

Shades of Citizenship

When Hans Mattson rose to speak to fellow Civil War veterans in St. Paul on March 6, 1889, the former officer emphasized the apparent ease with which white Union men and their white rebel counterparts had agreed to “bury the past” in order to shake hands over the war’s “bloody chasm” and together work for a better future.

As commander of a Union force in Arkansas, Mattson was tasked with protecting the local population, overseeing Confederate soldiers’ parole, and enabling the transition to freedom for thousands of formerly enslaved in the state.¹ However, the Swedish-born officer, who in 1861 defined the Civil War as a conflict between “freedom and tyranny,” twenty-four years later spent little energy discussing the plight of freedpeople and instead underlined how the federal military from the beginning had encouraged a *laissez-faire* approach to economic reconstruction in a region devastated by four years of war.²

“You must like free and independent citizens, place yourself by industrious labor, as soon as possible, beyond the necessity of federal support,” Mattson instructed farmers around Batesville on May 22, 1865.³ On the

¹ Donald J. Simon, “The Third Minnesota Regiment in Arkansas, 1863–1865,” *Minnesota History*, no. Summer (1967): 281–292. According to Simon, Mattson was responsible for “appointing loyal civil officials, establishing local militia companies, supervising the paroling of six thousand Confederate soldiers, and feeding the population when necessary.”

² H. Mattson, “Til Skandinaverna i Minnesota [To the Scandinavians in Minnesota],” *Hemlandet*, September 11, 1861.

³ Hans Mattson, “Early Days of Reconstruction in Northeastern Arkansas” (Saint Paul: Pioneer Press Company, 1889), 7. Mattson’s remarks here echoed the American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission’s 1863 recommendation that “freedpeople should ‘stand alone’ as soon as possible.” See Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*:

transition to a free labor economy in the South, the Swedish veteran went on to claim that in the early years of reconstruction, the inhabitants of Arkansas generally “made fair contracts with the liberated slaves and strictly and carefully observed them.”⁴ Yet, even if Mattson’s recollection is to be trusted, fair contracts carefully observed were not always the norm, and attempts to maintain an antebellum racial hierarchy were numerous.⁵ Toward the end of his speech, Mattson’s memory allowed for as much as he related “one incident of many” that underscored the prevalence of “old slave thinking” in the post-war South.⁶

“One day, a very tidy negro woman came and reported that her late master had recently killed her husband,” Mattson recalled. “I sent for the former master. He was a leading physician, a man of fine address and culture, who lived in an elegant mansion near the city. He sat down and told me the story, nearly word for word as the woman did.”⁷ Mattson’s speech, as it has been preserved, recounted the incident as follows:

Tom, the negro, had been [the planter’s] body servant since both were children, and since his freedom still remained in the same service. Tom had a boy about eight years old. This boy had done some mischief and I (said the doctor) called him in and gave him a good flogging. Tom was outside and heard the boy scream, and after a while he pushed open the door and took the boy from me, telling me that I had whipped him enough. He brought the boy into his own cabin and then started for town. I took my gun and ran after him. When he saw me coming he started on a run, and I shot him, of course. [“]Wouldn’t you have done the same?” he asked me with an injured look. The killing of his negro for such an offense seemed so right and natural that he was perfectly astonished when I informed him that he would have to answer to the charge of murder before a military commission at Little Rock, where he was at once sent for trial.⁸

Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 35, 122–124. As Stanley notes, “emancipation brought Yankee ideals face to face with the aspirations of freed slaves as well as with the interests of former masters.”

⁴ Mattson, “Early Days of Reconstruction in Northeastern Arkansas,” 7.

⁵ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 119–123.

⁶ Mattson, “Early Days of Reconstruction in Northeastern Arkansas,” 12–13. See also Anders Bo Rasmussen, “‘On Liberty and Equality’: Race and Reconstruction among Scandinavian Immigrants, 1864–1868,” in *Nordic Whiteness and Migration to the USA: A Historical Exploration of Identity*, edited by Jana Sverdljuk, Terje Joranger, Erika K. Jackson and Peter Kivisto (New York: Routledge, 2020).

⁷ Mattson, “Early Days of Reconstruction in Northeastern Arkansas,” 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12–13.

Mattson, true to ideals about equality before the law, sided with the freedwoman; but his comment about her appearance, “a very tidy negro woman,” also showed preconceptions, common among white men, against freedpeople themselves.⁹ Implicit in Mattson’s story was the fact that not all newly freed Black women were perceived as “very tidy.”¹⁰ As such, the structure of Mattson’s 1889 address to local veterans reflected the fact that many Scandinavian immigrants immediately after the war were primarily concerned with economic betterment, personally and collectively, in a free market economy, but it also implicitly demonstrated the sense of white superiority that continued to inform life in the United States.¹¹ Less than a year before Mattson’s speech in Minnesota, two Swedish settlers in Texas, Carl and Fred Landelius, wrote to their sister Hanna in Sweden about cotton growth in Travis County and their belief in a racial hierarchy:

At the moment we are very busy with cotton picking. Naturally we cannot pick all our cotton but we have 5 negroes (and negresses) hired. Don’t you think that it would be strange to be where we are among so many foreign people? The negro is, I think, of the lowest race. His is very slow by nature, actually weak-willed [*viljelös*], and lives in the moment. Seldom does one see a negro who is well-off.¹²

The roots of freedpeople’s poverty received little attention in the Scandinavian enclaves.¹³ Neither did the associated paradox between free labor ideology and government redistribution of land to mainly

⁹ For other examples from 1865 of prejudice based on skin color, see Kate Masur, “Color Was a Bar to the Entrance: African American Activism and the Question of Social Equality in Lincoln’s White House,” *American Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2017). For ideals about “equal protection of the law,” see Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation*, 35.

¹⁰ Mattson, “Early Days of Reconstruction in Northeastern Arkansas,” 12.

¹¹ Ibid. As Hannah Rosen has shown, “the social groups excluded from citizenship” in antebellum Arkansas “represented many of those who labored within the households of free white male citizens and under their control.” See Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 94. Mattson’s address thereby helped support German-born General Carl Schurz’s prediction from the summer of 1865 that white southerners were “unquestionably thinking of subjecting the negroes to some kind of slavery again” and demonstrated the continuation of ‘old slave’ thinking” in the postwar moment. Schurz quoted in Martha Hodes, *Mourning Lincoln* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 245.

¹² Quoted in Otto Rob Landelius, ed. *Amerikabreven* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1957), 127–128.

¹³ For a discussion of the importance of access to land in the post-war South, see Jay R. Mandle, *The Roots of Black Poverty: The Southern Plantation Economy after the Civil War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978), 16–27.

white citizens, what Keri Leigh Merritt has deemed part of “the most comprehensive form of wealth redistribution” in American history.¹⁴ But both free labor ideology and homestead policy were used as arguments for continued Republican support. To well-educated Scandinavian immigrants, equality was attained through free labor on one’s own land. The equality envisioned, however, was more economic than racial and social.¹⁵

In the early years of reconstruction, there seemed to be clear limits to how far Scandinavian ethnic leaders could envision freedom and justice extending. It was, however, increasingly important for Scandinavian leaders to situate Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants positively in a postbellum national narrative where the effort to gain political influence only increased. Hans Mattson, for example, wrote specifically about Scandinavian immigrants’ love of liberty, Republican support, and zeal for Civil War service in his English-language memoirs.¹⁶

Indeed, the experience of Civil War did seem to strengthen support for the Republican Party, not least its economic policy, among Scandinavian immigrants and thereby also strengthen ethnic leaders’ claim to political positions. On April 13, 1868, a brief front-page piece signed “many Scandinavians” appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* that touted Abraham Lincoln as “the representative and apostle of liberty to the downtrodden and oppressed of every nation on earth,” and it advocated, in essence, a Scandinavian ethnic holiday by “abstaining from ordinary work and festivities” on April 15.¹⁷ The *Tribune* piece was one among numerous indications of Scandinavian support for the Republican Party – and its Civil War-era leaders – in the years immediately after 1865. Among the Civil War veterans, support was especially pronounced. On January 1, 1867, for example, a reunion for the 15th Wisconsin regiment was held at

¹⁴ Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 38.

¹⁵ In an attack on the antebellum “despotism and absolute monarchy” that characterized the slave-based economy, *Skandinaven*, in the lead-up to the 1866 midterm election, proclaimed that “the Norseman’s heart” had always beaten warmly “for freedom and justice,” but it did not discuss racial equality. “Om Valgene [On the Elections],” *Skandinaven*, October 11, 1866.

¹⁶ Hans Mattson, *Reminiscences: The Story of an Emigrant* (Saint Paul: D. D. Merrill Company, 1891), 57–58.

¹⁷ Many Scandinavians, “Abraham Lincoln,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 13, 1868; Många Skandinaver, “Lincolns Dödsdag [Day of Lincoln’s Death],” *Hemlandet*, April 14, 1868.

the hall of “The Republican Gymnastic Association” in Madison, with speeches praising the party in power.¹⁸

In addition, *Hemlandet* on March 17, 1868, reported on “Grant Clubs” springing up “all across the country” and encouraged Swedes to attend meetings in Chicago’s 15th Ward.¹⁹ *Skandinaven* on October 7, 1868, reported the organization of a “Scandinavian Grant Club” in Racine County among “the Scandinavians in the towns of Norway and Raymond,” in which everyone pledged to vote for the former Union general in the upcoming election.²⁰

Republican loyalty and military experience, in turn, offered post-war opportunities, and numerous ethnic leaders took advantage.²¹ Hans Mattson was elected secretary of state for the Republican Party in Minnesota in 1869, Norwegian-born veteran Knute Nelson became a Republican state senator in Minnesota in 1874 and later a US senator, and his countryman and fellow veteran Hans B. Warner served as Wisconsin’s Republican secretary of state from 1878 to 1882.²² Fritz Rasmussen, like Mattson, Nelson, Warner, and others, also continued his

¹⁸ Johnson, “Forhandlinger Og Beslutninger, Vedtagne Af Det 15de Wisconsin-Regiment under Dets Gjenforening 1ste Januar 1867 [Negotiations and Resolutions Enacted by the 15th Wisconsin Regiment at Its Reunion January 1, 1867].”

¹⁹ “Chicago. Grantklubb [Chicago. Grant Club],” *Hemlandet*, March 17, 1868. For a different example of Republican support, see “Misslyckandet Af Impeachment [The Failed Impeachment],” *Hemlandet*, May 26, 1868.

²⁰ “Skandinavisk Grant-Klub [Scandinavian Grant-Klub],” *Skandinaven*, October 7, 1868.

²¹ Hundreds, if not thousands, of Scandinavian veterans received a Civil War pension as did more than 300,000 fellow soldiers and family members by the late 1880s. See, for instance, Ole P. Hansen Balling, “Declaration for an Original Invalid Pension,” in *Pension Records. Invalid Pension Application 1166591* (Washington, DC: National Archives, 1899); Gjertrud Marie Hansen, “Declaration and Affidavit (Continuation),” in *Pension Records. Mother’s Pension Application 424.662* (Washington, DC: National Archives, 1892). See also Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 102–103. Regularly, however, the application process for pensions was time-consuming and frustrating. For Norwegian-born Ole Steensland’s difficulty in procuring a pension despite his experience as an Andersonville prisoner, see Brian Matthew Jordan, *Marching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014), 156, 276.

²² Mattson, *Reminiscences: The Story of an Emigrant*, 115–16; Jørn Brøndal, *Ethnic Leadership and Midwestern Politics: Scandinavian Americans and the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890–1914* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 116; Millard L. Gieske and Steven J. Keillor, *Norwegian Yankee: Knute Nelson and the Failure of American Politics, 1860–1923* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1995), 48. Moreover, Danish-born Christian Christensen voted Republican while quickly rising through the post-war economic ranks in New York to manage J. P. Morgan’s burgeoning financial empire by 1880. See Christian Thomsen

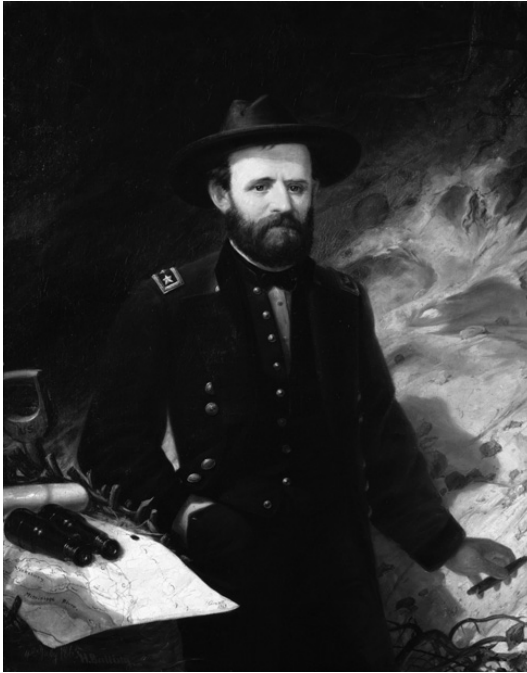


FIGURE 12.1 Ulysses S. Grant in the trenches before Vicksburg in 1863. Painting by Ole Balling who spent several weeks with the Union commander in the fall of 1864. Photo by Fine Art / Corbis Historical / Getty Images.

support for the Republican Party. Despite Rasmussen's reluctance to serve in the military, and the health problems it later caused him, his wartime experience became a source of pride and a motivation for continued Republican allegiance. Thus, on a clear and pleasant morning, November 3, 1868, Fritz Rasmussen went down to New Denmark's "town-house" and gave his "Vote for the High – or General Election," adding "this time it certainly was 'electing a General,' and a Grant too."²³ In the following

Christensen, "Address by General C. T. Christensen at a Meeting Held at Germania Hall, New York, by the Independent Scandinavian Cleveland & Hendricks Campaign Club" (Brooklyn: Eagle Book and Job Printing Department, 1884). By 1884, however, Christensen claimed to have become disillusioned with what he saw as the Republican Party's blind pursuit of capitalism mixed with corruption. See also Anders Bo Rasmussen, "Drawn Together in a Blood Brotherhood: Civic Nationalism Amongst Scandinavian Immigrants in the American Civil War Crucible," *American Studies in Scandinavia* 48, no. 2 (2016): 7–31.

²³ Rasmussen, "The 3rd Tuesday [November]."

years, Rasmussen held several positions of trust in the community and regularly lauded American government principles for being “better, than any [that has] yet existed upon earth.”²⁴

In this sense, the Scandinavian experience mirrored that of the German veterans, Carl Schurz most prominent among them, who, in Mischa Honeck’s words, understood that “courage in combat and a noble role in victory were important bargaining chips” for “going into business or entering government service.”²⁵ Yet, contrary to German Republican leaders in 1868, among whom “radicalism was ascendant,” no forceful principled arguments for Black suffrage appeared in the Scandinavian public sphere.²⁶ Instead, Scandinavian immigrants who challenged the Scandinavian-American nonradical Republican orthodoxy during the early years of Reconstruction faced swift backlash.²⁷

While still in its infancy, socialist-inspired agitation among Scandinavian immigrants – embodied by the Norwegian-born 1848 revolutionary Marcus Thrane – appeared in the public sphere in 1866. In the opening issue of *Marcus Thrane’s Norske Amerikaner* (Marcus Thrane’s Norwegian American) on May 25, 1866, Thrane laid forward a “program” that argued for active engagement on behalf of fundamental human rights, not least “every man’s right to vote.”²⁸ Without explicitly

²⁴ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “[Likely October 31],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1856–1876. Green Bay Mss 4. Box 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1876); “Record! Of Scandinavians, Who Have Been Settled and Lived in the Town of New Denmark.”

²⁵ Mischa Honeck, “Men of Principle: Gender and the German American War for the Union,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 5, no. 1 (2015): 59.

²⁶ Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (Washington, DC: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 137–139.

²⁷ Demonstrating the Republican, not abolitionist, mindset in the Scandinavian press, *Fremad’s* explicit white supremacist viewpoints and warnings that “we, who stand at the forefront of civilization, in arts and sciences” could be supplanted by “fanatics” and “fall into black barbarism” were attacked frequently by its Republican-leaning competitors and proved shortlived. By 1869 *Fremad* had been taken over and shifted its editorial focus toward the Republican Party under its new editor Sophus Beder (financed by the Civil War veteran turned post-war Chicago banker Ferdinand Winslöv). Expressions of Scandinavian ethnic superiority continued to find its way into the Scandinavian news outlets regularly, however. See “Fremad! [Forward!],” *Fremad*, May 7, 1868. Also Arlow William Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847–1872* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1953), 12–13; Odd Sverre Lovoll, *Norwegian Newspapers in America: Connecting Norway and the New Land* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2010), 73.

²⁸ Thrane, “Program [Program].”

connecting his editorial to freedmen's right to vote, Thrane praised the principle of equality in the Declaration of Independence and argued that slavery had always been "inreconcilable with the Republican principle."²⁹ Thrane also stressed women's central role in the fight for these foundational human rights and tied it concretely to the abolitionist cause.³⁰

From Thrane's perspective, among the most prominent "women and men" who had shaped public opinion against the antithesis of republican government, namely slavery, and helped save this basically "flawless" republican experiment from "failure," was first and foremost Harriet Beecher Stowe. To Thrane, Stowe was followed by her younger brother Henry Ward Beecher, Charles Sumner, and Abraham Lincoln ("just mentioning his name makes the hearts beat").³¹

Thrane's program – not least his implied socialist ideas (the present danger, Thrane wrote, "is the deep divide" between "wealth and poverty, enlightenment and ignorance") and his fight for freedom, for Black people's humanity, and for recognition of women's central role in the public sphere – seemed increasingly important.³² Enlightenment, according to Thrane, was the key issue, as it would ideally lead to the recognition of everyone's equality regardless of skin color: "Could a Negro work as a carpenter?" Thrane asked and, pointing to the lack of social equality in the post-war North, answered, "There is scarcely a shop where a laborer would continue to work if a Negro should also work there."³³ Change through enlightenment was needed, the editor argued.

Thrane's ideas, however, also included critique of religion and caused enough concern among Scandinavian ethnic leaders that both *Kirkelig Maanedstidende* and *Emigranten* published an anonymous rebuttal titled "A warning for all Christians" against Thrane's newspaper, despite its alleged small readership.³⁴ The letter, as well as the dissemination through the main religious and secular Scandinavian-American publications, testified to a sense of urgency in setting the agenda regarding notions of (economic) equality and morality – and, by extension, notions of American citizenship in post-war American society. In this sense, given

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. Moreover, in America the worker was offered a "high daily wage for 10 hours of daily" which, Thrane optimistically noted, might soon be changed to eight hours, if enlightened people, not least the Norwegians, were willing to fight for it.

³¹ Ibid. ³² Ibid. ³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "Advarsel Til Alle Kristne Mod Markus Thranes 'Norske Amerikaner' [Warning for All Christians against Markus Thrane's 'Norske Amerikaner']," *Emigranten*, August 20, 1866.

Thrane's admiration for Charles Sumner, the radical wing of the Republican Party received little, if any, support within Scandinavian publications.³⁵ Instead the Scandinavian editors' policy positions aligned closely with those of the former Civil War general Benjamin Butler who, in 1869, addressed southern Republicans and stated: "Now you must help yourself."³⁶ In other words, there could be no long-term governmental help for supporters of freedmen and freedwomen (e.g. opportunities for landownership or legal protection in contractual disputes) in the racialized post-war free market economy.³⁷

Among Scandinavian immigrants, not least editors and clergymen, there was little urge to use the Civil War as a stepping-stone to reinvent and extend citizenship rights to the formerly enslaved and to women. Instead, the Scandinavian-American press and clergy devoted space to a multitude of other issues, not least whether slavery was inherently sinful. By debating "last year's war," the Scandinavian-born elite essentially made it more difficult to start a conversation about future struggles over the meaning of equality and citizenship.

Any lingering doubt about whether Old World elites, as represented by Old World state churches, attempted to wield a conservative influence over Scandinavian communities in the New World vanished after the Civil War. *Marcus Thrane's Norske Amerikaner*, as Terje Leiren has shown, "survived only four months, largely because Thrane's social and anticlerical views precipitated a bitter feud with the clergy and its supporters."³⁸ Similarly, the 15th Wisconsin regiment's former chaplain, Claus Clausen, was essentially forced out of the Norwegian Synod when discussions over slavery's sinfulness erupted anew.³⁹

³⁵ When Congress adjourned for the summer in 1868, *Emigranten*, then still under Solberg's editorship, focused mainly on the economy, including the "good" budget, government expenditures, tax, industry, the purchase of Alaska, and the Burlingame treaty with China. See "Kongressen [Congress]," *Emigranten*, August 3, 1868.

³⁶ Quoted in Abbott, *The Republican Party and the South, 1855-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 204.

³⁷ Butler underlined his self-help philosophy, emphasizing individual agency over structural inequalities, in late 1875 when he stated that Black people could not expect government assistance against white terrorists and should themselves take up arms. *Ibid.*, 229.

³⁸ Terje Leiren, "Lost Utopia? The Changing Image of America in the Writings of Marcus Thrane," *Scandinavian Studies* 60, no. 4 (1988): 470-471.

³⁹ The Kingdom of Sweden and Norway abolished slavery on October 7, 1847, the Danish authorities reluctantly followed suit in the West Indies on July 3, 1848, and the United States definitively outlawed slavery with the 13th Amendment on December 6, 1865, but

This schism within the Norwegian community had been evident since 1861, when Claus Clausen retracted his statement that slavery was not “in and of itself a sin,” and it reemerged after July 4, 1864, when J. A. Johnson, who had been instrumental in raising the 15th Wisconsin Regiment, sided with the regiment’s former chaplain.⁴⁰ By 1865, the Synod leadership was publicly known to view Clausen’s interpretation as “diabolical” and rejected attempts to compromise.⁴¹

Throughout the 1860s, the slavery debate raged between conservative Norwegian Synod clergymen with ties to education in the Old World state church and Claus Clausen’s faction who generally stuck to the 1861 statement that slavery was indeed sinful.⁴² While the Norwegian Synod seemingly won the theological debate, Claus Clausen won considerable support in Scandinavian-American communities as well. *Skandinaven*, for example, pointed to Clausen’s popularity in 1867. During a visit to Chicago, Clausen had attracted one of the “largest gathering of Scandinavians [sic] that has ever attended a religious service in America,” *Skandinaven* reported on January 31, 1867:

It is probably especially of the strife and optimism he has shown in regard to slavery as a debatable question within the Lutheran Church that he has come to the front, so to speak, for the public and, not least, because of the harsh unforgivable and unchristian judgement his enemies have spread against him that he [to a great extent], receives the sympathy and is held in high esteem by the public. The following Sunday morning he preached in Vor Frelsers Kirke [Church of Our Savior] in Chicago, again for an overflowing audience.⁴³

still the discussion over whether the Bible sanctioned slavery continued for years in the Scandinavian immigrant communities. See Ernst Ekman, “Sweden, the Slave Trade and Slavery, 1784–1847,” *Revue française d’histoire d’outre-mer* 62, no. 266–227 (1975): 228–229. See also Niklas Thode Jensen and Olsen Poul Erik, “Frihed under Tvang Og Nedgang 1848–78 [Coercion in Freedom During Downturns 1848–78],” in *Vestindien: St. Croix, St. Thomas Og St. Jan [The West Indies: St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. Jan]*, ed. Poul Erik Olsen (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2017). See also “Frie Skoler,” *Emigranten*, September 24, 1866.

⁴⁰ “[W]e may if we choose to so far forget the sacred rights of humanity even believe that slavery is right and just and proper, and insult the Almighty by asserting that slavery is one of his ordained institutions, but let us agree that the will of the majority, constitutionally expressed must and shall be obeyed.” See Johnson, “88 Years Ago to Day the Immortal Continental Congress,” 36.

⁴¹ Claus L. Clausen, *Gjenmæle Mod Kirkeraadet for Den Norske Synode [Response to the Church Council for the Norwegian Synod]* (Chicago, IL: 1869), 64.

⁴² Clausen, “Tilbagekaldelse [Retraction].”

⁴³ “Pastor C. L. Clausen,” *Skandinaven*, January 31, 1867.

The extent to which *Skandinaven* actually spoke for a Scandinavian “public” is difficult to assess, but the account is supported by a correspondent, identified as a former schoolteacher from Hedemarken in Norway, who wrote home from Primrose, Wisconsin, on February 4, 1868. In his description of the religious conflict, the writer stated that the people had “demonstrated common sense and distanced themselves from the clergy’s arguments.”⁴⁴ Only pastor Claus Clausen, according to the letter writer, represented “defense of truth and freedom.”⁴⁵

This postbellum slavery debate in the Norwegian Synod, and its leadership’s insistence that slavery “in and of itself” was not sinful, was one of several examples of racial conservatism among Scandinavian-born opinion makers and helped legitimize opposition to equality and thereby citizenship rights for nonwhites.⁴⁶ In post-emancipation Scandinavian and American society, the view that white men of Nordic heritage were naturally superior to other ethnic groups, not least Black people previously held in bondage and American Indians, was common and, as we have seen, had found alleged religious and “scientific” support in the Old World for more than a century.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ “An America Letter, February 4, 1868 [*Verdens Gang*, April 29, May 13, 27, 1868],” in *America Letters and Articles, 1860–1890*. P435. Box 2 (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1868).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* On the more conservative Norwegian clergy, the letter writer hinted at German and Catholic influence. “Should there appear more bulls about this case or cases like it from the Missouri’s papal holy see, whereto the Wisconsin Synod belongs, then one must likely assume that the Norwegian people will treat the bull like the giant Luther treated the papal bull in 1520.”

⁴⁶ As Haraldsø has argued, the Norwegian Synod’s conservatism was partly tied to an Old World political emphasis on authority and “support for a hierarchically constructed societal model.” See Brynjar Haraldsø, *Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode: En Undersøkelse Av Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode i USA i 1860-Årene Med Særlig Vekt På Debattens Kirkelig-Teologiske Aspekter* [*The Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod: A Study of the Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod in the United States During the 1860 Emphasizing the Debate’s Church-Theological Aspects*] (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1988), 366; Engebret A. Lie, “Ossian Iowa Juli 20th 1869,” in *America Letters. Papers*. P0435 (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1869). Writing to a Norwegian pastor, Engebret A. Lie on July 20, 1869, argued that the Norwegian Synod won the theological debate.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Fredrika Bremer, *The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), 20, 351. Also Jørn Brøndal, “An Early American Dilemma? Scandinavian Travel Writers’ Reflections on the Founding Ideals of the United States and the Condition of African Americans, Ca. 1850–1900,” in *Les Constitutions: Des Révolutions À L’épreuve Du Temps Aux Etats-Unis Et En Europe/Constitutions: On-Going Revolutions in Europe and the United States*, edited by Marie-Elisabeth Baudoin and Marie Bolton (Paris, 2016), 143–144, 55.



FIGURE 12.2 Claus Clausen maintained his theological anti-slavery conviction after the Civil War and was consequently thrown out of the Norwegian Synod, again. Courtesy Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum Archives.

Whether through religion or “science,” these racist views were regularly on display in the Scandinavian-American public sphere, and the connection between Scandinavian religious conservatism and reluctance to embrace nonwhites as equal citizens in the United States was made clear in opinion pieces such as the one that appeared in *Emigranten* on March 16, 1868 linking interpretations of the Bible to racial superiority.

In a piece titled, “Is the Negro an animal or does he have a soul?” an admitted Democrat argued that the differences between white and Black people were so great that the latter could not possibly be a descendent of Adam, whom God had breathed life into, and went on to say that if “the Negro was in [Noah’s] ark (and we believe he was there), he entered as an animal and is an animal to this day.” Moreover, the Norwegian-born writer argued that any mixing of the Black and white race would categorize the offspring as Black and “therefore we believe that only Adam and

his descendants have souls and that Negroes are not descendants of Adam.”⁴⁸

This line of argument resonated with *Emigranten*'s editor, who noted that this opinion had been sent to him by an “esteemed” fellow Norwegian and that it did not seem to make sense to do missionary work among people of African descent, for if Black people were just “soulless donkeys or, at best, enlightened mules, then it is after all too much to make them Christian.”⁴⁹

Clausen, on the other hand, continued to stress a greater sense of equality (“no Christian could be pro-slavery”) and resigned from the Norwegian Synod on June 28, 1868, when its leadership insisted on different theological interpretations.⁵⁰ Along with Clausen, “a dozen or more congregations of the Synod similarly broke away or were split in two.”⁵¹ The Synod, with some merit, accused Clausen of holding theologically inconsistent views in a lengthy account published in 1868.⁵² Clausen's eighty-six-page rebuttal reiterated his anti-slavery position and contained unmistakable references to Grundtvig before he “laid down his pen.”⁵³

With failing health, partly due to his Civil War service, Clausen instead set his sights on landownership in the South and helped spearhead an ill-fated immigrant colony scheme in Virginia.⁵⁴ The colony was partly

⁴⁸ [A Norwegian Democrat], “Er Negeren Et Dyr Eller Har Han En Sjæl? [Is the Negro an Animal or Does He Have a Soul?],” *Emigranten*, March 16, 1868.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1931), 447–448; Claus L. Clausen, *Gjenmæle Mod Kirkeaaedet for Den Norske Synode* [Response to the Church Council for the Norwegian Synod] (Chicago, IL: 1869), 6–8.

⁵¹ Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition*, 447–48.

⁵² Rasmus Andersen, *Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen – Banebryder for Den Norske Og Danske Kirke i Amerika. Første Skandinavisk Feltpræst* [Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen: Trailblazer for the Norwegian and Danish Church in America. First Scandinavian Chaplain] (Blair, NE: Danish Lutheran Publishing House, 1921), 156–157.

⁵³ Clausen, *Gjenmæle Mod Kirkeaaedet for Den Norske Synode* [Response to the Church Council for the Norwegian Synod]; Andersen, *Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen – Banebryder for Den Norske Og Danske Kirke i Amerika. Første Skandinavisk Feltpræst* [Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen: Trailblazer for the Norwegian and Danish Church in America. First Scandinavian Chaplain], 156–58. Also Anders Bo Rasmussen, *I Krig for Lincoln* [To War for Lincoln] (Copenhagen: Informations Forlag, 2014), 288–294; J. R. Christianson, ed., “Clausens on the Move: Chicago, St. Ansgar, Virginia, 1870–1873,” *The Bridge* VI, no. 2 (1984): 28–29.

⁵⁴ Andersen, *Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen – Banebryder for Den Norske Og Danske Kirke i Amerika. Første Skandinavisk Feltpræst* [Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen: Trailblazer for the Norwegian and Danish Church in America. First Scandinavian Chaplain], 225–229;

doomed by the financial crisis of 1873 but did exemplify Scandinavian immigrants' continued preoccupation with land in the post-war years. Most Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes, however, set their sights west.

Exemplifying Scandinavian immigrant concern with social mobility through landownership and an expanding American empire on the continent, Danish-born Laurence Grönlund, whose writings in time would inspire Edward Bellamy and Eugene Debs, published a piece on the Homestead Act in *Fremad* (Forward) on April 23, 1868, shortly after his arrival to the United States.⁵⁵

Grönlund criticized American politicians for being too focused on “corporations and monopolies” at the expense of the “great mass which produce what the legislators consume.”⁵⁶ One notable exemption to the pattern, “an oasis in the desert,” was the Homestead Act, which Grönlund a few weeks later called a politically mandated leveller that allowed poor Old World immigrants to finally enjoy “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”⁵⁷ Impressed with the speed by which “liberal ideas” had spread in the United States to protect poor people against the powerful, Grönlund argued that the nation’s moral character had been elevated, as the people could now enjoy the fruits of their own labor by “sitting under one’s own grapewine and fig tree.”⁵⁸ To Grönlund, landownership yielded an almost “holy satisfaction.”⁵⁹ What is “life worth,” Grönlund asked, “if robbed of all convenience and comfort to the point where life consists of misery, degradation, and poverty”?⁶⁰ Entirely missing from Grönlund’s lengthy texts, however, were questions of Native people’s religious connection, and right, to the land. Such omissions, conscious or not, continued among Scandinavians for decades and helped settlers justify land appropriation.⁶¹

C. T. Christensen, “Danish Consulate and Legation, Pro. Tem. New York April 4th 1872,” in *Papers of Claus Clausen*. RG 15. Box 1. Correspondence 1871–1876 (Decorah, IA: Luther College Archives, 1872).

⁵⁵ P. E. Maher, “Laurence Gronlund: Contributions to American Socialism,” *Western Political Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1962): 620.

⁵⁶ L. A. Grönlund, “Hjemstedslovene [The Homestead Acts],” *Fremad*, April 23, 1868.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; L. A. Grönlund, “Hjemstedslovene [The Homestead Acts],” *Fremad*, May 21, 1868.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* ⁵⁹ *Ibid.* ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Karen V. Hansen, *Encounter on the Great Plains: Scandinavian Settlers and Dispossession of Dakota Indians, 1890–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5. Hansen highlights “historian Jean M. O’Brien” who “astutely observes, [that] denying the Native presence made land taking seem justifiable.” See also Louis Pio, “The Sioux War in 1862,” *Scandinavia*, March, 1884.

To a greater degree than other foreign-born groups such as the German and Irish, Scandinavian immigrants settled predominantly in rural areas (see Figure 12.3).⁶² For this reason, the Homestead Act, predicated on population growth and territorial expansion, was central to Scandinavian immigrants' visions of an American self-sufficient, moral citizenship and remained so for years. Conversely, high-level political attempts at territorial expansion into the Caribbean, where few Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish farmers imagined themselves settling, received much less attention.

To Scandinavian settlers, and many Americans, a contiguous American empire was the aim. Scandinavian immigrants' support was of such scale

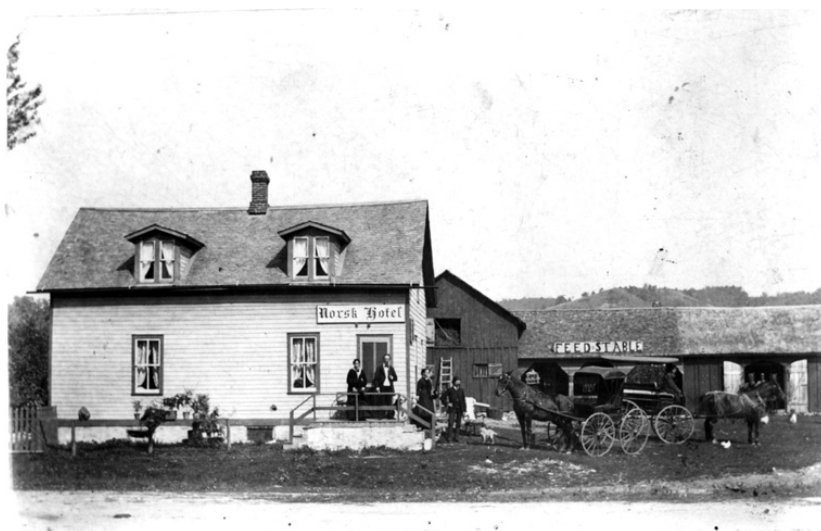


FIGURE 12.3 “Norsk Hotel” (Norwegian hotel) reads the sign above the entrance where four unidentified people are standing in an otherwise rural Iowa setting. The photo thereby exemplifies Norwegian immigrants’ continued attachment to Old World language and culture in rural America, what Jon Gjerde has called “complementary identity.” Courtesy Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum Archives.

⁶² Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen, *Danske i USA 1850–2000. En Demografisk, Social Og Kulturgeografisk Undersøgelse Af De Danske Immigranter Og Deres Efterkommere* [*Danes in the United States 1850–2000. A Demographic, Social and Cultural Geographic Study of the Danish Immigrants and Their Descendants*] (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2005), 160–165.

that “several questions” regarding the Homestead Act arrived at the *Skandinaven* offices in Wisconsin within just one week in 1868. The queries prompted *Skandinaven*’s editors, who knew that this law was one of the “most important for the Norwegian settlers,” to, once again, publish answers to these frequently asked questions.⁶³

Notably, Scandinavian immigrants after the Civil War started casting their gaze even further west. A Norwegian-born settler wrote from Minnesota in early 1868 that “3 ½ years ago there was not a white man in sight. Wild Indians and deer were the only living creatures,” but now numerous Norwegian, Swedish, and American settlements were part of the immediate surroundings.⁶⁴ Just a few months later, the Swedish-born pastor Sven Gustaf Larson relayed news of a small but increasing Swedish community in Jewell County, Kansas, where more than twenty-five countrymen each had laid claim to 160 homestead acres. As an indication of these Scandinavian settlers’ mindset, Larson recounted a conversation with the land commissioner in Junction City who had promised that there would be enough Homestead land for half of Sweden, to which the pastor in his letter to *Hemlandet* remarked, “Why not say all of Sweden’s population if one takes Nebraska and other western states into consideration.”⁶⁵ That the remaining valuable Native land in Kansas would soon be available for purchase “for the usual government price” was taken for granted by Larson in a subsequent dispatch.⁶⁶ The same argument – free land formerly inhabited by American Indians, soon to be available through the Homestead Act or for sale at \$1.25 an acre – appeared time and again in the Scandinavian-American texts.⁶⁷

As far back as 1838, Ole Rynning had noted how “the Indians have now been moved far west away from” the borders of Illinois, and by early

⁶³ “Atter Om Homesteadloven [Once Again on the Homestead Act],” *Skandinaven*, March 5, 1868. In the same issue, a lengthy piece about the contours of European immigration, using “settlement-formation” and “colonization” interchangeably, ran on the front page. See “Kolonisationen [The Colonization],” *Skandinaven*, March 5, 1868.

⁶⁴ T. Olsen Hougem, “Til Fædrelandets Redaktion. Red Rock, Minn., D. 6te Febr. 1868,” *Fædrelandet*, March 5, 1868; “Adopted Citizens and Expansion,” *Skandinaven*, January 11, 1899.

⁶⁵ S. G. Larson, “Från Pastor Larssons Resa [from Pastor Larson’s Travels],” *Hemlandet*, May 12, 1868.

⁶⁶ S. G. Larsson, “Ännu Liten Från Kansas [A Little More from Kansas],” *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Karen V. Hansen notes that “Scandinavian settlers privileged agriculture and therefore saw uncultivated land as unused.” See Hansen, *Encounter on the Great Plains: Scandinavian Settlers and Dispossession of Dakota Indians, 1890–1930*, 5.

1869 a Swedish correspondent reported home about potential landtaking on “[so-called] Osage-Indian land” in southern Kansas but warned against taking land in western Kansas “as long as the bloodthirsty Indians there frequently make their greetings.”⁶⁸

Further north, despite an anonymous correspondent in 1864 imploring *Fædrelandet*’s readers to recognize the immense “suffering” inflicted on Native people following their removal from Minnesota, the dispossession continued in the Dakotas.⁶⁹ Karen V. Hansen explains:

These lands in the public domain of the United States had recently been ceded by Indian peoples negotiating as sovereign powers. From the perspective of American Indians, therefore, the Homestead Act amounted to a wholesale scheme for further encroachment, violating the terms of the treaties they had recently signed protecting their land. In reaction to the continuing advance by white settlers, Dakota Chief Waanatan, attending a peace commission in July 1868, said, “I see them swarming all over my country . . . Take all the white and your soldiers away and all will be well.”⁷⁰

Despite Chief Waanatan’s plea, white settlers, Scandinavians among them, continued to move onto American Indian land and within decades came to occupy much of the land around Spirit Lake that had otherwise been set aside for Dakota bands following the 1862 war in Minnesota.⁷¹ White supremacy was, as Barbara Fields reminds us, “a set of political programs,” among other things, and the Homestead Act, with its requirement for citizenship or stated intent to naturalize, was one such example.⁷² Many Scandinavian-Americans saw landownership or opportunities for upward social mobility, along with political participation, as a right that came along with their understanding of American citizenship.⁷³ In the process, Scandinavian immigrants often supported

⁶⁸ Blegen, *Ole Rynning’s True Account of America* (Minneapolis, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Society, 1921), 50; A. Ahlqvist, “Utdrag Ur Ett Bref Från Kansas [Excerpt of a Letter from Kansas],” *Svenska Amerikanaren*, January 5, 1869.

⁶⁹ Pro Bono Publico, “Dakota. Blue Earth Winnebagoerne,” *Fædrelandet*, April 28 1864.

⁷⁰ Hansen, *Encounter on the Great Plains: Scandinavian Settlers and Dispossession of Dakota Indians, 1890–1930*, 10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 10–14, 36–45.

⁷² Barbara J. Fields, “Ideology and Race in American History,” in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143, 56. “The determination to keep the United States a white man’s country,” Fields points out, “has been a central theme of American, not just Southern, history. Racism has been America’s tragic flaw.”

⁷³ For examples of the Homestead issue’s continued appeal, see “Wigtigt För “Homesteadsettlares” i Minnesota [Important for Homestead Settlers in Minnesota]”;

a social hierarchy where American Indians and nonwhite people were deemed inferior. Still, in 1864, *Fædrelandet's* anonymous correspondent described Native people in the Dakota territory as “sick, naked, about to die of hunger, and defenseless”; and several descriptions of “suffering poor” freedpeople, who, in Frederick Douglass’ words, were “literally turned loose, naked, hungry, and destitute, to the open sky” after the Civil War, also appeared in the Scandinavian-American public sphere.⁷⁴ Initiatives to help alleviate nonwhite poverty, organized by Scandinavian-born immigrants, however, remained rare. Instead, Scandinavian community leaders, when advocating economic assistance to groups in precarious circumstances, prioritized resources to local Scandinavian-American aid societies or collections on behalf of Old World communities suffering from starvation or deep poverty.

While Scandinavian immigrants generally subscribed to the “free labor” ideology underlying their idea of “liberty and equality,” these ethnic mutual aid initiatives also testified to immigrants’ awareness of the market revolution’s potential fallibility.⁷⁵ White skin, a Protestant upbringing, and a relatively high educational level due to Old World compulsory education enabled many Scandinavian immigrants to steer clear of the most “exploitative class relationships,” but hard work did not always yield economic success.⁷⁶

This realization had, in part, led three Scandinavians in New York to form an association in the summer of 1844 to socialize and provide help in

“Skatten Paa Homesteadland i Minnesota [The Tax on Homestead Land in Minnesota],” *Hemlandet*, May 26, 1868.

⁷⁴ Publico, “Dakota. Blue Earth Winnebagoerne.” Frederick Douglass is quoted in Susan Opatow, “‘Not So Much as Place to Lay Our Head . . .’: Moral Inclusion and Exclusion in the American Civil War Reconstruction,” *Social Justice Research* 21, no. 1 (2008): 30. *Fædrelandet* published an appeal from General Rufus Saxton to send blankets and other supplies to South Carolina ahead of winter to “alleviate the want” among freedpeople. And *Hemlandet* reported on the death among the children of Black Union soldiers and published a call for “help” from “Mrs. Josephine S. Griffin,” but similar initiatives did not originate within the Scandinavian community. See “Stor Nöd Bland Friade [Great Want among the Freed],” *Hemlandet*, November 15, 1865; “Trængende Negre [Destitute Negroes],” *Fædrelandet*, November 9, 1865.

⁷⁵ Winslow, “Det Skandinaviske Selskab i New-York [The Scandinavian Association in New York].”

⁷⁶ Ibid. See also Brøndal, “An Early American Dilemma? Scandinavian Travel Writers’ Reflections on the Founding Ideals of the United States and the Condition of African Americans, Ca. 1850–1900,” 139–140. For a discussion of whiteness and exploitation, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), 13.

case a fellow countryman fell on hard times.⁷⁷ This Scandinavian Association established in a small house on Cherry Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side had the added purpose, according to a later travel writer, of bringing Scandinavians together to counterbalance "German, Irish, and all the other foreign nations who already have societies here."⁷⁸ The Scandinavian Association's minutes – and its underlying mutual aid idea, which inspired similar associations in the Midwest – was a reminder that Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants regularly needed a helping hand to stay afloat in the American labor market.⁷⁹

Scandinavian immigrants in Wisconsin and Illinois also set up several mutual aid societies in 1868 as hunger in Norway became a factor that increasingly pushed people in the Old World toward the Midwest. The Swedish association Swea and "the Emigrant Aid Association" worked both separately and collaboratively to establish a shelter in Chicago.⁸⁰ Moreover, John A. Johnson in Wisconsin organized a collection of funds for needy immigrants to be sent to *Fædrelandet's* editor or distributed through aid societies and pastors in Chicago or Milwaukee.⁸¹

The Scandinavian immigrant elite, however, who specifically advocated American landownership as a means for achieving equality and liberty when leaving the Old World, were conspicuously silent on the topic of land- (and by extension wealth-) redistribution in the wake of the Civil War and by 1868 were more interested in white ethnic economic issues than in national aid initiatives on behalf of nonwhites. In short, Scandinavian-Americans in the post-war moment proved more interested in organizing help for their former fellow citizens from the Old World

⁷⁷ "Love for Skandinavisk Forening Af 1844 [Statutes for Scandinavian Association of 1844]," in *IEP Skandinavisk Forening af 1844. Love . . .* (New York: New York Public Library, 1898). See also Winslow, "Det Skandinaviske Selskab i New-York [The Scandinavian Association in New York]."

⁷⁸ Axel Felix, *Langt Fra Danmark 1–10: Skitser Og Scener Fra De Forenede Stater i Nordamerika. Bind 1* (Forlaget Danmark, 1985), 59. Felix claims that the society was organized on a Sunday but puts the date at June 27, while A. N. Rygg, writing in 1941, puts the date at July 9, 1844. See Rygg, *Norwegians in New York 1825–1925* (New York: Norwegian News Company, 1941), 9–10.

⁷⁹ Winslow, "Det Skandinaviske Selskab i New-York [The Scandinavian Association in New York]"; Clifford E. Clark Jr., "The Changing Nature of Protestantism in Mid-Nineteenth Century America: Henry Ward Beecher's Seven Lectures to Young Men," *Journal of American History* 57, no. 4 (1971): 832–846.

⁸⁰ "Till 'Emigrantens' Redaktion [for 'Emigrantens' Editorial Office]," *Hemlandet*, May 14, 1868.

⁸¹ J. A. Johnson, "Christeligsindede Medborgere! [Christian-Minded Fellow Citizens!]," *Emigranten*, May 30, 1868.

than they were in helping American Indians, on whose lands they often settled, or in helping the newly emancipated, and soon to be fellow, American citizens navigate the structural pitfalls of a free labor economy.⁸²

By 1868 the work to ensure political and civil rights for freedpeople seemed finished in the eyes of the Scandinavian-American editors. The former Confederate States were slowly adopting the rewritten Constitution that formally ended slavery within the United States, and now financial matters could again occupy the minds and newspaper pages in Scandinavian communities. The economic opportunities that had led the Civil War-era Scandinavian immigrants to the United States in the first place were now to be utilized, Homestead Act in hand, with freedpeople's and American Indians' rights taking a back seat to the renewed focus on agricultural and industrial growth.

Yet, even as Scandinavian-American communities pushed issues of reconstruction into the background, continued discussions over citizenship rights in Washington, DC, turned out to have important implications for the attainment of contiguous and noncontiguous American empire

⁸² Ferd S. Winslow, "Til Skandinaverne i Chicago! [To the Scandinavians in Chicago]," *Hemlandet*, April 28, 1868; Johnson, "Christeligsindede Medborgere! [Christian-Minded Fellow Citizens!]."