



The Scandinavian American Family Album (American Family Albums)

Dorothy Hoobler, Thomas Hoobler

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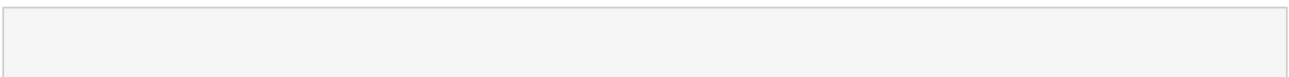
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One of the first Europeans to discover North America, Leif Eriksson landed on its shores around the year 1000. His expedition was part of a great era of exploration and migration for the Nordic people and the beginning of a long history of Scandinavian involvement in the New World. By the middle of the nineteenth century, huge waves of America fever had spread through the Scandinavian countries and by 1907 an official of the Swedish government reported that it was difficult to find a farm where none of the immediate family was in America. Today, approximately 11.5 million Americans describe themselves as being of Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic, Finnish, or Danish descent, a number that equals half the population of the five countries from which they and their ancestors came.

The Scandinavian American Family Album tells the history of this tremendous wave of immigration and of the contribution of Scandinavian people to the growth and development of the United States. Through their own diaries, letters, and through interviews, rare photographs, and songs, we are treated to a firsthand account of the hardships, challenges, and triumphs that awaited the generations of Scandinavian immigrants who made their way across the ocean to start new lives in America. We learn about their day-to-day life before emigration, the factors--such as social inequality, financial hardship, and overpopulation--that contributed to their decisions to leave, of their experience upon landing at Ellis Island, and the various occupations that they settled into as they began to establish homes and communities. We discover that the Danes were the first European settlers in the Bronx and Harlem in New York City and that Swedes and Finns built the first log cabins. Personal accounts describe homesteads and early colonies set up all over the country, from Maine to Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Kansas, and as far west as Utah and Nebraska. These early immigrants and their descendants tell us about pioneering farming ventures, the dangers and hardships of logging and mining, the thrill of the gold rush, and the struggle of early labor movements.

All across the country, Scandinavian Americans played a key role in building the institutions and communities that still exist today. Among those who made distinguished contributions to American life and culture are Jacob Riis, the founder of modern photojournalism; Thorstein Veblen, renowned economist; sports legends Knute Rockne and Babe Didrikson Zaharias; aviator Charles Lindbergh; and Knute Nelson, the first Scandinavian American governor of Minnesota. Others profiled include actress Candice Bergen, dancer Peter Martins, Norman Borlaug, the first agricultural scientist to win the Nobel Peace Prize, novelist Ole Rølvaag and Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor who created the giant heads of four presidents on Mt. Rushmore. The stories and memories contained in this album, illustrated with vivid photographs drawn from a vast array of archives, make this volume a valuable window into the past of Scandinavian Americans and the country they now call home.

The titles in the American Family Albums series tell the multicolored and often heroic stories of American immigrant groups, largely through their own words and pictures. Like any family album or scrapbook, the pages contain many period photographs and other memorabilia. These join with original documents--including selections from diaries, letters, memoirs, and newspapers--to bring the immigrant experience vividly to life.



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