



Getting Ahead: A Swedish Immigrant's Reminiscences, 1834-1887

Charles J. Hoflund

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In 1913, the year before he died, Charles J. Hoflund dictated his life story to his grandson, Stanley Hoflund High. That story is presented here for the first time in its entirety by H. Arnold Barton.

Hoflund was born in Djursdala Parish, Sweden, in 1834, and emigrated to America with his family in 1850. His life is highly representative of those of most Swedish immigrants during the earliest phase of their great exodus to America. Unlike other immigrants who recorded their recollections, Hoflund provides a wealth of fascinating detail about life in his home parish before he departed for America.

He gives a vivid account of the long, harrowing journey to America during the sailing ship era and describes the early days in the original Swedish "core" settlements around Andover in Henry County, Illinois. Opportunities came fast on the frontier—the day after the family's arrival at Andover, Charles was hired to work for a nearby Yankee farmer, allowing him to earn his keep and contribute to his family's depleted assets. Hoflund sought opportunity wherever he could find it. He tells of cutting timber in the Wisconsin wilderness, rafting down the Mississippi, matching wits with sharp-dealers, farming on the Illinois prairie, running for political office, and eventually seeking new possibilities in Nebraska.

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