 1873. There was a mixture of Swedes, Norwegians and Danes in the club, and even members such as Iver Fretland, Frank Hornstrom and Julius Sorensen, whose wives were not Nordics.¹⁶ The Society gave a Christmas Ball in 1873, had a singing society and a relief committee.¹⁷ It disappeared sometime in the early 1880s. Few Scandinavian oriented clubs lasted any longer. The Scandinavian Relief Association with Frank Abraham as agent, existed between 1888 and the mid-1890s.¹⁸ Valhalla, another Scandinavian organization established in 1889 with twenty-three members,¹⁹ was never even listed in the City Directories. However, the club had a men's singing group called Luren, whose members were

¹⁶Portland City Directory, 1874 (Portland: S. J. McCormick, 1874), p. 32; Portland City Directory, 1880 (Portland: S. J. McCormick, 1880), p. 44; and Bureau of the Census, Census manuscript, 1880, pp. 231A, 287D, 332B.

¹⁷Portland City Directory, 1880, p. 44.

¹⁸Portland City Directory, 1889 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1889), p. 470.

¹⁹Skarstedt, Oregon och Washington, p. 214.

mainly Norwegians and Swedes.²⁰ The Norden Scandinavian Society existed for about four years in the 1890s.²¹ The International Order of Good Templars had a chapter in the Scandinavian community, Svithjod 3. Organized in June of 1905, Svithjod was one of the few organizations which admitted both men and women. Although it was technically a Nordic organization, Svithjod's members were mainly Swedes.²² The strength of the Scandinavian Brotherhood of America (Skandinaviska Brödraförbundet af Amerika) was symbolized by Mjolnir, Thor's hammer, but the Portland chapter of the lodge was listed in the City Directories from its creation in 1909 to 1916.²⁴ Only two Scandinavian lodges survived nearly forty years. The first was a sub-lodge of the American fraternal and benevolent lodge, Knights of Pythias. Scandia Lodge No. 26 of the Knights of Pythias was organized in 1886 and existed until the mid-1920s.²⁵ The second was also a sub-lodge of an American fraternal and benevolent lodge: Foresters of America, Scandia Court 7. Organized in 1892 by C. W. Helmer who had been a member of another lodge, Scandia Court 7 established a library

²⁰ Ibid.; and Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, p. 129.

²¹ Portland City Directory, 1896 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1896), p. 92.

²² Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, p. 128.

²³ Historisk Utveckling af Skandinaviska Brödraförbundet af Amerika (Jamestown, New York: Bergwall Printing Co., n.d.), p. 222.

²⁴ Portland City Directory, 1913 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1913), p. 87.

²⁵ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 616.

for its members, and operated until the 1930s.²⁶

The organizations established by Danes were few in number, but among the most enduring. The Danish Aid Society (Den Danske Forening) was the second Nordic organization established in Portland, and the first of the Nordic national enclaves.²⁷ A benevolent society which aided a much larger area than just Portland, the Society was active from the 1870s through about 1945, making it the longest running Nordic organization of the period between 1870 and 1920. Also organized by Portland Danes were local chapters of the Danish Brotherhood and Danish Sisterhood, both nationwide organizations. Established after the turn of the century, there were two lodges of the Brotherhood by 1913, one which met downtown and one which met in Albina.²⁸ An offshoot of the chapter was a Danish Singing Society organized about the same time. Both the Brotherhood and the Sisterhood remain active today. Perhaps because the Danes were not fragmented among half a dozen ethnic organizations, and had the additional support of a secure, nationwide series of lodges, the Danish clubs had the strength and unity to continue.

The Finns and Swede-Finns had few organizations before the 1940s, and those that were established before 1920 were of a political rather

²⁶ Oregon Posten 10 November 1915, p. 2.

²⁷ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 616.

²⁸ Portland City Directory, 1916 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1916), p. 122.

than fraternal or benevolent nature. The first society was the Finns' Temperance Association, begun in the mid-1890s, but listed in the City Directories for only one year.²⁹ Temperance societies were very popular among the Finnish immigrants. The later period of immigration coupled with the language difference created a barrier between the Finns and Scandinavians. The saloon was a popular meeting place for Finns as well as other newly arrived immigrants when there were no clubs or churches, but it also fostered a Finnish reputation for drinking and brawling. This stereotype was so strongly held by Americans, that when historian Carl Wittke described the Finns, he wrote quite seriously that "the Finns' greatest handicap has been an addiction to strong drink."³⁰

Another Finnish stereotype, that of being ranting red socialists, was given form by the Finnish Workers Society, organized in Portland about 1911 with Mathias Heimo as president,³¹ and the Swedish-Finnish Socialist Club, organized in 1914 with fourteen members.³² What many people have overlooked is that the Finnish socialist clubs had a social and educational function as well as a political function. The Swedish-Finnish Socialist Club, for example, held a masquerade in October of

²⁹ Portland City Directory, 1896, p. 90.

³⁰ Carl Wittke, We Who Built America: The Saga of the Immigrant (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University, 1939), p. 290.

³¹ Portland City Directory, 1912 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1912), p. 105.

³² Oregon Posten 25 November 1914, p. 8.

1916.³³ The clubs helped maintain Finnish ethnicity. Children were taught proper Finnish in schools sponsored by many of the socialist locals, in an attempt to combat "Finglish." The socialist locals were seen by many as contributing towards the maintenance of Finnish culture in America, and were a "refreshing change" to the "tedious and rigid social life provided by the churches and temperance societies."³⁴

Norwegians, like Danes, had trouble organizing and maintaining an ethnic society until they established a chapter of a national enclave. A literary society organized in 1886 was the first Norwegian club in Portland. It was named Freya by its ten members.³⁵ Minerva, a Norwegian fraternal society, appears only two years in the City Directories.³⁶ A Norwegian Double Quartet for men was organized around the turn of the century, and probably took part in the annual Pacific Coast Norwegian Singers' Association (Pacifikystens Norsk Sangerforbund). The Sons of Norway Grieg Hall Lodge No. 15 was the one enduring Norwegian club in Portland. The Sons of Norway was originally a sick benefit society. First established in Minneapolis in 1895, the lodge soon established chapters across the United States. The Portland lodge, organized in 1910, had fifty-five charter members. In 1927,

³³ Oregon Posten 18 October 1916, p. 8.

³⁴ Toveri Kummenvuotias, 1907-1917: Muistojulkaisu (Astoria: Toveri Press, 1917), p. 91, quoted in Paul George Hummasti, "Finnish Radicals in Astoria, Oregon, 1904-1940" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Oregon, 1979), p. 6.

³⁵ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 616.

³⁶ Portland City Directory, 1896, p. 92.

the Sons of Norway and the Daughters of Norway (Døtre av Norge) Lodge Fylke No. 6 merged into one organization which is active today, with about 1,000 members.³⁷

The Swedes were the largest Nordic ethnic group in Portland during the period between 1870 and 1920, and among the most heavily represented in the Scandinavian groups. The first Swedish society in Portland was the Swedish Brothers (Svenska Bröderna), organized in 1888. Renamed Linnea in 1892, the club was a sick benefit society, supplying a form of insurance to its members in case of illness, unemployment or accident.³⁸ Linnea was also a social organization, celebrating the traditional Midsommar Fest, as well as the American holiday of Halloween. It also had a library.³⁹ Swedish Society Nordstjernen⁴⁰ was a short-lived organization established at the turn of the century.⁴¹ The all-male Swedish Singing Club (Svenska Sångarförbundet), later named Columbia, was begun in 1905.⁴² Columbia was the first Swedish singing club in Portland. Not only did the club sing in

³⁷ Scrapbook, Sons of Norway Grieg Hall Lodge No. 15, Portland, Oregon, (pp. 2, 13-15, 45).

³⁸ Oregon Posten 10 November 1915, p. 2.

³⁹ Oregon Posten 27 June 1909, p. 8; Oregon Posten 27 October 1915, p. 8; and Skarstedt, Oregon och Washington, p. 221.

⁴⁰ Properly spelled Nordstjärnen, meaning the North Star.

⁴¹ Portland City Directory, 1901-1902 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1901), p. 89.

⁴² Ernst Skarstedt, Svensk-Amerikanska Folket i Helg och Söcken (Stockholm: Björck & Börjesson, 1917), pp. 142-143.

various festivals, including the concert for the Lewis and Clark Exposition Scandinavian Day in 1905, and Seattle's Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition four years later,⁴³ but it also sponsored dance groups, concerts, and literary events.⁴⁴ The Swedish-American National League (Svenska Nationalforbundet) was organized in 1907, lasting until about 1913.⁴⁵ Another of the more stable clubs was the Swedish Society Nobel No. 184 of the Vasa Order of America. Established in 1911 by Alfred Green, the Portland lodge was one of three hundred lodges spread across the United States. By 1915, the Portland chapter had two hundred members.⁴⁶ Eventually, Vasa grew to three lodges. Vasa, as did other Nordic clubs, celebrated the traditional Midsommarflykt, where everyone was to come in their Swedish national costumes, and Julfest, as well as an America "Hard Times Party."⁴⁷ As with other sub-lodges of nationwide societies, Vasa remains active today.

The Nordics who participated in the Nordic clubs and lodges tended to be those who married spouses of their own nationality. While there were those like Arthur Carlson and Claes W. Swenson who joined

⁴³Oregon Journal 29 July 1905, p. 1; and Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, p. 129.

⁴⁴Oregon Posten 10 February 1909, p. 3; and Oregon Posten 7 February 1912, p. 8.

⁴⁵Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, p. 128.

⁴⁶Oregon Posten 10 November 1915, p. 2.

⁴⁷Oregon Posten 9 June 1915, p. 8; Oregon Posten 20 December 1916, p. 8; and Oregon Posten 27 September 1916, p. 8.

Swedish as well as American clubs,⁴⁸ the majority of Nordics who belonged to American organizations were either American-born or married to an American, European, or another Nordic nationality. Elof Johnson, who was a Swedish tailor and married to an American, belonged to the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and the Royal Arcanum.⁴⁹ Olaf Laurgaard, who emigrated from Norway at the age of five months and also married an American, belonged to the Sons of Norway Lodge as well as the Elks, Chamber of Commerce, Multnomah Amateur Athletic Club, Laurelhurst Club and Portland Club.⁵⁰ Anker P. Henningsen, a Dane whose wife was English, was a Mason and a member of the Scottish Rite.⁵¹ Arthur Wilson, who served as the Swedish-Norwegian vice-consul in Portland, was a member of the Arlington Club.⁵²

The other vehicle for ethnic continuity besides the Nordic clubs and lodges was the foreign language press. While such newspapers inhibited total assimilation into the mainstream American life, they also provided a connection between immigrant and American by supplying local and national news in the immigrant's language, including

⁴⁸ Arthur Carlson was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, and married a Swedish-American. He was a member of the Woodsmen of the World, Linnea, Swedish Nationalförbundet, and the Artisans. Claes W. Swenson belonged to the Scandinavian Brotherhood and Woodsmen of the World. Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, pp. 171-172, 195-196.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 178-179.

⁵⁰ Lockley, History of the Columbia River Valley, 3:292-297.

⁵¹ Ibid., 2:510-515.

⁵² Skarstedt, Oregon och Washington, p. 230.

advertisements for store and professional services.

The foreign language press provided one of the great schisms among the Nordic nationalities in America. While Danes and Norwegians share a common "Dano-Norwegian" literary language which evolved during the nearly four and a half centuries of Danish rule,⁵³ Swedish, Icelandic and Finnish are entities each unto themselves. Many newspapers began publication and failed because there were not enough people of a specific language to support the ventures.

Between 1870 and 1920, at least twelve Nordic language newspapers were published. As shown in Figure 3, the Nordic language press in Portland was a precarious business. Three papers lasted over twelve years, while the other nine folded within three years. Their failure lay partially in poor financial support and poor journalism, but primarily because there was not a sufficient population of any one Nordic nationality, with the exception of the Swedes, to support these ventures.

Stillehavsposten was the first Nordic language newspaper published in Portland. Established in 1888 by J. P. Holm, a former book dealer, the Norwegian-Danish language newspaper was sharply criticized for its frightful literary style. Endre Cederbergh claimed Holm did not even know the language in which he was attempting to publish, and dismissed the paper as simply "laughable." Stillehavsposten ceased

⁵³ Reports of the Immigration Commission, Vol. 1: Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, p. 270.



Figure 3. Graph showing growth and decrease in number of Nordic language newspapers in Portland. Based on data collected from Portland City Directory, 1870-1980.

publication about 1891.⁵⁴

The next venture was The Vidnesbyrdet (The Testimony), originally a semi-monthly, then a weekly journal of Norwegian-Danish Methodism for the Pacific Coast.⁵⁵ The paper began publication about a year before Portland's Norwegian-Danish Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1884. The Reverend John L. Ericksen was the minister of the church as well as the editor of The Vidnesbyrdet. About 1891, the same publisher began The Vor Tid, a short lived publication which

⁵⁴ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 612.

⁵⁵ Arlow William Andersen, The Salt of the Earth: A History of Norwegian-Danish Methodism in America (Nashville: The Parthenon Press, 1962), p. 127.

disappeared from the City Directories by the next year,⁵⁶ while The Vidnesbyrdet lasted a few years into the twentieth century.

Several other newspapers had no better length of survival than did The Vor Tid. Demokraten, the first Swedish paper in Oregon, only published two issues in May of 1890. The Swedish newspaper Folkets Röst (The People's Voice) only printed one issue in 1892. Veckoblad was in publication from April to December of 1894, while Nordvestern, another Swedish newspaper, lasted from October of 1906 to April of 1907.⁵⁷ The monthly Norwegian paper Hjemmet was listed in the City Directories from 1895 to 1897; the weekly West Coast Scandinav was listed only in 1896, the Norwegian weekly Pacific Skandinav from 1897 to 1898. The only religious paper in Swedish was the monthly Harolden, organized in January of 1907 with the Reverend John Ovall as editor. Ovall was a Methodist minister, but the paper was geared as a non-sectarian religious newspaper.⁵⁸ The Pacific Skandinaven, one of the most lasting of the Nordic language newspapers, was a Norwegian weekly edited by Harold Lange. Begun about 1905, the paper continued publication until about 1920.⁵⁹ The third of the more enduring newspapers was the Swedish weekly, Oregon Posten. Organized in 1908 by F. W.

⁵⁶ Portland City Directory, 1892 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1892), p. 167.

⁵⁷ Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, pp. 119-120.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 120; and Portland City Directory, 1907 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1907), p. 171.

⁵⁹ Portland City Directory, 1905 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1905), p. 77.

Lonegren, the Oregon Posten was published by the Swedish Publishing & Printing Company.⁶⁰ Each issue gave bits of news about various Swedish provinces and places in Oregon, in addition to a special column devoted to local and national news. On each title page the paper boasted, "Oregon Posten is the only Swedish newspaper in Oregon and one of the Best Scandinavian advertising mediums on the Coast." Because it was the only Swedish newspaper in Oregon probably explains its longevity, for the Oregon Posten continued publication until the late 1930s.

The foreign language press underscored the effort to maintain the immigrants' heritage languages. By its very nature, the foreign language press raised the question of ethnicity and mixed loyalties, and was therefore subject to criticism, suspicion and prejudice after World War I began. Prejudice towards the Nordics in America was minimal until the advent of the war. The history of the Nordic immigrants in the Pacific Northwest is one of general tolerance and acceptance. There were petty slurs in the form of "Swensky" jokes complete with lisping accents, the stereotype of the stoic, slightly thickheaded Nordic and the condescending attitude of some American-born towards anyone who was unable to speak unaccented English. On the whole, however, the Swedes, Norwegians, Danes and Finns as ethnic and immigrant groups fit into the pattern of Oregon ideals.

The question of language had been an issue since the first non-

⁶⁰ Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, pp. 120-121.

English speaking immigrants stepped onto the shores of America. The older immigrants tended to retain their mother tongue, using English -- if they knew any -- only with those who could not understand the language. Younger immigrants and the second-generation were faced with the perplexity of two languages, often not learning English until they were of school age, taught European customs at home and American ways at school. It was confusing for the child, as if he were to be two people in one skin. One Finnish girl who faced this dilemma later remarked:

My mother has told me how she would often wake up in the middle of the night to find me crying in my sleep and trying to talk a mixture of English and Finnish. And then my mother would cry too, because she wanted to help me and could not.⁶¹

The problem of language often created a barrier between parent and child. As one observer wrote:

It is a tragedy for a mother and child not to be able to converse intimately with one another . . . Can you feel the heartache of that mother as she sees the child slip away into another world? . . . And can't you understand, too, that the child suffers a loss which it can ill afford?⁶²

Others felt that those who chose to come to America ought to put away their European ties and become Americans. The editor of Seattle's Washington Posten commented on the issue of speaking Norwegian at home:

⁶¹Kolehmainen, The Finns in America, p. 37.

⁶²Ibid.

I remember children in Trondhjem born of English and German parents who knew little or nothing of these languages; they became Norwegians and the same holds true here; let them become American.⁶³

Socialism was another aspect of "immigrant baggage." Many immigrants, especially Finns who arrived after the turn of the century, brought an allegiance to the Social Democratic Party. Finns, for example, felt oppressed under a foreign monarch; the Social Democratic Party was ousted from the Finnish Parliament in 1909 and the Russian Duma assumed all power.⁶⁴ In America, about 25 percent of the Finnish immigrants joined the Industrial Workers of the World, or the socialist and communist parties.⁶⁵

Portland had its own socialist and communist groups. The Scandinavian Socialist Party and Finnish Workers Society⁶⁶ were active prior to World War I. The Portland local of the socialist association ASSJ (American Suomalaisten Sosialistiosastojen Järjestö) was embroiled in the controversy over supporting the I.W.W. or the American Federation of Labor, resulting in the Portland local leaving the ASSJ.⁶⁷ Portland is not a city known for its radical politics, and the Oregon

⁶³ Washington Posten (Seattle) 24 June 1910, p. 3, quoted in Dahlie, "A Social History of Scandinavian Immigration," p. 70.

⁶⁴ Wargelin, Americanization of the Finns, pp. 56-58.

⁶⁵ Gary London, "The Finns in Politics," lecture at Randle Street Hall, Aberdeen, Washington, 23 November 1980.

⁶⁶ The Workers' Party was a legal offshoot of the underground Communist Party of America. Hummasti, "Finnish Radicals in Astoria," p. 239.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 136.

Posten, unlike some foreign language newspapers such as Astoria's Toveri, did not favor either the I.W.W. or any "andra radikala social-ister."⁶⁸ When the First World War broke out, Nordic socialists claimed that the war was morally wrong, and that it was "an imperial competition between capitalists for world markets."⁶⁹ The Scandinavian Socialist Local in Portland gave a lecture on "Christendom, Capitalism and War" soon after the outbreak of the war.⁷⁰

The reaction of the Nordic nationalities to the war in Europe varied, affecting American response to the ethnic groups. The Danes were very anti-German, given their nation's history of territorial clashes with Germany. Norwegians were evenly divided between Germany and Russia.⁷¹ Swedes and Finns tended to be pro-German. From the days of Peter the Great, Swedes had feared Russia, and Finland had had the uneasy position of buffer state between the two countries. Finns hoped for freedom from Russia by supporting a victorious Germany. From the viewpoint of their native histories, neither Swedes nor Finns could believe Russia was fighting for democracy and the rights of smaller nations.⁷² With this background, the Swedish language press was often critical of United States Foreign policy.⁷³ When the U.S. entered the

⁶⁸Oregon Posten 26 June 1912, p. 8.

⁶⁹Hummasti, "Finnish Radicals in Astoria," p. 164.

⁷⁰Oregon Posten 19 August 1914, p. 8.

⁷¹Furer, Scandinavians in America, p. 70.

⁷²Lindmark, Swedish America, p. 72.

⁷³Ibid., p. 78.

war on the side of the Russians in April of 1917, the situation changed abruptly and the foreign language newspapers grew silent.

The entire nation took a patriotic stand, and "one flag, one language" became the national motto. Nationalism called for the suppression of all American journals not printed in English. Most journals took a positive stand for American patriotism.⁷⁴ Oregon became known as the "volunteer state," and vigilante groups prowled Portland searching for dissidents, in the name of fervent patriotism.⁷⁵ The articles about the war in the Oregon Posten grew smaller and smaller, from two or three full columns in 1914 to barely half a column in 1916. There was less news on Germany and more emphasis on Greece, Italy or Rumania.

The Oregon Posten joined in the nationwide appeal to buy liberty bonds. Half page advertisements appeared in every issue after April of 1917 advocating the purchase of liberty bonds in forceful, unobtrusive tones. If one did not buy bonds, claimed the ads (in English), you would be "personally responsible for disaster . . . YOUR laxity in this respect imperils American soldiers . . . DO YOUR BIT, EVEN IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD IT;" "It is your duty! It will save lives! It will win this war!" "Tis Freedom's Call Lend Your All . . . It is your country's right to demand. It is your privilege and duty to respond."⁷⁶ Ethnic

⁷⁴ Andersen, Salt of the Earth, p. 236.

⁷⁵ O'Donnell, Portland, p. 54.

⁷⁶ Capitalization and punctuation are from the advertisements. Oregon Posten 17 October 1917, p. 3; Oregon Posten 9 January 1918, p. 7; and Oregon Posten 10 April 1918, p. 5.

lodges such as the Sons of Norway made a conscious effort to demonstrate loyalty by the purchase of Liberty Bonds and the promotion of the Red Cross.⁷⁷ Portland was not a city in which one could neglect one's patriotic duty. Louise Hunt, a pacifist librarian who quietly refused to buy liberty bonds finally resigned her job after a great deal of harassment and a long messy battle over the issue.⁷⁸ When Henrietta Johnson recalled this era from a vantage point of nearly sixty years, she observed:

The patriotic fervor that existed then was something that doesn't seem to exist at this time. The loyalty, the willingness to sacrifice, to give up, (because the soldiers were giving so much) was part of our lives.⁷⁹

Even multi-millionaire Simon Benson came under attack. In 1916, Eugene E. Smith, president of the Central Labor Council charged Benson with using his wealth to control politicians. At this time, Benson happened to be re-filing for American citizenship because his father's naturalization papers, completed when Benson was still a minor, had been burned. Smith used opportunity and climate of opinion to turn the entire issue of Benson's supposed misuse of power into a question of Benson's fitness for citizenship on the grounds that he had no "decent conception of the duties and responsibilities of a citizen."⁸⁰ Without the tense atmosphere of war and suspicion of all things not wholly

⁷⁷ Scrapbook, Sons of Norway Lodge, (p. 19).

⁷⁸ MacColl, Growth of a City, pp. 149-152.

⁷⁹ Johnson, interview, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Scrapbook 45, pp. 32-33.

American, Benson's supposed political manipulations would not have been dragged into his filing for citizenship, and even if it had, it would have been dismissed as irrelevant.

The patriotic fervor continued. An act of 6 October 1917 required all foreign language newspapers to file an accurate translation of all war articles printed in their pages. By May of 1918, the Oregon Posten was printing a sub-caption on all war articles: "True translation filed with the postmaster at Portland, Ore., on Oct. 6th 1917." In this same year, Theodore Roosevelt called for a ban on all foreign language newspapers.⁸¹ "There is no room," Roosevelt claimed, "for hyphenated Americanism."⁸²

The hyphenated-American attempted to prove their loyalty. In Portland, the Vasa Order gave a benefit for the soldiers from the club in honor of their bravery.⁸³ The Viking Bakery Company, run by A. Sanden, offered "Uncle Sam's Victory Bread."⁸⁴ Most of the Nordic churches began to use English in their services, even if it was only once a month, as a patriotic contribution.

When the war ended in November of 1918, celebrations were widespread, but the Treaty of Versailles horrified many Nordics. The

⁸¹ Lindmark, Swedish America, p. 104.

⁸² Wargelin, Americanization of the Finns, p. 16.

⁸³ Oregon Posten 11 September 1918, p. 8.

⁸⁴ Oregon Posten 26 June 1918, p. 4.

intent, it seemed, was to annihilate Germany and build up Russia.⁸⁵ The Finns had won their independence during the turmoil of the Bolshevik Revolution, and felt vulnerable. Sweden's vulnerability was directly related to Finland's. But opposition to the war or to the treaty was not an advisable sentiment to express in the post-war era. Immigrants in America, regardless of their origin, were faced with a slogan of "100 percent Americanism."⁸⁶ The patriotic hysteria would take a few more years to die away, soon to be lost in the worries of the Great Depression.

The nuclear family, ethnic clubs and lodges, and Nordic language newspapers were all vital perpetrators of nineteenth century ethnic culture in America. Between 1890 and 1910, Nordic ethnicity flourished in Portland through the clubs, lodges, newspapers and churches. Several factors led to the temporary decline of Portland's Nordic culture. By 1910, the second-generation had come to maturity and were in turn raising third-generation Nordic stock who had little or no exposure to their distant heritage culture. Secondly, the advent of the First World War and Oregonians' intense, patriotic reaction to wartime tended to discourage interest in European ancestry. By 1920, the number of Nordic societies and newspapers was rapidly decreasing, not to be revived for nearly twenty years.

⁸⁵ Lindmark, Swedish America, p. 129.

⁸⁶ Wittke, We Who Built America, p. 528.

CHAPTER V

CHURCH LIFE

The church was a central institution in immigrant life. Whether or not the motive for emigration to America had been religious persecution, churches were the first organizations established in immigrant communities. They provided more than simply a place to worship. For the Nordics as well as other immigrants, the church was a place to train the young in both the Bible and cultural traditions. The church was a community service center for the sick and elderly. It was a place to baptize, marry and bury, and a social center for newly arrived immigrants, in which they could find others of their own nationality, language and religion.¹ In the frontier life of America, the church was often called upon to administer far more than simply spiritual aid and comfort.

The state church in all five Nordic countries was the Lutheran Church. Regardless of professed denomination, membership or attendance, every adult had to pay dues to the State Lutheran Church. A certain Nordic temperament developed out of this union of church and state. Unlike the American Calvinistic mentality, where one's faith and devotion were accepted and measured by one's actions and church attendance,

¹Fogelquist, Albin, Milton Nesvig and Roland Swanson, "Congregational Life and the Scandinavian Heritage," panel discussion at Pacific Lutheran University, Parkland, Washington, 20 November 1980.

many Nordics attended church only on the occasions of family baptisms, confirmations and marriages, yet still considered themselves Lutherans in somewhat the same manner as one accepts one's citizenship on the basis of birth, residence and the payment of taxes. This attitude followed the Nordic Lutherans to America.²

The Lutheran church in America was one of the chief bearers of Nordic religious and cultural traditions. Nordic-American churches of all denominations maintained the use of their mother tongue in services during the early years of organization. Prior to World War I, English was the exception, not the rule, in Nordic-American churches. Church services, Sunday School classes and confirmation classes kept the Nordic languages alive and active in America, and thereby slowed immigrant assimilation. Furthermore, the church activities and the role of the church in ethnic life with Julfests, lutefisk dinners, bazaars and the like helped to maintain the culture of late nineteenth century Denmark, Norway, Finland or Sweden in America, while the Nordic countries moved on.³ Ethnicity tended to linger longer in Nordic Lutheran congregations than in Baptist, Methodist or Congregational churches. The latter three denominations were generally Nordic offshoots of American synods, grounded in American culture and ideas; all three sects were themselves very recent additions to nineteenth century Scandinavia. The Nordic Lutheran church, however, grew from

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

its roots in the Nordic countries, and developed from hundreds of years of Nordic culture, ideas and traditions.

Freed from the union between church and state in America, freed from the centuries of religious traditions, tensions developed quickly in religious circles. Different factions within the Lutheran church were quick to feel the influence of American culture, and conflicting theological positions split the Lutheran State Church in America into a number of synods.⁴ The Lutheran ethnic itself affected American culture, where the doctrine of justification by faith -- the "historic soul of Lutheranism" -- provided a striking contrast to the Calvinistic conceptions of pre-destination and the elect of God so inherent in American society.⁵ Other Nordics turned completely away from Lutheranism to the Baptist, Methodist or Congregational denominations. The Baptists and Methodists were well received for their more democratic church organization.⁶ The religious tensions that developed between nationalities, denominations and synods were carried to the Pacific Coast by pastors, missionaries and settlers.⁷

When in the 1870s the Nordic missionaries began looking towards the Pacific Northwest as a potential mission field, they naturally

⁴Odd S. Lovoll and Kenneth O. Bjork, The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1925-1975 (Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1975), p. 2.

⁵Wefald, Voice of Protest, p. 16.

⁶Andersen, Salt of the Earth, p. 11.

⁷Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 480.

looked upon Portland as their headquarters. Portland was well located geographically, and it was the largest population center north of San Francisco, for Seattle and Tacoma were still hamlets hugging the shores of their respective bays. Even after churches had been established in other parts of Oregon and Washington, Portland remained the center of Nordic religious life.⁸

One of Portland's first Nordic missionaries was the Reverend Anders Emil Fridrichsen, described as "one of the strangest candidates for the ministry ever to have come to America."⁹ The eccentric Norwegian pastor was well-known for his shaggy, yellow skin trousers and boots, which earned him the title of "Leatherbreeches Minister," as well as his habit of interrupting a church service to whistle at or comment upon attractive women in the congregation to which he was preaching.¹⁰ Between his arrival in Portland in 1871 and his supposed death in 1882, Fridrichsen probably did as much harm as good to Nordic religious life. While he was the first pastor able to organize a congregation among Portland Nordics, Fridrichsen was also responsible for many of the schisms between Lutheran churches that lasted for years.

Friderichsen was not sent by any particular Nordic synod or church; none would have him, not in the Midwest nor in Texas.¹¹ The

⁸ Carlson, History of Columbia Baptist Conference, p. 12.

⁹ Nora O. Solum, "Oregon and Washington Territory in the 1870's, As Seen Through the Eyes of a Pioneer Pastor," Norwegian-American Studies and Records 16 (Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1950): 64.

¹⁰ Fogelquist, "Congregational Life."

¹¹ Solum, "Pioneer Pastor," p. 65.

Scandinavians in Portland accepted him, however, and Fridrichsen was able to organize the first Scandinavian Lutheran church in Oregon on 19 April 1871. The Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church, as it was called, was located in East Portland on Ninth and Lincoln Streets.¹² Fridrichsen had engaged in a long-standing rivalry with the Norwegian Synod of the Lutheran Church, and in turn, influenced his congregation into sharing his bitter opposition to the Synod.¹³ When the Norwegian Synod sent an official pastor to Portland in 1879, Fridrichsen claimed the man was sent to split his established congregation.¹⁴ The congregation actually did divide that year when the Swedes left to organize their own church with the help of a Swedish pastor, Peter Carlson.¹⁵ Fridrichsen's resentment towards the Synod created deep tension within the congregation; as a final stroke against the Synod, its followers, and probably the two other Nordic Lutheran congregations, Fridrichsen willed the church property and building, which he had purchased and developed at his own expense, to Zion Lutheran Church as a mission center. Zion Lutheran Church belonged to the Missouri Lutheran Synod

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 64. Bjork records the church as standing at East Seventh and Lincoln Streets. See Bjork, "A 'Leatherbreeches Minister'," p. 571.

¹³ Fogelquist, "Congregational Life."

¹⁴ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 485.

¹⁵ Since Fridrichsen's church was not within Portland's city limits at the time, many texts consider the Swedish Evangelical Immanuel Lutheran Church to be the first Nordic and Swedish Lutheran church in Portland. The first Norwegian-Danish Lutheran church in Portland would then be the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, organized in 1886 by the Reverend John Tackle. It is now known as Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

and was composed of Germans.¹⁶ As a final joke on the enraged congregation, Fridrichsen really did not die in 1882, although there is a grave in Portland; he turned up later working for the Norwegian Free Church in North Dakota.¹⁷

Church life declined in the first few years after Fridrichsen's "death" in 1882, but the factions he helped to foster lived on. Of the three Scandinavian Evangelical churches begun between 1871 and 1885, all split along national lines. The Swedes left Fridrichsen's East Portland church in 1879. By 1882, the Swedish congregation had a building on the west side of the river at Ninth and Burnside Streets, but no leader. The Norwegians and Danes had a quick succession of pastors who did nothing to repair the tensions among congregations, but no building. During the 1880s, Portland's Lutheran churches were so hostile towards one another, that the Reverend Knut Nilsen invited all the Lutheran ministers in Portland to a meeting, urging that they combine their efforts for the welfare of the church, rather than rip the congregations apart "in the most tragic manner." The plea was well founded, but bore no results.¹⁸

Nordic Lutheranism continued to thrive in Portland despite friction. From the beginning of Scandinavian missionary work in Portland, Lutheranism was the major religion among Nordics. At the turn of the

¹⁶ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, pp. 484-485.

¹⁷ Fogelquist, "Congregational Life."

¹⁸ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, pp. 487, 501, 502, 504.

twentieth century there were five Nordic Lutheran churches, two in the North End, two in Albina and one in East Portland. By the end of the first fifty years of Nordic religious life in Portland, there were nine Nordic Lutheran churches.¹⁹

Baptist missionary work began with Brother Landstrom,²⁰ who in 1875 had charge of a Baptist Mission under the auspices of Portland's First Baptist Church. The church reported to its conference that "Brother Landstone has charge of the Scandinavian Mission, and his labors have been blessed. Six have confessed their faith in Jesus by baptism."²¹ There is no more mention of additional Baptist mission work among the Scandinavians until January of 1881 when the Reverend Olaus Okerson was appointed by the Mission Board of the Convention of the North Pacific Coast as general missionary.²² The first Scandinavian

¹⁹By 1920, the Nordic Lutheran churches included the Danish Lutheran Church (renamed Bethania Lutheran), Immanuel Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church (renamed First Immanuel), the Norwegian-Danish Lutheran Church (renamed Bethlehem Lutheran), Our Savior's Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church (now called Augustana Lutheran, it belonged to the Norwegian Synod), Zion Swedish Lutheran Church, Bethel Lutheran Church (belonging to the Norwegian Free Synod), the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (renamed Messiah Lutheran), Tabor Park Swedish Lutheran Church, and Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church (belonging to the Norwegian Synod).

²⁰P. Stiansen in History of the Norwegian Baptists in America (Wheaton, Ill.: The Norwegian Baptist Conference of America and the American Baptist Publication Society, 1939) and P. Benson in Begynnelsetider af Svenska Baptisternas Verksamhet på Västkusten (Seattle: Washington Printing Company, n.d.) refer to the missionary as Landstone. Kenneth Bjork in West of the Great Divide calls him Landstrom.

²¹Stiansen, Norwegian Baptists, p. 230; and Benson, Svenska Baptisternas, p. 16.

²²Benson, Svenska Baptisternas, p. 16.

Baptist Church in Portland was organized three years later with sixteen members. Within a year, the congregation had a building in south Portland on Sixth and Caruthers Streets.²³ Probably because south Portland was not as heavily populated with Nordics as the North End, the church moved to Twelfth Street about 1886.²⁴ The Baptists were no more able to overcome the difficulties of language and nationality than were the Lutherans; by 1895, the congregation had split and been renamed First Swedish Baptist Church.²⁵ A second Swedish Baptist Church had a short existence on Haight Avenue and Beech Street in Albina, listed in the City Directories from 1896 to 1898. The Scandinavian Church of Christ was listed for the eleven years that followed 1890. A Swedish mission was temporarily established on the east side of the river, and a Swedish-Finnish mission met in First Baptist Church on Taylor Street in downtown Portland.²⁶

The Methodists began, as did the Baptist and Lutherans, with a Scandinavian Methodist Episcopal Church organized in November of 1882 by the Reverend Carl J. Larsen. Initially, the congregation met in a chapel on Third and Burnside Streets in the North End, but in 1883 they

²³ Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, p. 117; and Portland City Directory, 1885 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1885), p. 78.

²⁴ Portland City Directory, 1887 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1887), p. 71.

²⁵ Portland City Directory, 1895 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1895), p. 79.

²⁶ Portland City Directory, 1907-1908 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1907), p. 163; and Portland City Directory, 1916, p. 115.

purchased a lot on Twelfth and Davis Streets.²⁷ By 1889, the congregation had become the Norwegian-Danish Methodist Episcopal Church.²⁸ In 1891, a second Norwegian-Danish congregation organized in Albina, and about 1892, a Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church on North Mississippi was established.²⁹ A Danish Mission was opened briefly about 1901 at Russell and Flint Streets, and the East Side Norwegian-Danish Methodist Episcopal Church on Vancouver and Skidmore Avenues opened about 1909, with the Reverend Carl Larsen in charge.³⁰

Various other denominations founded churches during the first fifty years of Nordic settlement in Portland. The Swedish Mission Church, belonging to a synod which is an offshoot of the Lutheran Church,³¹ was organized in 1887 with seven members, a Sunday School and a Ladies' Aid Society.³² By 1911, the church had missions in several other centers of Nordic settlement besides northwest Portland:

²⁷ Oregonian 1 January 1885, p. 15; and Portland City Directory, 1884 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1884), p. 39.

²⁸ Portland City Directory, 1890 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1890), p. 62.

²⁹ Portland City Directory, 1892, p. 138; and Portland City Directory, 1893 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1893), p. 123.

³⁰ Portland City Directory, 1902 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1901), p. 70; and Portland City Directory, 1910 (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1910), p. 79.

³¹ The Mission Church developed as a pietistic reaction to the conservative Lutheran State Church. See Ljungmark, Swedish Exodus, p. 117.

³² The Fiftieth Year (Portland: The Swedish Mission Church, 1937), p. 12.

Brooklyn, St. Johns and Albina.³³ The Congregationalists were also found in Portland's Nordic community. Unlike the other denominations, the Congregationalists did not try to establish churches for the entire Nordic population. Instead, Bethania Swedish Congregational Church was organized in southeast Portland, and the Norwegian and Finnish Mission Congregational Churches were established in Albina.³⁴ A Swedish Adventist Church was renamed Scandinavian Adventist Church, the only Nordic Adventist church established prior to 1920. Located in southeast Portland, the congregation moved to Albina about 1916.³⁵ Also in Albina were the First Scandinavian Nazarene and the Swedish Evangelical Free Churches.³⁶

Nordic women played an important role in the organization of congregations on the American frontier. Throughout the nineteenth century, Scandinavian women bore culture and civilization to the new land, recreating the old life in the new, maintaining traditions and customs, representing home and hearth in the sense of *Kinder, Kirche and Küche*. In many Nordic communities, the church was the only institution open to women. Fraternal lodges were limited to men, and many

³³ Skarstedt, Oregon och dess Svenska Befolkning, p. 118.

³⁴ Portland City Directory, 1912, p. 86; and Portland City Directory, 1917, p. 69.

³⁵ Portland City Directory, 1910, p. 78; and Portland City Directory, 1917, p. 69.

³⁶ The Evangelical Free Churches of America grew out of the Mission Covenant Church in 1884, in Boone, Iowa. See American-Swedish Handbook, vol. 1 (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Book Concern, 1943), pp. 37-38.

women's social clubs were connected with the upper class, who had leisure time and were not as closely bound to the home. The church and church societies, however, had a spiritual purpose, and were open to all women, regardless of social class. In this sense then, the church may have been more important to women than men. Women had fewer opportunities for contact outside the home than men, and fewer diversions from life's tedium. In the case of the immigrants, she was thrown into a new culture, a place where she was a stranger amidst strange ways and a strange language, when she may have never cared to leave her homeland in the first place.

In Portland, this was also true. Before the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1886, a group of Norwegian and Danish women began meeting in homes twice a month. They agreed to perpetrate the religion of their homeland and therefore found a site for the church at Fourteenth and Davis Streets in the North End.³⁷ When Immanuel Lutheran offered the property of Zion Lutheran Church to the Lutheran residents of Albina in 1905, the women didn't want to wait for a formal organization of a church.³⁸ In May

³⁷ Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon, Diamond Anniversary, 1887-1962 (Portland: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 1962), p. 13.

³⁸ The years between 1893 and 1897 were "starvation years" in Portland. Zion Lutheran Church had run up a debt of \$1,300 when Immanuel took over the property in 1896. See J. P. Wistrand, "History of the Swedish Lutheran Church in East Portland from 1890-1910," History Files, Augustana Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon. (Type-written.)

of 1906, they formed the Svenska Kvinnoforening Concordia, a Ladies' Aid Society, with the purpose of working for a congregation.³⁹ One of the first organizations within the Swedish Mission Church was the Ladies' Aid Society, which made articles of clothing and needlework to be sold, with the proceeds going towards the church and its missions.⁴⁰ Augustana Lutheran Church had a Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society by 1918, but there was no men's club within the church until 1944.⁴¹ The mother was usually the one who saw to it that the children received at least the rudiments of spiritual life. At Immanuel Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, 79 percent of the children baptized between 1883 and 1920 did not have parents who belonged to the church. Furthermore, if only one parent was a member, in every case it was the mother.⁴²

Groups for the young people were usually among the first organizations established in the churches. The young were supposed to absorb the language and culture of their heritage and also take part in the church and its work. Besides having a social purpose, the young people's societies often visited the sick and distributed gospel

³⁹ Forty Years at Augustana, 1906-1946 (Portland: Augustana Lutheran Church, 1946), (p. 3).

⁴⁰ The Fiftieth Year, p. 23.

⁴¹ Lorraine Nelson, "People and Organizations," The Augustana Story, no. 2 (1975), History Files, Augustana Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon. (Mimeographed.)

⁴² Records of Ministerial Acts, 1883-1921, 2 vols., First Immanuel Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon.

tracts in hotels, saloons and on boats.⁴³ The girls often made fancy work, as did the Ladies' Aid Societies, to be auctioned off, with the proceeds going to the missions.⁴⁴ Social events included ice-cream socials and a "Patriotisk Fäst."⁴⁵

Another split in the unity among Nordics was a cleavage between the clergy, church organizations, and secular societies. Besides an arbitrary division imposed by both factions between "church people" and those who weren't linked with organized religion,⁴⁶ there were the hostilities between "church people" and the socialists, whom the former bitterly opposed. Many Nordic churches disapproved of fraternal, ethnic and political organization. The secular societies tended to have a more lenient attitude towards alcohol than expressed by the clergy.⁴⁷ Even as late as 1920, the Western Norwegian-Danish Mission Conference of the Methodist Church banned dancing, including the traditional folk dancing.⁴⁸ Members of the Masonic orders were not allowed to become members of the Lutheran Church. Secular groups, such as the Scandinavian Brotherhood, tried to ease this gap, claiming that

⁴³The Fiftieth Year, p. 27.

⁴⁴Forty Years at Augustana, (p. 5).

⁴⁵Oregon Posten 13 July 1910, p. 8; and Oregon Posten 21 February 1917, p. 8.

⁴⁶Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 615.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Andersen, Salt of the Earth, p. 139.

"the Brotherhood does not interfere with any one's religion, but that it encourages him in the practice of it, and lends him moral support in his loyalty to his and to his church." The Brotherhood closed this statement with the terse sentence: "No discussion of a sectarian or dogmatic nature is permitted within the walls of the lodge room."⁴⁹

The churches in Portland were concerned with more than simply spiritual needs; health and education were two other primary concerns. Most of Portland's hospitals were financed by churches, as was Emanuel Hospital. The building of the hospital was initiated by the Immanuel Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, when about 1909, a hospital society was formed to raise funds to assist a desperately ill young man. The project was so successful that the Reverend Carl J. Renhard took an option on property, and set out to gather a board of directors.⁵⁰ By 1912, Renhard had bought out an unsuccessful hospital venture and with backing from the Columbia Conference of the Lutheran Church, Emanuel Hospital opened in a three-story house not far from the church.⁵¹ Surgery was on the second floor of the old-fashioned house, and since there were no elevators, the Reverend Renhard carried the patients up to surgery.⁵² In 1915, the hospital moved to its present

⁴⁹ Skandinaviska Brödraförbundet, p. 225.

⁵⁰ First Immanuel, p. b.

⁵¹ Carl J. Renhard, Fifty Years of the Columbia Conference, 1893-1943, ed. Carl J. Sangren (N.p., 1943), pp. 156-158.

⁵² Johnson, interview, p. 1.

location in Albina.⁵³

There were never any Nordic schools in Portland. In 1891, Norwegian and Danish Methodists discussed the possibility of founding a college and seminary in Portland, to be affiliated with Willamette University in Salem.⁵⁴ A notice was run in the Oregonian, urging businessmen of Portland to donate towards the \$15,000 bonus in order that Portland could become an educational center.⁵⁵ The college was to be built on College Place, the brick contract had been let, but the entire endeavor faded away.⁵⁶ There simply was not the numerical strength among Norwegian and Danish Methodists to realize such an ambitious project.

There is some irony in the fact that language divided the different nationalities and their churches, for within the first fifty years, English began to replace the Nordic languages, just as Nordic customs began to be replaced by American ones. The idea of introducing English into the Nordic church in Portland originated with Fridrichsen, whose pet dream it was to hold services in English.⁵⁷ Fridrichsen preached in Norwegian, German or English⁵⁸ but his preference is clear in the

⁵³ Renhard, Columbia Conference, p. 158.

⁵⁴ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 519.

⁵⁵ Oregonian 5 March 1893, p. 20.

⁵⁶ H. Earl Pemberton, "Early Colleges in Oregon," Oregon Historical Quarterly 33 (September 1932): 240.

⁵⁷ Fogelquist, "Congregation Life."

⁵⁸ Bjork, West of the Great Divide, p. 484.

comment: "Religious services in the English language . . . In the Norwegian language when required and noticed."⁵⁹ As the years went on, there became less and less need to perpetrate European languages in the Nordic-American churches. Many of the immigrants learned English. Services in Swedish or Norwegian discouraged non-Nordic members. Furthermore, many of the children of immigrants did not understand the language of their parents, and the younger ministers could not preach a satisfactory sermon in the required Nordic language.⁶⁰ The language difficulty drove many second-generation Nordics to Episcopal or Presbyterian churches where the sermons and services were in English.⁶¹ Finally, children often did not know enough of their parents' native tongue to grasp instruction in the catechism in their confirmation classes.⁶² Immanuel Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church opened a Swedish school in 1909, probably to mitigate this exact problem.⁶³ As a compromise, many churches began doing as did Augustana Lutheran about 1912: offering services in English one Sunday evening each month.⁶⁴ The First World War and the resulting hysteria over anything non-American defeated the final, stubborn effort to maintain the heritage

⁵⁹ Portland City Directory, 1874, p. 38.

⁶⁰ Sivert Olaus Skothiem, "A History of the Norwegian Lutheran Churches in Seattle" (Master's thesis, University of Washington, 1940), p. 41.

⁶¹ Fogelquist, "Congregational Life."

⁶² Mattila, Finnish Lutherans, p. 19.

⁶³ Oregon Posten 2 June 1909, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Forty Years at Augustana, (p. 10).

languages. Parents stopped teaching their children their native tongue, because such an act was not considered patriotic. Ministers came under suspicion if they preached in a foreign language. There were no laws against it, but local people labeled those pastors as pro-German.⁶⁵

In August of 1915, Bethlehem Norwegian Lutheran Church decided at a congregational meeting to conduct alternate English and Norwegian services on Sundays.⁶⁶ By the end of the war, congregations such as Augustana Lutheran Church began all their evening services in English, and soon began buying only English Sunday School papers.⁶⁷

In the succeeding years, the Nordic churches by and large lost much of their ethnic identity. English replaced the native tongues. Non-Nordic membership rose. Even the synods lost the nationality divisions that so divided them in the early years. The church, one of the strongest institutions of ethnic continuity, itself was assimilating.

⁶⁵Fogelquist, "Congregational Life."

⁶⁶Bethlehem Lutheran Church, p. 6.

⁶⁷Forty Years at Augustana, (p. 18).

CONCLUSION

The recent renewal of interest in America's ethnic heritage and history has raised many questions about the immigration movement. While the varying decline and resurgence of Nordic ethnic activity in Portland during the past six decades has been affected by contemporary trends and events, the base of Portland's Nordic ethnicity was created in the formative years of development between 1870 and 1920.

Portland had the potential in the 1870s to become the center of Nordic immigration to the Pacific Northwest. It had achieved the hard-earned title of "capital city" of the area for travel and commerce. It was chosen as the mission center for all Scandinavian denominations which sent missionaries. In the following years, however, other centers of banking, trade and commerce emerged in the Pacific Northwest, such as Seattle and Spokane, and Portland lost much of its dominant position. Portland eventually had the greatest concentration of Scandinavians in Oregon, but it never attained the large percentages of Nordics in relation to the general population that occurred in some other Pacific Northwest urban centers such as Seattle, Aberdeen and Astoria. As a result, Portland never achieved a reputation for Scandinavian influence.

Part of the problem lay with the Nordics. Despite the fact that each nationality except the Swedes had a very small population in Portland, each nationality preferred to have its own churches, clubs and lodges. History, pride and a language gap separated the nationalities, and made cooperation negligible.

Much of the problem lay in Portland itself. Portland's history shaped the development of the Nordic community rather than the Nordics molding Portland. The lack of continuity in Nordic settlement patterns which followed the changing character of Portland neighborhoods hindered the continuance of culture in any one area. As the Nordics moved from the North End to Albina, from Albina west to St. Johns and east to the city boundaries, the older areas of settlement were filled with newer immigrants and racial groups, or became industrial centers, thereby nearly obliterating any Nordic impact upon the areas.

Portland's stubbornly homogeneous character did not encourage either development or continuance of immigrant ethnicity. Foreign enclaves exerted power within the community for little more than a generation. Immigrants who wished to improve their social and economic position had to conform to Portland's ideals of small-town New England folk. The fervent patriotism of World War I merely enforced homogeneity. When the entire nation began criticizing the "hyphenated-American" and all activities not "100 percent American," the churches and ethnic societies were forced to make an effort to conform. Nordic churches introduced English into their services sooner than otherwise would have occurred. Nordic clubs, lodges and societies participated in American activities, such as the sale of Liberty Bonds. Once Nordics settled in America, lived among Americans and were exposed to American ways, it was only natural for the immigrants and their descendants gradually absorb more and more of the customs around them.

Nordic ethnicity did not fade away entirely in the years following

1920. In the 1940s, interest in ethnicity resurged, and soon was again under suspicion created during wartime. In the late 1970s, a new ethnic awareness emerged among third and fourth-generation Americans of Nordic descent. The center of this new interest in Portland, however, was based around the churches, clubs and societies established in the formative years of Nordic settlement in Portland: 1870 to 1920, the first fifty years.

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