

OLOF SWENSSON An Innovative Immigrant

Olof Swensson was born on May 19, 1843 on a farm named Brodeboe at Ostmarken, in Kongvigers Parish, in Norway. He married Ingeborg Agnetta Pearson in 1869, and they immigrated to America three years later. They settled on a farm near Wegdahl in Chippewa County.

Swensson became known for his many talents -

- his building abilities which are portrayed throughout the farm.
- his religious beliefs. He conducted weekly religious services in the large chapel upstairs. His sermons, in Norwegian, have been preserved.
- his writing, which included books stating his convictions.
- his political activities. He proposed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and also ran unsuccessfully for Governor of the State of Minnesota.

After Olof's death in 1923, the farmstead gradually fell into disrepair despite the fact that his three surviving children continued

to occupy the premises. Upon John's death in 1967, the property was bequeathed to the Chippewa County Historical Society.



The Barn

The large 1880s timber-framed barn rests on a one-story granite foundation cut from locally gathered boulders. The barn's elaborate system of wind-bracing and notching attest to Swensson's skills as a designer and builder. A museum quality preservation of the barn was completed in 2003, and it was one of the largest barn preservation projects ever undertaken in the United States.



The House

The 22-room wood frame house was begun in 1901 and faced with brick in 1903. Total construction costs were \$5,000.00. Olof was 58 when construction began. The monumental task of cutting and laying in pattern the foundation of huge local granite stones was done by Olof and his daughter Katie. Together they also built the home with the occasional help of one carpenter. The home has 52 doors and 59 windows. A 38' x 38' room on the second floor is home to Olof's chapel and is referred to as "The Master's Room".

"Fool or genius; man of wisdom or distorted vision? Those who knew Olof Swensson best believed he was a half century ahead of his time; those who knew him little, tended to brand him an unrealistic fool. Perhaps he was a little of both. History leans to the side of genius."

The Grist Mill Remains

A grist mill was constructed in the 1890s near the barn. It was first powered by horses and later by steam engine. The burrs, or millstones, were made of local granite and carved by Olof Swensson. For a brief period "Swensson Flour" was marketed until 1904, at which time the mill was used only for grinding feed.



The Family Burial Plot

Olof Swensson fashioned concrete monuments, including his own, for the family cemetery located on the farm. Nine family members are buried here. The wooden forms for the tombstones are on display in the house.

The Moehring Building

Built with funds donated by Ernest Moehring, this structure provides storage and display areas for farm equipment. A 1936 John Deere Model D, a 1935 Allis Chalmers Model WC, and a 1935 Oliver Hart Parr 28-44 are on display.

OLOF SWENSSON Statesman



After living in this country for over twenty years, Olof was disturbed by many political and economic situations that seemed wrong to him. Being a man of action, Olof wrote a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution and had it printed on February 6, 1892. During this same period, Swensson also ran unsuccessfully for Governor of Minnesota.

Directions to the Swensson Farm Museum - from Montevideo, six miles east on Highway 7, five miles south on County Road 6, and 1/8 mile east on County Road 15.

Open Sundays, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., Memorial Day - Labor Day. Admission - Adults (18 and over) \$4.00, Students (6-17) \$2.00, 5 and under Free. Private tours available by appointment only.

Owned by
Chippewa County Historical Society
PO Box 303
Montevideo, MN 56265
320-269-7636
ChippewaHistory@qwestoffice.net

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Journey Back In Time ...

Swensson Farm Museum

**On the National Register
of Historic Places**



17 ACRE FARMSTEAD
22 ROOM BRICK FARM HOUSE
LARGE TIMBER-FRAMED BARN
GRIST MILL WITH HAND CUT MILLSTONES
FAMILY BURIAL PLOT

"Those who remember Swensson, called him a good neighbor, honest and true, but peculiar in ways."