

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# Public Documents of Maine :

BEING THE

ANNUAL REPORTS

OF THE VARIOUS

PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INSTITUTIONS

FOR THE YEARS

1872-73.

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AUGUSTA :

SPRAGUE, OWEN & NASH, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1873.

# REPORTS

OF THE

BOARD AND COMMISSIONER

OF

IMMIGRATION.

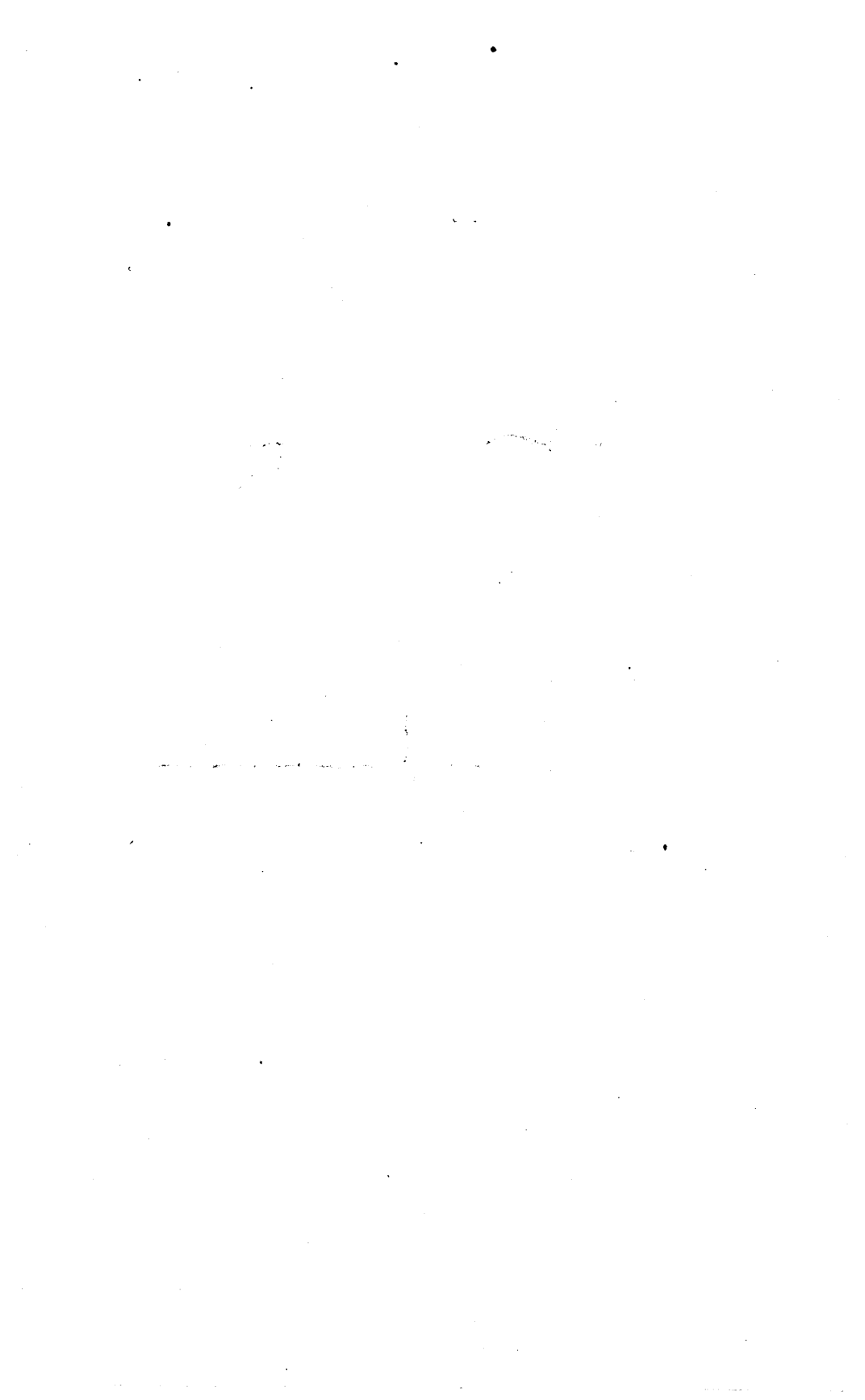
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## REPORT OF THE BOARD.

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*To the Senate and House of Representatives:*

The Board of Immigration created by the act approved February 20, 1872, entitled "an act to promote immigration and facilitate the settlement of the public lands," appointed W. W. Thomas, Jr., Commissioner of Immigration, and Nicholas P. Clasè, Agent to reside in New Sweden. Unfortunately for the colony, the past season has been so rainy that it was utterly impossible to clear more than one third of the land intended for crops; and for the same reason part of the grain was badly rusted. Had the season been as favorable as usual, the colonists would have raised an abundance for themselves and to supply their countrymen who will join them during the next year.

In all other respects the condition of the colony is highly satisfactory. Though deploring the partial failure of their crops, the colonists are not discouraged, but express their determination to become thoroughly acquainted with the principles of our Government and language, and declare their confidence in the success of the colony. In consequence of the partial loss of their crops it will become necessary to extend some further aid to a portion of the immigrants.

The money expended in this way is not lost to the State, but accomplishes the double purpose of planting a colony of intelligent, industrious, frugal people to become taxpayers and citizens, and building roads through the most valuable lands of the State.

We transmit herewith the Report of the Commissioner of Immigration which furnishes complete information in regard to the past history and present condition of the colony.

SIDNEY PERHAM,  
GEORGE G. STACY,  
PARKER P. BURLEIGH, } *Board of  
Immigration.*

AUGUSTA, December 27, 1872.

## REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER.

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*To the Honorable Governor and Board of*

*Immigration of the State of Maine :*

I have the honor to submit the following report for 1872.

Swedish immigration continues steadily to increase the population of Maine.

In 1870 one hundred and fourteen Swedes arrived and settled in our State.

In 1871 this number was augmented to one thousand.

The effort during the present year has been rather to firmly establish the Swedish settlers already within our borders than to add to their numbers. Still the immigration has continued to flow. Three hundred immigrants have arrived in 1872, and the Swedish population of Maine to-day numbers not less than *thirteen hundred*.

*These immigrants have all paid their own passage to Maine and brought with them \$60,000 in cash.*

The Swedes are not all settled in one locality, but are distributed throughout our entire State. They are at work in the great tanneries of Penobscot, and the slate quarries of Piscataquis ; on the farms and in the mills and lumber woods of Penobscot and Aroostook, and upon the railroads of Cumberland and York. They furnish help in families, stores and work-shops in Portland, Bangor, Houlton, Presque Isle, Fort Fairfield, Caribou and other cities and villages. They are everywhere intelligent, trustworthy laborers, and everywhere are praised and prized by their employers.

The city of Portland alone numbers over three hundred Scandinavian inhabitants. They have organized a flourishing society, leased a hall, hold weekly meetings, and enjoy an annual celebration.

Some of our Swedish immigrants have come to us in independent circumstances and purchased improved farms in Presque Isle, Fort Fairfield, Maysville, Woodland and other towns, paying from \$300 to \$2500 for the homesteads on which they have located. None of these Swedes and but few of those who are at large throughout Maine, seven hundred in number, have received any pecuniary assistance from the State.

#### NEW SWEDEN.

The heart of this enterprise however, the center which both attracts Swedish immigrants to Maine, and holds them within our borders, the nucleus around which the immigration of the future will gather, is the colony of New Sweden.

In the summer of 1870 a little company of fifty Swedes sailed across the Atlantic and founded a New Sweden in the forests of northern Maine. In two years this colony has increased twelve fold and now numbers six hundred souls.

At the center of the settlement a commodious public building which the Swedes call the capitol, was erected; thence roads were cut into the woods in every direction; from these roads lots of one hundred acres were run out, a lot was assigned to each settler, and each one worked early and late to transform one hundred acres of forest into a comfortable and profitable homestead.

#### CROPS.

The immigrants of 1870 each cleared his little "chopping" in the woods the same year, sowed his clearing the next spring and reaped his first harvest the autumn of 1871.

One hundred and sixty-five acres of land were thus put into a



crop—fifty of which were seeded to grass—and three thousand bushels of grain and five thousand bushels of potatoes were harvested.

Meanwhile new immigrants were pouring in, taking up lots, building houses and felling the forest. From five to twenty acres of woodland were cut over on each of nearly two hundred lots, and these “felled pieces” comprised in the aggregate two thousand acres.

Had the season been ordinarily favorable, these two thousand acres would all have been cleared and put into a crop the spring of 1872. Frequent and copious storms of rain, however, rendered it impossible to get any first general burn on most of the chop-pings. The Swedes were thus compelled to chop, pile and burn the logs while green and wet, vexed and delayed by thousands of branches and bushes, which a general burn would have consumed, and despite great energy and hard work, were unable to clear but seven hundred acres of land. This was sowed last spring with wheat, rye, barley, oats, beans, peas, potatoes, turnips and garden vegetables. One hundred and fifty acres of the grain fields were also seeded to grass. The crops grew luxuriantly and promised abundance, but an extraordinary succession of warm rains in August and September rusted the standing grain and injured much that was cut. Rust fell also upon the potatoes, stopping their growth and causing many to rot.

This year's crop in New Sweden, though well put in and growing on most fertile soil, has been so damaged by unexampled wet weather that it is a partial failure.

This same wet, however, has occasioned an excellent catch of grass on the one hundred and fifty acres seeded, which will prove a great help to the colonists during the coming year.

#### BUILDINGS.

The cabins of logs and bark, which most of the immigrants hastily threw together for shelter on their arrival, are now very

generally replaced with substantial houses of timber; many commodious frame and timber barns have also been built.

On the clearings of New Sweden are one hundred houses, sixty of them with cellars, and eighty-eight barns.

#### LIVE STOCK.

The original colony brought no domestic animals into the woods with them.

As soon as pasturage, hay or fodder could be obtained, however, the Swedes commenced purchasing necessary live stock; and now own seventeen horses, six oxen, seventy-six cows, eleven sheep and one hundred and eighteen swine.

#### MANUFACTURES.

Early in 1872 a number of Swedes formed a company under the name of "New Sweden Shingle Bolaget Industria," for the purpose of manufacturing shingles from the cedar on their lots. A steam engine of thirty-five horse power and a shingle machine of the capacity of 15 M shingles a day were purchased in Bangor and transported to New Sweden.

A mill was erected in a convenient location on a branch of the Caribou stream, and on the 3d of May, 1872, the steam whistle sounded for the first time through the woods of northern Aroostook and the only stationary steam engine in the county was put in operation. It had sawed up to December 1st, 700,000 shingles. The first and second qualities have been sold outside the colony, while the lower grades are used by the colonists on their houses and barns. This mill complete, cost \$4,500.

A second shingle company was soon after formed. A machine and engine of fifteen horse power purchased in Bangor, a mill erected and sawing commenced in October. This mill is situated about three miles from the first and cost \$3,000. Both mills were erected by the labor, money and credit of the Swedes, without

the contribution of a dollar directly or indirectly, by the State.

These mills will be worked up to their full capacity through the present winter and will furnish employment to many colonists, who by reason of having families or other cause cannot go outside the colony to work.

A dam was built across the Beardsley brook in the autumn of 1871, and a mill with a single up and down saw, completed and put in operation early last spring. A portion of the dam, however, was carried away by a freshet. During the past summer the dam was thoroughly rebuilt and the mill recommenced sawing boards in October. Not only the Swedes but the nearest French settlers will haul logs to this mill. It is situated on the Beardsley brook near its junction with the Little Madawaska river, is four and one-quarter miles from the capitol and five from the nearest steam mill.

#### ROADS.

The supplies, tools, etc., furnished by the State are not *given* the Swedes, but *sold* them on credit, and payment taken in work on roads and other public improvements.

From the founding of the colony in 1870, to December 1st, 1871, the Swedes thus received State aid to the amount of.....	\$9,925 13
And were credited by work.....	2,238 00
Balance due in 1871.....	\$7,687 13
From December 1st, 1871, to December 1st, 1872, Swedes debtor to State aid.....	\$10,382 94
Credit by work.....	2,040 00
Balance due 1872.....	\$8,342 94
Total State aid to December 1st, 1872.....	\$20,308 07
Total credit by work.....	4,278 00
Total balance due.....	\$16,030 07

This balance of indebtedness the Swedes will repay in work on State roads, etc., as rapidly as they can spare the time from the

all important task of raising sufficient to live upon from their own clearings.

For the purpose of building and maintaining roads, New Sweden is divided into ten highway districts, to each of which is appointed a competent Swedish road surveyor. The inhabitants of every district work under their own surveyor, on their own roads, and also on allotted sections of the main highway.

Thirty miles of road have thus been cut through the woods and put in passable condition, with knolls leveled, the worst stumps removed, swamps corduroyed and streams substantially bridged. Three miles also of the main highway have been turnpiked in a thorough manner, which gives the colonists a good road from the capitol out of the woods to the nearest American settlers.

The road from New Sweden to Fort Kent, which was suggested in my last report, was laid out by the Commissioners of Aroostook county in October of the present year.

This road is but a continuation of the main thoroughfare from Caribou to New Sweden, in the same general northwest direction, to the confluence of the St. John and Fish rivers. It is thirty-seven miles in length, of easy grade, passes through excellent settling lands the entire distance, will tend largely to open up a tract of 600,000 acres, lying between the Aroostook and St. John rivers, will shorten the travelled distance by twenty-five miles from Fort Kent and the growing settlements of the upper St. John, to Caribou, Fort Fairfield, Presque Isle, Houlton and rail communication, and can be largely built by Swedish labor, in payment of supplies furnished by the State.

This road is a public necessity, and fortunately can be constructed in great part by the same appropriations which enable the Swedes to live while they hew themselves a home out of the forest.

#### POST OFFICE.

The general government of the United States has recognized our new colony by establishing a post office there, appointing a

postmaster, making the road from Caribou to New Sweden a post route, and inaugurating regular paid postal service to commence July 1st, 1873.

#### NEWSPAPER.

In January last a weekly newspaper, "The North Star," was successfully started at Caribou, eight miles distant from New Sweden. Every issue of this paper contains a column in the Swedish language, edited by Mr. E. Winberg, one of our Swedish immigrants, and extensively read in New Sweden.

It is an interesting fact, that this is the first paper or portion of a paper ever published in a Scandinavian language in New England, although the Scandinavians sailed along our coast, and built temporary settlements on our shores five hundred years before Columbus discovered the islands of our continent.

#### CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

Public religious services have continued to be held every Sunday throughout the year. The Sabbath school also is largely attended every week, and great interest manifested by both teachers and scholars.

The first free common school was opened November 13, 1871, in the hall of the capitol. Rev. Andrew Wiren, the pastor, was teacher. His school numbered seventy-seven scholars, and continued four months.

The English language was the only study permitted to be taught. To speak, read and write our tongue was deemed to be of more importance to these Swedes in Maine, than all other branches of education.

The public examination of this school occurred the fifteenth of last March. Rev. W. T. Sleeper, Supervisor of Schools for Aroostook County, and your Commissioner were present. Mr. Sleeper in a report of the exercises of the day, thus speaks of the Swedish school:

*School Examination at New Sweden.*

"Pastor Wiren closed his school on March 15th, which has been under his instruction for four months. This was the first and only school (except Sabbath school) that has been taught in the Swedish colony. It was a purely English school. Commissioner Thomas, who has had the whole control of the colony and the expenditure of the State money for school and other purposes, directed the teacher, Mr. A. Wiren, when he opened the school, to teach the children to read and talk in the English language, to let other branches alone at present, and bend all his energies in this single direction. This was sensible counsel, and the remarkable results prove the wisdom of such a course. The teacher was further directed to make the explanations as far as possible in the English language, and require the pupils to talk and ask questions in the same tongue. Not a word in Swedish was allowed to be spoken by the children.

"We had the pleasure of attending the examination of Mr. Wiren's school. And such a school, and such hosts of visitors on examination day we never saw before. This school numbered seventy-seven boys and girls, from five to sixteen years old. The parents were present from every part of the colony, to the number of about three hundred. One father and mother, who lived five miles off, and had two children attending the school, came the night before on Swedish snow-shoes, across the woods, drawing their young babe on a sled. A more interested audience one may not often see than this assemblage of three hundred parents and friends, witnessing the performances of their children, brothers and sisters, in a language they themselves could not understand. Only about thirty adults can speak or read in English.

"The reading of these children, after a training of only four months, was remarkable for its clear, loud, distinct articulation, and for the correctness of modulation and inflection for the most part. We have heard many classes that have attended school five years, under the charge of such teachers as we have, with such town supervision as we get, that could not read half so well as these Swedish children.

"After the children had finished their reading, declamations, dialogues and recitations of poems in English were in order; and here every pupil had a part—little boys and girls, five years old, going upon the platform, making a handsome bow, and then

speaking some little piece. One young miss recited very distinctly, Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life.'

"At the close of the children's performances, we were called upon to make remarks. The parents—except about thirty, who know some English—could not understand us, and we supposed the children would not be able to comprehend our words in English; but, to our surprise, all the children were interested listeners. If an amusing remark was made, they laughed heartily, and if a question was put to them, they responded in a chorus of voices, giving the right answer. This proved that the children had learned English in a practical way. They could understand conversation and converse themselves.

"This is a remarkable work to accomplish so soon, when it is remembered that three or four months ago they knew no English.

"In witnessing this examination and the day's proceedings we were deeply impressed. What shall be the future of this colony? With the start it already has, it would seem impossible but the result shall be favorable to this people, and greatly beneficial to our State. The value of the capitol building, where public worship is had, where the school for the entire colony is kept, and where must be every public gathering, cannot be estimated. With this building, moral instruction, education, religion, and patriotism are possible, and about certain. Without this building, or something equivalent to it, the people would gradually go backward until they reached a state of barbarism.

"During the day the American flag was floating from one flag-staff, and both the American and Swedish from another. The fifteenth day of March was a very stormy day, but to witness such a scene was worth facing a storm many miles. This day will long be remembered by about four hundred of the Swedish colony who were at the capitol, and listened to the performances of that occasion."

A second term of this school was commenced early last September and still continues in session. Pastor Wiren is teacher and has eighty pupils. The English language is still the study of the school. Some of the older and more advanced scholars are however, instructed in arithmetic and geography. To show how this instruction is prized, it may be stated that some children come

five miles through the woods to school—slipping over the snow on *skidor*, Swedish snow-shoes.

#### MARRIAGES, BIRTHS, DEATHS.

Since the founding of the colony there have occurred seven marriages, fifty births and twenty-seven deaths. Most of the latter were aged people or infants.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS.

Two years and a half ago New Sweden was an unbroken wilderness; no blow of the settler's axe had ever been struck in its solitudes, no smoke from settler's cabin had ever risen among its forests. To-day New Sweden is an organized community; the home of six hundred pioneers from over the ocean, with roads and clearings, houses, barns and domestic animals, mills and stores, the church and school-house, free schools and free worship of God.

Such a result in so short a time could never have been attained, had it not been for the liberal aid and fostering care of the State of Maine. It was expected by both the State and the colonists that no further aid would be necessary; that by the close of 1872 the colony would be permanently founded and able by its unaided exertions to go forward towards a future alike prosperous for itself and our commonwealth.

But the winds and the clouds, which no man can stay in their courses, have been unpropitious; incessant pouring rains have quenched the clearing fires of the settlers and damaged their crops. This unexpected misfortune has not dampened the courage of the colonists, but compels them though reluctantly to appeal to the State for aid.

A large sum is not asked, since one third of the settlers are independent and another third have money, wages or crops sufficient to half support themselves; but it is most earnestly requested that such moderate appropriation be granted as will supply the needy with seed in the spring and food until harvest time.



This is not asked as a gift; each Swede is charged for all the supplies furnished him, and works out his debt on roads and public improvements which are of permanent value to the State.

Should the Legislature deem it just and wise to grant the aid indicated, it is believed that by such aid the future of New Sweden will be rendered secure, that no further assistance whatever from the State will be needed; that the colony will continue to grow by immigration and natural increase until a large portion of the wilderness of northern Maine is converted into a productive and tax-paying area, and that Swedish mechanics, workmen and servants, drawn to Maine by the influence of New Sweden will supply in great measure the demand for honest, efficient labor now felt throughout our State, and which is becoming every day more pressing by the revival of shipbuilding and the quickening of manufactures.

W. W. THOMAS, JR.,  
*Commissioner of Immigration.*

NEW SWEDEN, Dec. 14, 1872.