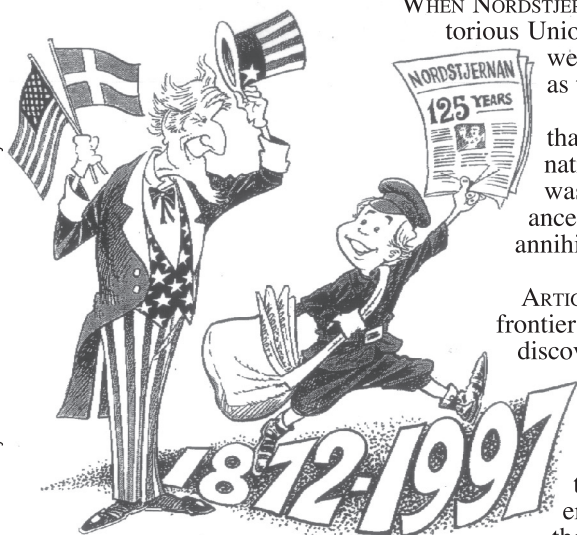


*Here is how it all began:
at noon, Saturday, September 21, 1872, the first issue of America's Swedish newspaper,
Nordstjernan, appeared on newsstands in the Manhattan district of the city of New York.*

A star emerges amid fiery times

Illustration by Dave Granlund for our 125th anniversary



WHEN NORDSTJERNAN published its first issue, Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885), the victorious Union military commander from the American Civil War, was in the last weeks of campaigning for what would be his reelection to a second term as the 18th President of the United States (1869-1877).

The Confederacy surrendered to him at Appomattox slightly more than seven years before the first issue of *Nordstjernan* was printed. The nation writhed in confused attempts to heal its wounds, political corruption was abundant, and in Sweden, crop failures were forcing families whose ancestors had tilled the soil for hundreds of years to flee famine and certain annihilation.

ARTICLES IN EARLY ISSUES which dealt with news in the still-wild Western frontier of America, told of wars with Indians, rugged journeys and amazing discoveries by venturesome Swedes who dared to conquer the vast and virgin territory. But America was nonetheless a new horizon of promise, hope and prosperity to Swedes who disembarked for the first time from steam-powered ships and set foot in the bustling city of New York.

SOME FEW MADE golden fortunes and sailed triumphantly back home to Sweden, where hard cash could procure a better life for them. Others struck roots and sent money home for other family members to join them in their newly found homeland.

APPEARING IN THE FIRST issue of the Swedish language newspaper *Nordstjernan*, sold on the streets to the blossoming communities in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis and Kansas, advertisements from dozens of passenger ship lines support the fact that the trans-Atlantic tickets on board the steam-driven clipper sailing ships were being frequently purchased, and Swedish immigrants were arriving in New York by the shipload on a daily basis. The need for a publication was clearly to serve them, and to produce it, the Svenska Tryckföreningen in New York began publishing *Nordstjernan*. On newsstands each Saturday, at noon, it sold for six cents per copy, or three dollars per annual subscription, postage not included (later reduced to \$2.00 per year and five cents per copy after protests from readers). In that day, a salary of about \$25 per month was considered respectable for the average worker.

During the early days of *Nordstjernan*, the 1870's, stories in publications were painstakingly composed by hand. From shelved sets of intricately divided drawers, one letter at a time was plucked, set in place in a hand held carrier, spaced with tiny metal strips to make the lines of even length and finally, when about a single paragraph was assembled, it was tied with string and set into place in a metal form which eventually grew to become the page itself. Due to the direct printing process, all this hand work was, of course, backwards reading.

Typewriters did not exist until after their invention in 1878, and because each printed word required tedious labor, journalists carefully composed their articles in long hand writing to make the maximum use of both labor and newsprint paper, which was, relative to modern prices, quite expensive.

Engraving was a valuable talent within the printing trade. All the illustrations which appear, mainly in advertisements, in the first decades of *Nordstjernan* were carved by hand as mirror images into metal. Photo-engraving arrived much later, but the earliest years' pressrooms were filled with teams of craftsmen who worked, often without sketches, to laborously carve the delicate lines and minuscule details of every illustration.

THINGS CHANGED throughout our now 136 years. Today, we work with the latest equipment and the latest software to put together your newspaper - given our resources we just could not do it any other way - but the legacy continues, as it has now for well over a century. This also means the pages of this newspaper have quite a story to tell. A very lively and extremely intense story. The world changed many times over, as did the world of newspaper publishing, as did the world of Swedish-America, as did *Nordstjernan*. If you have an interest in things Swedish, -American or in publishing, you definitely don't want to miss another issue of a very much alive and living legend.

Ulf Mårtensson
Editor & Publisher

NORDSTJERNAN

PHONE: (212) 490.3900 FAX: (212) 490.5979 TOLL FREE 1-800.827.9333 EXT. 10