Five hundred seventy newspapers and other periodicals were started by the Norwegian immigrants in North America. Of these, Skandinaven, published by the John Anderson Publishing Company in Chicago, was by far the biggest, the most influential, and, until its demise in 1941, the longest-lived. The paper’s circulation reached 53,742 for the semi-weekly edition and 24,540 for the daily in the peak year of 1912. Only Minneapolis Tidende and the nonpolitical Decorah-Posten approached these figures; the circulation of most of the papers never exceeded the range of 5,000 to 10,000.1 Again, while 33.7 percent of the Norwegian-American papers died at the end of their first year and 88.6 percent did not live more than ten,2 Skandinaven built itself so solid a position that it lasted seventy-six years, and it had more subscribers in its last year than most of the other papers had at their height.

Historians account for the unique success of Skandinaven, Decorah-Posten, and Minneapolis Tidende by noting that they alone of the Norwegian-American papers were owned and operated by experienced, practical
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printers — John Anderson, Brynild Anundsen, and Thorvald Gulbrandsen. Chicago newspaper biographies of John Anderson attributed Skandinaven's success to the hard work of its principal owner; John Anderson himself gave the credit to hard work and good editors. All of these factors, plus the firm's location in Chicago, contributed to Skandinaven's rise to prominence.

John Anderson was born in Voss, Norway, on March 22, 1836, and was brought by his parents to Chicago in 1845. His two brothers died on this journey. At Chicago the family were met by Ivar Lawson (born Larsen), an earlier immigrant who had become adviser and banker for many of the newly arrived Scandinavians. Lawson was the first Norwegian to hold public office in Chicago. There was a small Norwegian settlement on Superior Street, and Anderson's father bought a lot on Clark Street between Superior and Chicago Avenue for $210. (The lot was worth $25,000 in 1899.) Here he began building an eight-room frame house, but before it was finished he died in the cholera epidemic of 1848.

Twelve-year-old John was left responsible for his mother, an infant sister, and for the money due on both the house and the lot. He rented out most of the house, then started selling apples and newspapers, and managed to get in one year at the Kinzie School, the only formal education he ever received.

The first newspaper Anderson served as a carrier was the Commercial Advertiser. He learned to set type at this plant and at the Argus, the next paper he worked for. When the Argus was sold to the Democratic Press, he went with it. Then the Democratic Press was consolidated with the Tribune in 1852. By this time, Anderson was a regular compositer and was developing a reputation for rapid work and a talent for display. According to a congratulatory editorial which Skandinaven offered
the Chicago Tribune on its ninetieth anniversary, "the task of setting the Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858 was intrusted to [Anderson]."\textsuperscript{4} The scale of the undertaking, and the honor involved, cannot be properly determined from this brief reference, but at any rate his skill was such that by 1856 (at age twenty) he was placed in charge of the advertising department of the Tribune composing room, a position he held for ten years.

Anderson had saved his money and invested it in real estate; when he decided in 1866 to leave the Chicago Tribune to start his own Norwegian-language newspaper, he was the owner of seven lots and two houses. He needed additional capital, however, and he obtained it from one Andrew Nilson Brekke\textsuperscript{5} and from Ivar Larson. Up to this time none of the Norwegian-American newspapers had been financially successful, and starting one was regarded as a highly risky venture. Lawson was also instrumental in securing a good editor for the paper — his wife’s uncle Knud Langeland, the highly respected former editor of Nordlyset, the first Norwegian-American newspaper.

Langeland told the story this way: “It had long been discussed by my friends in Chicago that I ought to come there and make a new attempt with a Norwegian newspaper; but since I had had costly experiences myself and seen how unsuccessfully it had gone for others, I could not give them an encouraging answer. Finally in the summer of 1865 Mr. John Anderson came out to my farm in Racine County while on a visit to his wife’s relatives. . . . My friends had recommended him to me as well qualified to run a press. Yet nothing was settled at that time, because I still had reservations about embarking on this undertaking. Early in the spring of the next year he came back out and brought a letter of recommendation with him from Ivar Larson, in which was emphasized intentions of financial support should it prove
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necessary, together with the assurance that he considered Mr. Anderson competent as a printer and a businessman. With this my scruples were overcome."  

They purchased the subscription lists of the foundering Norske-Amerikanerne, a newspaper which had been started in 1865 by Marcus Thrane; on May 2, 1866, they issued the first number of Skandinaven from offices in an upper story at the corner of Clark and South Water streets. 

The paper was a four-page weekly of news and editorial comment. Despite many predictions of a short career, it was favorably received, both in Chicago and in the surrounding area of Illinois and Wisconsin. In 1870 a separate tri-weekly edition, designed for Chicago readers, was begun, and in the following year this was made a daily. Since several sources clearly state that the paper was not financially successful before the Great Fire of 1871, these expansions were not the result of reinvested profits. They were more likely an effort to attract local Chicago advertising by separating the local from the distant purchasers.

The circulation for both editions was growing slowly but steadily when the Great Fire, of October 8–9, 1871, completely destroyed the paper’s plant. Anderson lost everything he owned except his subscription lists. Insurance was uncollectible, and there was neither printing press nor type to be had anywhere in the city. But he borrowed $500 from somewhere to go to Madison, Wisconsin, where he purchased a press and Norwegian type and hauled them back to Chicago. On October 18, nine days after the fire, he reissued his newspaper from a burned-out cellar office.

In May, 1872, Langeland resigned as editor; neither he nor Anderson ever explained for the record just why they split. Langeland immediately went into partnership with Ivar Lawson and John A. Johnson, the manufacturer
of farm and industrial machinery and leading citizen of Madison, to publish another Norwegian newspaper in Chicago called *Amerika*. The three men signed their articles of co-partnership on June 12, 1872. Johnson had evidently offered originally to buy out John Anderson’s share in *Skandinaven*; on June 27, he repeated his offer in the following letter:

“Dear Sir: Although you told me you had decided not to sell your paper, yet I suppose you are like all the rest of us liable to change your mind. If there should be any trade between us it would have to be fixed up very soon, as we have our location decided upon and shall take a lease at latest on Saturday. The same is the case with presses. We have made our choice and shall give our orders very soon. After such arrangements are made you understand the difficulties in the way of a trade would probably be too great to be overcome.

“Although of course I have the same right to go into the newspaper business, which as you know is congenial to my taste, which you would have to go into the reaper business if that should appear advisable to you, yet it will I suppose be as true in the former case as it would be in the latter that there would be a division of business and that as a consequence one would somewhat effect [sic] the other. That was my reason for proposing to buy you out in the first place, and as I stated to you was willing to pay a big price under the circumstances.

“Should you be of different opinion in regard to selling now from what you were please call on me at 206 Lake St. and if I should not be in leave a note fixing time and place of meeting.”

Anderson again refused to sell out. He hired Professor Svein Nilsson, another man with a reputation in the Norwegian community, as his new editor, and enough of their subscribers and advertisers remained loyal to carry them through the rest of 1872.
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B. Anundsen, Decorah-Posten's publisher, once recalled that whenever things looked really desperate he expanded the paper, and that eventually the bravado paid off. Anderson perhaps used the same tactics. The year 1872 must have been a difficult one for him, trying to recoup from the fire and losing his editor to a new and wealthier competitor. Yet it was in 1872 that he began his most audacious venture: the publication of a biweekly European edition, designed for circulation in Norway and Denmark. It contained no advertising, and only American news, the markets, and the notices of births, deaths, and marriages in the Norwegian-American community.

It was evidently a successful enterprise, for it had become a weekly paper and was still being published in December, 1891, according to the Artist Printer, which stated that the European edition was regarded in Scandinavia "as authority on all matters pertaining to America," and that, "with the exception of the New York Herald, [it] is the only weekly newspaper in the United States prepared especially for European circulation." The European edition was discontinued some time between 1891 and 1899, for the official reason that "its readers came to prefer the regular weekly edition; as they often stated, this edition contained a better selection, and a larger amount, of Norwegian news than could be had from papers published in Norway itself." Making Skandinaven's name well known in Norway at a time when thousands of Norwegians were leaving for the United States undoubtedly helped to swell the ranks of the paper's American subscribers.

Amerika meanwhile met with moderate but not overwhelming success. Then in the fall of 1872 Ivar Lawson died suddenly; his son Victor Fremont Lawson was new to all his father's business enterprises, John A. Johnson was two hundred miles from Chicago and a busy man,
and Langeland was, on his own admission, no businessman. So a consolidation was effected between the two papers and publishing companies: the new *Skandinaven og Amerika* was issued January 1, 1873, with Johnson, Anderson, and Lawson as publishers, and Svein Nilsson and Knud Langeland as editors. Besides their financial investments in the business, Johnson contributed influence, prestige, and frequent articles, Lawson was cashier, and Anderson expertly directed the presses.

John A. Johnson’s career as a self-made, civic-minded businessman, and his influence in Wisconsin politics and Norwegian-American cultural and church affairs have been well documented elsewhere. His personal and financial support of *Skandinaven* (*Amerika* was dropped from the title after 1873) was probably crucial to its survival during the trying decade of the 1870s. Although he sold out his interest in the firm to Anderson and Lawson in April, 1876, letters written to him by Anderson between 1873 and 1886, preserved in his papers at the Norwegian-American Historical Association archives, bear witness to a number of loans made during these years, and also to Anderson’s struggle to repay them. Two of the more interesting letters are reproduced here; the first was written June 21, 1873, shortly after the firm’s offices had been moved to a building owned by the Lawson estate:

“Dear Sir: Your letter of the 13th inst. was duly received and contents noted. In answer to the first part of your letter I will state that I have studied how and where to cut down expenses in all departments, from the Press-Room up to the News-Room, but fail to discover any place where we can cut off any help at present, our help is certainly cheap considering the workmen we have, with the exception of one man, and you know as well as I do who that man is, you give him an inch he
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will want a foot. I made it a rule with myself last Monday morning to be in the office about 7 o'clock in the morning and stay until 1 o'clock P.M., so that I could see that every man was at his post on time and cut down those that are not. I have given instructions to Nelson, Foreman of Job Room, to lay off one or two men in his room whenever work was slack, and the men must take their turns about it, they all work by the week; in the News-Room they work by the piece or M with the exception of Johanneson and Jenson.

"The receipts of Job Work has not been collected by far, as heretofore the bills have not been made out as promptly as they should have been, Fremont having been too busy, but after this will have material help from Storm, and bills will be collected more closely. For my part I cannot see why the job office does not pay, but I know it does pay and will pay better in the future. You must remember that we have had considerable of printing of our own, dead-head, and have heretofore labored under disadvantages, and it takes both time and money to move and fix up things as they should be, but that is now done. I think we have bought paper and stock as cheap as any printing office in the city and great deal cheaper than most of the printing offices, considering amount used, as Fremont can testify to. Of course you know times are exceedingly hard and money very tight, but I think we will come out all right.

"As to that part of your letter alluding to me, I am thankful to you for [sic] especially for its frankness of tone; accidents will happen once in awhile, but you will find in the future that you need not borrow any uneasiness on my account, as you will find that if any man attends to his business connected with the office it is me. I am vain enough to say that, everything considered, I have done about as well in moving and looking after rigging up a new office as any ordinary man could do, though could have kept entirely sober. Yesterday we
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sold the west-side engine and boiler as they stand, to Mr. McGregor for $400.00; Reedy only offered $350.00. $127.00 goes on what we owe him, balance in 90 days.

"I should like very much to attend your 4th of July Fest in Rock Prairie but cannot possibly spare the time as I feel my presence is required in Chicago.

"Things are going about as well as can be expected. Hope to see you soon."

The second letter was written February 8, 1880, when Anderson's affairs were beginning to look up at last:

"Friend Johnson: Your letter of the 5th received and contents noted. . . . Now in regard to sending you $500.00 by the 1st of March I cannot say whether it will be possible or not. I have been badly disappointed in the receipts from subscriptions; we have received over 1,000 new subscribers since the 1st of October, but the old subs. are keeping back their dues about as badly as last year, on what account I cannot tell, but we have attributed much of it to bad Roads and negligence on their part, and we have thought it not advisable to cut them off the list before about the 1st of April this year, then they will owe us even 50 cents. There is over 4,000 that have not paid yet.

"The money that has been received I have paid out as soon as I got it, mostly on Notes that Lawson signed with me and old debts to hands and paper — men that are getting very cranky and say that their paper is just as good as cash.

"I feel very badly about the $500 that you ought to have had over a month ago, and was very sure before the 1st of January that I could pay, but the above is the fact, and I hope when we commence to cut off that money will commence to come in again, as there is over $8,000 coming to us if the great bulk continue to take the paper.

"Anything in the Job line will be gladly applied on my indebtedness to you.

"Fremont had as grand a Wedding as ever occurred in
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Chicago both in regard to numbers as in fashion, and has gone South for a month."

With these letters are preserved a number of receipts which show that, in addition to the outright loans, Johnson advertised steadily in Skandinaven and gave the firm a great deal of business in job printing. He ordered stationery supplies of all kinds, and catalogues and advertising circulars in English, German, and Norwegian until at least well into the 1880s. In addition, he referred other businessmen to them for advertising and job work, and had his machinery and insurance salesmen solicit subscriptions for the newspaper.

From 1873 to 1878 Skandinaven was located at 123 Fifth Avenue, in a building owned by Victor F. Lawson. Here there was room to develop a book department and to open a bookstore, Skandinaven’s Boghandel, in December, 1876. The business of both grew steadily.

When Melville Stone (who later was general manager of the Associated Press) and other newspapermen began the publication of the Chicago Daily News in 1876, they also took offices in the Lawson building, and their paper was printed on Skandinaven’s presses. The Daily News was not profitable at first, and Stone and his associates offered to sell it to Skandinaven’s publishers. Anderson, with all his capital tied up in Skandinaven, felt that he had his hands full and was not interested, but Victor Lawson—younger, wealthier, and a native American—was. He bought the Daily News and eventually made it one of the biggest and most profitable newspapers in the country. He introduced — among other things — a foreign news bureau, which was a tremendous boon through the years to all the foreign-language newspapers of the Midwest. The firm of Anderson & Lawson was dissolved on May 21, 1878, and Anderson became sole proprietor of John Anderson & Co.

The early 1880s saw the beginnings of permanent
prosperity for the firm, as the flood of newcomers from Norway swelled the subscription rolls of the newspaper and began ordering books. One of the reasons they bought *Skandinaven* was that Anderson had his newsboys out on the platforms of the Chicago railroad stations through which most of the immigrants passed. When he learned from the boys that the weary pilgrims were hesitant to pay out even the price of a paper from their dwindling resources, he directed that all newly arrived immigrants should receive a copy free, to help them to orient themselves to the Norwegian-American world and to locate Norwegian businesses, doctors and the like, in Chicago. The good will earned by this measure brought in many subscriptions. 12

In 1878 the plant was moved from Lawson’s building to the Hendlie Building at 86–89 Franklin Street; the rent here was high, however, and the firm was still short of space. So Anderson decided to use 85 feet of land he had acquired on Peoria Street, just off Milwaukee Avenue in the Scandinavian business district, to erect his own building. This structure was completed in 1883. It was built of brick, 60 feet wide and 118 feet deep, three stories high with a basement. An account of the plant in a Chicago printing trade publication of the time described the interior as follows:

“The basement, lighted on all four sides, is used entirely as a pressroom, mailing and stock room. It contains thirteen newspaper, book and job presses (under the charge of Andrew Menzenberger, an able and efficient workman), which, with the other machinery, are driven by a forty-horse power engine furnished by the well-known firm of Fraser & Chalmers. Such is the pressure of work that the pressroom runs day and night.

“The first floor is devoted to the business office, salesroom and job department, the latter under the foremanship of Mr. F. A. Egerston, giving employment to from
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twenty to thirty compositors. One special feature of this department is that orders for book and job work can be filled in ten different languages, namely, English, Norwegian, Swedish, German, Holland, French, Spanish, Finnish, Italian and Bohemian — an advantage of which no other printing establishment in the United States can boast. In other words, manuscript received in any or all of these languages, ranging from a pamphlet to a volume, can be turned out ready for the market promptly and without leaving the building.

“On the second floor are located the editorial staff of the Skandinaven, consisting of six writers, under the supervision of the chief editor, Prof. Peter Hendrickson, a gentleman of national reputation; also the private office of Mr. Anderson, where all the mail is opened, the extent of which must be seen to be appreciated, the services of two clerks being required to open and handle the same.

“The third floor is devoted to the bindery and newspaper department, the former under the supervision of Mr. Julius B. Johnson, where may be found embossing, stamping, cutting, numbering, wire stitching and sewing machines, and, in fact, all the paraphernalia required in a first-class binding establishment. Here forty hands are engaged.

“The composing room of the newspaper department adjoining, airy and well lighted, under the control of Mr. B. Shervey, gives constant employment to twenty-six compositors.” The article also described the building as “without a doubt the best lighted printing office in this city.”

According to another newspaper article about the firm, the move to Peoria Street was a sound step, better than “going into business on the crowded quarters of the South Side [where other printers were located]; many things are cheaper there than in the latter locality,” including land, taxes, and minor points of service. The
article continued: “But all that need make no difference in the prices charged. Books sell for as much here as they would any place in the city. The paper commands as good a price. Job work is as well paid. And all this means that the ‘print shop out in the country,’ as some of their competitors have playfully described the plant, makes a far better margin of profit than they would with the choicest of locations down town.”

From its founding, Skandinaven tackled the issues that confronted the Norwegian community. For a number of years the question of the common school was debated in the immigrant press. Many of the clergymen in the Norwegian Synod opposed the attendance of Norwegian children in the American public schools. Beginning about 1857, they conducted a virtual crusade against the common school. Skandinaven and its editor, Knud Langeland, who was personally deeply involved in the issue, took a strong stand against the Synod’s program of parochial, Norwegian-language education. Langeland argued in his editorials that such a program was totally unnecessary and could mean only economic ruin to a farm people already heavily in debt. The paper opened its columns to instances of the success of the public schools and to the great benefits to be derived from the education they offered.

The Civil War and the Homestead Act of 1862 had made Republicans of a majority of the Norwegian Americans, a position that Skandinaven also assumed. Langeland urged the Norwegians to work and vote for Republicans for local as well as for national offices, and he urged the Republican party to recognize its large Scandinavian following by nominating Scandinavians for local and national positions. At the same time, he warned his fellow immigrants against blind partiality for their own national group. They must not vote Democratic just to vote for a Scandinavian.
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During the 1870s, Skandinaven generally favored the westward expansion of the nation. There is a noticeable absence of any discussion of the problem or plight of the Indian, but this attitude was true of the Scandinavian press in general.

As stated above, Langeland was only a part-time editor after 1872, with Svein Nilsson the editor-in-chief until 1886. A man of large experience with Norwegian and American newspapers, Nilsson continued Langeland’s editorial policies. He was a “progressive” Republican and helped materially to put the paper in an independent position vis-à-vis local Chicago politics.\(^{16}\)

Two issues to which Skandinaven did not devote much attention in the early years were the growing temperance movement and the closely allied women’s suffrage movement. The latter seems not to have been an issue in the predominantly rural Norwegian community or in its press, but the temperance movement was a topic of great interest, and there were a number of Norwegian temperance newspapers. The editors of Skandinaven deplored the “results of drunkenness,” but saw the problem as a moral, not a legal, question and would not present it as a major issue.\(^{17}\)

Nilsson was succeeded as editor-in-chief in 1886 by Professor Peter Hendrickson, another able, energetic man and a staunch Republican, who was in considerable demand as a political speaker at election time.\(^{18}\) Under his six-year editorship, the daily paper, circulated primarily in the Chicago area, increased in size from four to eight pages and in circulation from 3,500 to 10,300, while its subscription price remained constant at $3.00 per year. The growth of the weekly edition was steady, but not as spectacular, from twelve to sixteen pages in size, and in circulation from 22,000 to 34,200. Its price was also held constant at $2.00 per year.\(^{19}\)

In 1892 a Sunday edition of Skandinaven was started,
while demand for the weekly paper outside the Chicago area had grown to a point where a branch was established in Minneapolis. This office not only handled business from advertisers in the Northwest, but also a special Minneapolis Sunday edition. In 1898 the weekly edition became a semi-weekly, published Wednesday and Friday mornings. The largely local circulation of the Sunday edition grew steadily, and it was later attached, for subscription purposes, to the daily paper.

Nikolai A. Grevstad became Skandinaven’s fourth editor-in-chief in 1893. He was another man with impressive credentials: he had been an outstanding student and a controversial newspaper editor in Christiania; he was a friend of Johan Sverdrup, the Norwegian politician who led the bønder to political victory over the upper class.

Grevstad lost his editorship in Norway because of his political views and came to the United States in 1883. Despite being over thirty when he arrived, his mastery of English was so excellent that he was a leading editorial writer on the Minneapolis Tribune for two years, and he later edited the Minneapolis Times.

Under Grevstad, Skandinaven’s reputation continued undiminished and its basic character unchanged, but it focused more sharply on contemporary issues. It was now over twenty years since Langeland had left the paper, and much had changed in Norwegian America. The first immigrants had won their battle with poverty and were in relatively comfortable, often well-to-do circumstances; many had become prominent in business, politics, and other fields. The Midwestern prairies were largely settled and Chicago itself had become a metropolis, with a Norwegian population of nearly 100,000. From being little-esteemed immigrant folk, the Norwegians had become a power to be reckoned with.
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their biggest newspaper shared in the increased power and prestige. Grevstad emphasized Skandinaven's importance in politics by printing many of his editorials in English as well as Norwegian. Under his editorship, the paper reached the height of its circulation and influence in the first decade of the twentieth century, which was also the last of John Anderson's life.

Skandinaven was still a distinctly Republican paper, but it espoused the Progressive Republicanism of Theodore Roosevelt and Robert M. La Follette. The Norwegian immigrants were reform-minded, and in the 1880s and 1890s they entered into state and national politics to protest and oppose the growth of uncontrolled industrial monopoly. In the winter of 1902–1903, Skandinaven attacked the coal barons for trying to boost prices by holding back on deliveries. Earlier, on February 16, 1900, Grevstad had warned: "If [industry] misuses its right to live, then society can and should interfere." 22

Despite their rural constituency, the Norwegian newspapers were strongly prolabor. Skandinaven decried the evils of the sweatshop and considered organized labor a force for much good, but it commended Samuel Gompers for keeping the American Federation of Labor from forming a labor party. 23

Skandinaven also devoted special attention to child labor and the race question in the South; it advocated the direct election of senators, direct primaries, and control of trusts. The paper was also tireless in its fund-raising appeals for disaster-stricken people all over the world. Through its efforts, over $26,000 was collected for relief of a famine in Finland in 1903. 24

In 1911 Grevstad was appointed United States minister to Uruguay and Paraguay; his place on the paper was taken by John Benson, another experienced editor. Grevstad returned as editor when Benson died in 1933.
After this year, *Skandinaven* was listed in Ayer’s *Newspaper Annual* as an independent rather than a Republican paper, a step taken probably to save subscriptions among the farmers who were turning to the Democratic, farmer-labor organizations for political solutions to the problems of the Great Depression. After Grevstad’s death in 1939, the paper, filled with concern for the occupied homeland, was edited by Reidar Rye Haugan until its demise in 1941.

News and politics were *Skandinaven*’s forte; on these its reputation was built. But, like the other Norwegian-American and American papers, *Skandinaven* provided its readers with lighter matter as well. There were short stories, serialized fiction, reviews, announcements and advertisements of books, literary essays, excerpts from journals, chapters from books, and poetry. The poetry was usually amateur verse by Norwegian Americans, including some of the earliest writings by Norwegian immigrants in their provincial dialects.25

In nonfiction, *Skandinaven* included biographical sketches, travel reminiscences, factual articles about faraway places, public addresses by prominent personages, and informative and educational essays on scientific, historical, and other topics. In 1870, for example, it offered a series of articles on the uses of chemistry in agriculture and another on the Norse discoveries in America.26 The paper also had an extensive network of correspondents in Norway who reported on the news of their particular districts. Most of them were simply articulate private citizens, but two were famous and popular writers — Kristofer Janson and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.27

In 1873 the newly merged *Skandinaven og Amerika* announced the publication by Johnson, Anderson, and Lawson of *Husbibliothek*, a monthly literary magazine. Beginning in October, it printed stories “complete in
each issue,” and sketches and poems from “both the newer Scandinavian and American literatures.” Its purpose, however, was “especially to be instrumental in preserving the mother tongue among the Scandinavian young people in America by giving them entertaining and at the same time sound and instructive reading.”

In 1882 *Skandinaven* discontinued printing serials in the regular paper in order to devote more space to news. Serial fiction was shifted to *Husbibliothek* and printed in larger installments.

By 1890 the magazine had a special section for poetry and illustrations. The October issue, for example, devoted a great deal of space to pictures and descriptions of Colorado. Each issue also contained a selection of music, usually a Norwegian song with four-part piano accompaniment. Dr. Ingeborg Rasmussen, who edited the women's section of the paper, supervised much of the preparation of *Husbibliothek*. She was on the staff of *Skandinaven* for at least the years 1890–1916, and from the way newspaper articles written about the firm in those years all noted her presence, lady editors were still a rarity in Chicago, even in the women's departments.

One feature of the Sunday edition of *Skandinaven* was a full-length sermon, usually written by one of Chicago’s Norwegian Lutheran clergymen. It was evidently a well-regarded feature, for, when the daily paper ceased publication in 1930, the sermon was moved to the Friday issue of the semi-weekly edition. Moreover, Mr. M. C. Henningsen, on the staff of *Decorah-Posten* for over fifty years, stated that the sermon was the only feature of *Skandinaven* incorporated into the nonpolitical *Decorah-Posten* when the latter eventually bought out its Chicago rival.

In short, *Skandinaven* attempted to inform the immigrant of what was going on in the world, to teach him about his adopted country, to encourage him to partici-
pate in his government, and to provide him with reading matter for his personal edification and enjoyment. The role Skandinaven filled in the life of the Norwegian-American community cannot be better summarized than it was in 1916 by Congressman H. T. Helgeson of North Dakota. He wrote to the editor: “I understand that on May 2nd ‘Skandinaven’ will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. As a boy, living then in Winnesheik County, Iowa, my first recollection of a newspaper was the Skandinaven, which was religiously read every week by my parents. Being farmers, and newspapers not being so plentiful then as they are today and our present wonderful postal service not having been even dreamed of at that time, they did not get many newspapers, and therefore the Skandinaven became such a household necessity that, to use a common American expression, they ‘could not have kept house without it.’

“It was, therefore, through the Skandinaven they kept in touch with the world; it was through its columns they kept track of the religious discussion that created so much interest and (at times) excitement among Norwegians of the Northwest during the years following the Civil War, and politically the Skandinaven was the guide in whose wisdom and patriotism they had so much confidence that few indeed were the Norwegians who voted contrary to its advice. We hear of newspapers now that have great influence in moulding public sentiment, but with the numerous newspapers and periodicals now being read even by farmers, no one newspaper can hope to mould public sentiment now as did the Skandinaven in those early days, and right well did it perform its duties and responsibilities. Did it ever make mistakes? Oh, yes! It would not have been human if it had not erred, but the people had so much confidence in the character of its publisher that if mistakes were made he did not lose the confidence of the public.”

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Skandinaven was the heart and soul of the John Anderson Publishing Company, but book and job printing were also major enterprises for years. Many of the Norwegian-American newspapers printed, manufactured, and retailed their own books. The majority of these books were translations, reprints, or serials rebound in book form, but some were original texts. According to Professor Haldor L. Hove: "The whole Norwegian-American book-publishing enterprise is a bibliographer's nightmare, with the simultaneous publication of book lists, book advertisements and announcements, book reviews, bonus books, translations, reprints, and serials." 31

It was common practice to publish a long work in installments in paper cover and to publish it at the same time in one cloth-bound volume. The publishers sold and exchanged their plates, and sold each other's books, as well as their own, in their bookstores. The consequence of such co-operation was that the same books, with varying imprints, appeared in all the bookstores simultaneously.

In December, 1876, the John Anderson Publishing Company opened Skandinaven's Boghandel. It became in time the leading bookstore in America selling Norwegian books. Its announcement promised that "any book not found in this catalogue can be obtained on order, so long as it is on the market." 32 Books published by the firm were distributed through the bookstore by traveling salesmen (there are letters from John A. Johnson, requesting copies of certain books to send out with his salesmen), and as "bonus" books — premiums awarded when the newspaper subscription was paid a year in advance.

The lack of surviving business records for the company also means that there is no bibliography of the books published and printed. Only four issues of the bookstore’s annual catalogue are preserved, at St. Olaf College. While the catalogues have a separate section for
books from Anderson's presses, there is no bibliographical data — no dates and no copyright information. The Norwegian collections at St. Olaf College (ca. 10,000 volumes) and Luther College (ca. 2,700 volumes), the Haldor Hanson Collection at Luther College (ca. 2,200 volumes), and the remaining holdings of the Norwegian collection of the Logan Square Branch of the Chicago Public Library (ca. 500 volumes) yield additional titles published or printed by the Anderson Publishing Company. The total is a list of over 400 titles, of which about twenty percent can be shown to have been copyrighted.

Beyond this statement, however, exact figures become difficult to use. The high degree of title duplication among the collections searched tempts one to conclude that virtually all of the firm's publications are accounted for, but conclusive proof is lacking. Many of the books were reprinted a number of times through the years, and it is frequently impossible to tell from the date given on a copy when that title was first or last printed by John Anderson. A book printed in 1918 may bear the notice "copyright 1878 by the author" (who may have had it printed first by another Norwegian-American or American firm), or a book with only one date on it may be inscribed Nyt oplage (New edition). For this reason, it is not possible to trace from the evidence the rise and wane of Skandinaven's book-publishing business.

From the number of books inscribed "Aftryk af Skandinaven" (Reprint from Skandinaven), it appears that the popularity of a book was frequently tested by printing it first as a serial in the newspaper. This was especially true of fiction, although other books were similarly published. In general, reprints were by far the greater portion of the volumes issued. An article in the Chicago Herald describes the book plant as follows: "The fact is that in book work the Scandinavians do as good work as can be found in any of the English printing
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houses. . . . The product of these presses is found in thousands of volumes in all styles, for while the proprietor imports a great many books he finds a still greater source of revenue in taking the foreign prints and reproducing them in his own establishment. . . . These books furnished a profitable source of revenue for the house of Anderson, and there are in the great vaults $10,000 worth of plates which have been used and will be again.” 33

The book department, like the other divisions of the company, was expected to remain solvent and show a profit. So it was not possible to help everyone who came in with a book he wanted printed. But while John Anderson was careful with the firm’s money, he was generous with his own. Hjalmar Rued Holand tells how Anderson aided him in the publication of his first book, Norske settlementers historie (History of the Norwegian Settlements). His story was printed in both the fiftieth anniversary jubilee issue of Skandinaven and in its seventy-fifth anniversary issue. 34 Holand had spent eleven years researching his book, and could not find a publisher. So he came to John Anderson and asked him to promise to purchase “a couple thousand” copies to sell in his bookstore. Holand felt that if he had this sales assurance, he could persuade a printer to issue the book on credit. Anderson refused to consider buying a book that was not even printed — he had too many books in the basement as it was, he said. But he explained exactly where to go in Chicago to buy good paper and whom to hire to print, bind, and illustrate the work. He then told Holand to have these men send all their bills to John Anderson, personally, for payment. When Holand, amazed at the size of the loan offered, asked why Anderson did not simply print the book on his own press, he replied that he could not expect his firm to buy a “pig in a poke” (literally a “cat in a sack”), but that what he did with his own money was his business.
Most of the books known to have been published by the John Anderson Publishing Company were fiction. They included works of the best Norwegian writers of the nineteenth century — Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Jonas Lie, Alexander Kielland, as well as those of a few first-rate English and American writers like Charles Dickens and Mark Twain in translation. The bulk of the books, however, were of lesser quality. The adventure stories of the Dane, Johan Carl Christian Brosbøll, who used the pseudonym Carit Etlar, were very popular and often serialized or published in book form by the Norwegian-American press. His stories were a better class of adventure yarn, perhaps not too far below those of Robert Louis Stevenson. Anderson also published *Gjest Baardsens levnetsløb* (Gjest Baardsen’s Life Story), a sensational account of the career of a Norwegian bandit. This book ran through many printings, the last known one in 1921. It is a good example of how the Norwegian-American press, including *Skandinaven*, catered in the bookstore to the lack of taste decried in its own literary columns. Also well represented in its catalogue are a group of Norwegian women who wrote moral and sentimental novels and novelettes. Included are Elise Aubert and Antoinette Meyn (who used the pseudonym “Marie”). There were also translations into Norwegian of American and European books in all these genres.

The next largest group of books printed were in the field of theology and religion, with psalters, books of daily devotions, and hymnbooks very prominent. These included some of the bookstore’s biggest-selling titles; according to the *Story of “Skandinaven”*, over 60,000 copies of the English translation of Erik Pontoppidan’s *Forklaring til Dr. Martin Luthers katekismen* (Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther’s Catechism) were sold in 1916 alone.³⁵ *Forklaring* was a standard text for confirmation instruction.
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After religious books come those on science and history. The science volumes were predominantly about agriculture and included a whole series (half of them copyrighted) on veterinary medicine by one H. Galtung. The history books deal chiefly with American history and biography, and a number of them were written by members of Skandinaven’s staff, in particular David Monrad Schøyen and O. M. Peterson. These included biographies of Presidents Lincoln, Grant, and Garfield. In 1901, the John Anderson Company published a copyrighted translation of Murat Halstead’s William McKinley, with an introduction by Chauncey M. Depew. The translation was done by Peer O. Strømme, a Norwegian-American writer who served on the staffs of several newspapers during his career.

Self-help manuals on everything from the etiquette of letter-writing to the raising of chickens were printed. English and Norwegian grammars and dictionaries sold very well and were reprinted many times. The firm even published its own dictionary, Haldor Hanson’s Norskdansk-engelsk ordbog (Norwegian-Danish-English Dictionary), copyright 1909; it was reprinted at least in 1913, 1916, and 1925. Hanson was on the editorial staff of Skandinaven and the faculty of Luther College. Travel and picture books of Norway and other lands, for example R. B. Anderson’s Norge i billede (Norway in Pictures), with photographs and poems on facing pages, and music books for choir and family singing finish out the list.

To look more specifically at just those books that were copyrighted, the earliest one known dates from 1868 — Andrew Haagensen’s Psalmer og sange til Guds ære og hans menigheds opbygelse (Psalms and Songs to the Glory of God and the Edification of His Congregation). The copyright was entered in the author’s name and the book is inscribed “lste udg.” (first edition). Not many of
the books on religion were copyrighted; most were reprints of standard, orthodox Norwegian texts.

Many of the copyrighted books dealt with history. Worthy of mention are D. M. Schøyen’s three-volume *Forenede staters historie* (History of the United States), copyrighted in 1874 by Johnson, Anderson, and Lawson and highly praised by the Norwegian-American press,36 and Schøyen’s *Præsident Lincolns snigmord* (President Lincoln’s Assassination), and Algot E. Strand’s *History of the Norwegians of Illinois*, copyrighted in 1905. O. M. Peterson’s four English grammars and readers were part of a group of instructional books — for home or school — that also included Ole Apland’s *Praktisk regnebog for skolebrug og selvstudium* (Practical Arithmetic Book for School Use and Self-Study), copyrighted in 1908.

Much of the copyrighted fiction was by Norwegian-American authors — the three principal writers being Allan Saetre, Gulbrand Sether, and John Lie — but the exceptions to this statement are some of the more interesting books from the standpoint of publishing.

In 1877 a new book by Kristofer Janson (a leading Norwegian writer who lived in the United States for a number of years) entitled *Amerikanske fantasier* (American Fantasies) was published by the John Anderson Publishing Company before being put out in Norway.37 It was hoped that this would start a trend of Norwegian writers publishing some of their works among their emigrated countrymen, but the trend never developed. Janson brought out one other book, *Præriens saga* (Saga of the Prairie), with John Anderson in 1885.

Two other innovations in Anderson’s book publishing were made in the first decade of the twentieth century, when the company was at the height of its prosperity. First, it obtained sole permission to translate into Norwegian and copyright the popular Civil War novels of Byron Dunn (published in English and copyrighted
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by A. C. McClurg and Company of Chicago). The translations were done by Peer O. Strømme, and the books were bound as a set, each in a different color, with gold lettering and engraved illustrations. Their price in the 1915–1916 catalogue was $1.00 each.38

The second innovation was the publication of a school text of a Norwegian book — Bjørson’s Synnøve Solbakken, edited with introduction, notes, and vocabulary by George T. Flom and published in 1905. According to the editor’s preface, “This book is the first American edition of a Norwegian text for school or college use.” It was followed in 1908 by Ibsen’s Brand, edited by Professor Julius E. Olson of the University of Wisconsin. It is possible that these were two in a series of school texts (they have similar bindings); whether they were successful as a commercial venture is not known.

To summarize, most of the books published by the John Anderson Publishing Company were reprints of works known to be popular and thus certain of being sold. Even those published for the first time tended to fall into established and popular genres. A few of them, however, such as the books on American history, the original translations by the firm’s own staff, and the text editions of Norwegian literature, represent a creative addition to the reading of the Norwegian in America.

Skandinaven’s job-printing department had been in existence as long as the firm, and would seem to have been a major revenue source. Anderson’s men established a reputation for careful, accurate work, and specialized in executing printing in many foreign languages. An article in the Chicago Herald said: “The printers, as a rule, are educated in at least two languages besides the English, and stand more in the position of linguists than journeymen.”39 The article went on to tell the following story:

“The foreman at the Skandinaven tells of a pamphlet
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which came to him for translation and printing some time ago. A sort of translation accompanied it, but the typo to whom the copy was given was a scholar, and he objected that the translation was not good. He could give a better rendering, and he was allowed to go ahead. When the work was done the original translator told the publisher the copy had been changed, but he was compelled to admit that the later rendering was better than his own, and so, while he was not above taking $50 for his service, he was generous enough to recommend that the typo be treated in like manner, which was done. But what American printer would have thought of suggesting such a change in the copy, even if he had been sure it was full of errors?" 40

For many years, the Anderson Publishing Company did the printing of the large catalogues, in English and other languages, for the Deering, McCormick, Champion, Plano, Walter A. Wood, and Milwaukee Harvester companies. These firms manufactured farm machinery, and the immigrant workmen at Skandinaven were familiar with the correct farm terminology in their native languages. According to one of Skandinaven's own advertising circulars, 41 printed in 1873, one of the editors "has had a long experience as dealer in agricultural machinery, and translates advertisements, pamphlets, and circulars in this line much better than is usually done." The Story of "Skandinaven" relates that the company also printed maps, folders, and pamphlets for the Northern Pacific, Great Northern, Santa Fe, Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, Union Pacific, and Chicago & Northwestern railways in different languages, and adds that it was awarded the contract for the "Official Guide" to the World's Columbian Exposition (held in Chicago in 1893), of which "over one million copies were printed." 42

Despite its apparent success, the job-printing depart-
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ment was discontinued at some time between 1899 and 1910. The reason given in the Story of “Skandinaven” was that “the newspaper demanded all of Mr. Anderson’s time and attention; and besides, the large space occupied by it was required for the various departments of the paper itself.” Perhaps the profitability of the job office had dwindled, but it seems more likely that its success relative to that of the newspaper had lessened. For these were the years when the paper reached its full glory. At least by 1915, it had taken over the entire Skandinaven building, and the bindery and book departments had to be moved.

The Anderson Publishing Company was highly regarded in Chicago printing circles. There were a number of long accounts describing the firm and its founder in the city’s English-language newspapers. The two quoted above from the Chicago Herald and the Artist Printer were followed by a whole spate of articles in 1899, when the firm’s thirty-third anniversary was celebrated. The Chronicle, the Sunday Times-Herald, the Tribune, and of course the Daily News all published accounts of the testimonial dinner held in Anderson’s honor at the Sherman House on May 2, 1899, and attended by over 300 prominent Scandinavians and Americans from all over the country, as well as by a number of Chicago’s business and civic leaders. United States Senator Knute Nelson of Minnesota was the principal speaker.

Anderson had a wide circle of friends and acquaintances in and outside of the Norwegian community, and was an active, energetic man. In addition to work with the Lutheran church and the Republican party, his activities included the Chicago Typographical Union, in which he completed five successive terms as treasurer, the Norwegian Old Settlers’ Society, which he twice served as president, and the Old Time Printers Association of Chicago, of which he was a charter member and thrice president.

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In 1903, John Anderson was honored by King Oscar II of Norway and Sweden, who made him a knight in the order of St. Olav in recognition of the services which as publisher of *Skandinaven* he had rendered the Norwegian people of America.

In the above-mentioned newspaper articles, Anderson attributed his success to the fortunate choice of good editors for his newspaper and to hard work. There were many testimonials to the latter. "He worked night and day," and "He took so much work upon himself personally, that it was a constant source of wonder to those who were aware of it, that he could get through it all." He worked that hard right up to his unexpected death on February 24, 1910, of heart failure brought on by bronchitis, one month short of his seventy-fourth birthday. His business was then at the height of its prosperity.

Louis M. Anderson (1882-1955), John Anderson's eldest son from his second marriage (to Julia Sampson in 1875) became president of the firm, and sometime between 1914 and 1916 his brother John Arthur became secretary-treasurer.

For a while the company continued to prosper. But then came the First World War, which was hard on all the immigrant press. In addition to the strong antiforeign feelings, that caused many immigrants to emphasize their "Americanism," the cost of paper skyrocketed and did not come down again in the years immediately following the war. M. C. Henningsen stated that in 1920 the three big Norwegian papers in this country, *Skandinaven*, *Decorah-Posten*, and *Minneapolis Tidende*, were all compelled to raise their annual subscription rates by fifty cents. The circulation for all three papers immediately dropped. Because *Decorah-Posten* had the lower overhead costs of a small-town location, it was able to decide in 1921 to drop its rate back to the original price. The city papers could not afford to do this and lost further subscribers to *Decorah-Posten*. This, Hen-
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ningsen asserted, was the beginning of the end for both Tidende and Skandinaven.

In Chicago, as advertisers became aware that the Scandinavians now also read papers in English, they switched their foreign-language advertising to the new ethnic groups such as the Poles. Skandinaven’s daily edition, intended largely for Chicago readers, was hardest hit by the loss of advertising and ceased publication on March 31, 1930. Book sales also declined as more and more people preferred English, and printing books was largely given up, although occasionally a batch might be run off from old plates to be used as subscription bonuses.

To counteract falling profits, the Andersons reestablished the job office and attracted a considerable amount of business. According to Henningsen, they had a number of lucrative city contracts during the Republican administration of Mayor William (“Big Bill”) Thompson, but when the Democrats replaced the Republicans in City Hall, this patronage was lost. The printing of newspapers and periodicals in different languages became a major part of the company’s business in the 1930s and 1940s. Among the papers printed on Skandinaven’s presses were Svenska-Kuriren, Swedish-American, and New World, a Catholic paper.

The rising costs of newspaper publishing and declining subscriptions finally caught up with the semi-weekly edition of Skandinaven in 1940, and after the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration in May, 1941, Louis Anderson made contact with the Anundsen Publishing Company, owners of Decorah-Posten (which had taken over the subscription lists of the Minneapolis Tidende in 1935), to arrange the sale of his newspaper. Henningsen recalled that Anderson had remarked that Skandinaven had lost $5,000 in 1940, and that he was unwilling to sink more of his own money into what he saw as a downhill
venture. So the Anundsen Publishing Company bought Skandinaven's subscriptions, agreeing to send Decorah-Posten to the Chicago paper's 11,000 subscribers to fill out their subscriptions. The last issue of Skandinaven was published on October 31, 1941.

Louis Anderson continued the job-printing business for a few years, but he was in failing health. In 1949 he sold the firm's property and the John Anderson Publishing Company came to an end.

John Anderson was unusually successful at meeting the needs of the Norwegian-American community during the years when it was in transition from the Old-World culture it had left behind to the New-World culture it was not yet ready to adopt. While remaining a son of that community and maintaining the Norwegian identity of his establishment, he managed to gain a well-deserved reputation in the American and even the international publishing worlds. This double success was not easy to achieve; it required the careful balancing of the needs of a very provincial, rural group with those of a new and bustling urban class. Anderson did not just print a good Norwegian-American newspaper; he also printed a good Norwegian newspaper, a familiar voice not only to Middlewestern farmers but to expatriate Norwegians all over the world. He published a good American newspaper, deeply concerned with the issues facing the Republic, a newspaper that urged its readers to take an active part in the national life. Skandinaven was thus three newspapers in one.

The John Anderson Publishing Company was a business for profit; Skandinaven was a commercial newspaper. Its advertisements were not always blameless; its fiction was not often great literature. But the paper did try to present the news of the world and the community in a straightforward fashion, and the book department, both press and store, was aimed at providing its clientele
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with reading satisfying enough to bring them back for more. Thousands of people relied on the firm over a period of many years.

Anderson was personally responsible for much of the company's success. He had to cope with the Great Fire, with two economic recessions, with subscription payments that came in slowly when the rural roads were bad. He was not educated himself, but he always had talented and highly qualified editors for his paper, and he apparently stayed out of their way and let them edit. He used his location in a center of growing industry to establish himself in American printing circles as a master at job work.

After 1900 and especially after the founder's death in 1910, the company began to lose some of the elasticity and diversity that had helped it remain vital. Some of the causes of the decline were logical, such as the gradual assimilation of the immigrants into the American population; others were contingent, such as the negative effects of the First World War and Louis Anderson's ill health during the firm's last years.

The life cycle of Skandinaven and the John Anderson Publishing Company remained closely tied to the rise and wane of Norwegian immigrant culture in America.

NOTES

1 The figures are from American Newspaper Annual (Philadelphia, 1880-1941).
3 Johannes B. Wist, Norsk-amerikanernes festskrift 1914, 73 (Decorah, Iowa, 1914).
4 Chicago Daily Tribune, June 19, 1937. The Tribune was the only newspaper in Chicago older than Skandinaven.
5 Wist, Festschrift 1914, 45. This is the only source which mentions Brekke's name in this connection.
6 Knud Langeland, Nordmændene i Amerika, 220 (Chicago, 1888).
7 The Story of "Skandinaven" 1866–1916: Excerpts from "A Short History of Skandinaven" Which Appeared in the Jubilee Issue, Published May First, 1916, 3 (Chicago, n.d.).
8 This letter is among the papers of the John Anderson Publishing Company in the archives of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, Northfield, Minnesota.
9 Anundsen's account of his early struggles is contained in a commemorative booklet entitled "Decorah-Posten 1874-1894," a copy of which is still in the possession of the Anundsen Publishing Company, Decorah, Iowa.
10 Artist Printer, 228 (December, 1891).
12 Wist, Festskrift 1914, 50.
13 Artist Printer, 228 (December, 1891).
14 Chicago Herald, October 23, 1890.
18 Wist, Festskrift 1914, 53.
19 American Newspaper Annual, 724 (1884), 1270 (1890).
20 This edition is mentioned in The Story of "Skandinaven," 6, in Wist, Festskrift 1914 and in an employee contract found in the Anderson Publishing Company's papers in the archives of the Norwegian-American Historical Association. But it is not mentioned in Ayer's Directory of Newspapers (which lists all other editions of Skandinaven separately), nor is it a bibliographical entry in the holdings of the Minneapolis Public, University of Minnesota, St. Olaf College, or Luther College libraries. It was very likely a Minneapolis page or two inserted into or enveloping those copies of the Sunday edition shipped to Minneapolis.
22 Wefald, A Voice of Protest, 37.
27 Hove, "Five Norwegian Newspapers," 54-60.
28 Skandinaven og Amerika, September 16, 1873.
29 Interview March 18, 1972, with M. C. Henningsen, at the Anundsen Publishing Company, Decorah, Iowa.
30 Story of "Skandinaven," 11.
31 Hove, "Five Norwegian Newspapers," 274.
32 Skandinaven's boghandel: Katalog over norske, danske, og engelske bøger, stereoscopbilleder osv. for 1892, 3 (Chicago, 1892).
33 Chicago Herald, October 23, 1890.
35 Story of "Skandinaven," 5.
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37 “Five Norwegian Newspapers,” 262.
39 Chicago Herald, October 23, 1890.
40 Chicago Herald, October 23, 1890.
41 Circulars now preserved in the company’s papers in the archives of the Norwegian-American Historical Association.
44 Wist, Festskrift 1914, 50.