

### Youth and Children's Clubs:

Through our Youth and Children's Clubs our younger members learn of their Swedish heritage with such activities as folk dancing, singing, language classes, and crafts. Summer children's and family camps provide a setting where people gather for fun and learning. Youth exchanges are planned for each summer between member's families in Sweden and North America.



**Scholarships:** The Vasa Order of America is proud to be able to offer assistance to qualified students in quest of continued education. Many scholarships and student loans are available to students in accredited institutions of higher education and for a Swedish language camp. A fellowship is available for graduate study. Grants are available for Elderhostel studies.



**Communication:** The Vasa Star, the official publication of the Order, is published six times a year and mailed to every family in the Order. It carries important information from the Grand Lodge, articles about our Swedish heritage and interesting members, as well as activities of the Districts and Local Lodges in the USA, Canada and Sweden. Many District and Local Lodges produce newsletters that share activities and upcoming events within their areas.

**Vasa Archives:** The Vasa Order of America maintains an archive in the historic Swedish Community of Bishop Hill, Illinois. The purpose of the Vasa National Archives is to preserve the history of our lodges and our members. It also serves as a valuable resource for genealogical and immigration research. The setting for the Archive is an excellent example of our Swedish Heritage. Located in the gentle rolling prairie of western Illinois, Bishop Hill is an historic town founded by Swedish immigrants in the 19th century.



A large graphic featuring the American and Swedish flags. The American flag is at the top, and the Swedish flag is at the bottom. The text "Vasa Order of America" is prominently displayed in the center, with "A Swedish-American Fraternal Organization" underneath it. In the bottom right corner, there is a white box containing the text "Contact information:" and the word "information" in a stylized font.

Contact information:

information

# The Vasa Order of America

The Vasa Order of America is a Swedish-American fraternal organization with lodges in the USA, Canada and Sweden. Its aim is to foster Swedish culture and traditions and to create and maintain fraternal connections between Swedes and Swedish descendents in the USA and Canada. The Vasa Order of America is a nonpolitical and non-religious organization.

## History

The Vasa Order of America was organized 18 September 1896 in New Haven Connecticut, USA. It resulted from the merger of a number of Swedish sick-benefit societies in Connecticut that had spent about a year creating the organization complete with structure, constitution and ritual. The name "Vasa Order of America" was chosen to honor Gustav Vasa, the Swedish king considered the father of his country.

The original aim of the Order was to: by means of income from fees, membership dues, etc., provide other Swedish immigrant members economic and social security in times of sickness and need, establish and maintain funeral benefit funds and educate members in moral, intellectual and social aspects thus making them more valued representatives of Sweden.

From the initial organization in Connecticut the Vasa Order of America grew by establishing new lodges, first in Massachusetts, then throughout the USA and Canada to become the largest Swedish-American organization. Many of the approximately 1.2 million Swedes that immigrated to North America found welcome and refuge in the Vasa Order. Vasa members returning to Sweden set up lodges there beginning with Goteborg Lodge No. 452 in 1924.

While its original aim was primarily focused on providing members economic social security Vasa, with time, came more and more to be a keeper of Swedish traditions and culture. Today, most of the focus is on celebrating cultural traditions such as special holidays food, dress, language and music.

## Organization

[www.vasaorder.com](http://www.vasaorder.com)

The Vasa Order of America is organized in three levels: The Grand Lodge, District Lodges and Local Lodges.



**The Grand Lodge** has management responsibility for the whole Order. It meets in convention every four years, with representatives from each district, to decide on issues of interest to the Order. It is the only body that can change the Constitution. The operation of the Grand Lodge is through five elected officers, headed by the Grand Master and six elected Executive Board Members representing various geographic regions including Canada and Sweden

**The District Lodge** has management responsibility for the local lodges within its district. It meets either annually or biennially, with representatives from local lodges, to decide on business of interest to the district. The Vasa Order of America is divided into 19 districts and 3 regions. Each district elects and installs district officers.



**The Local Lodge** meets monthly to conduct its business and carry out its cultural and social activities. Members join a local lodge by being initiated in person at a regular meeting. A local lodge may sponsor children and/or youth clubs, activities clubs and any other activities that are of interest to its members. Each lodge annually elects and installs officers to carry out its activities

## Membership Requirements

Persons of Swedish or other Nordic ancestry, or committed to the promotion and advancement of Swedish and Nordic heritage and culture, 14 years or older, are eligible for membership in the Vasa Order of America.

## Benefits of Membership

**Fellowship:** The Vasa Order of America is the largest Swedish-American fraternal organization dedicated to the preservation of Nordic customs and traditions. By joining together, we come in fellowship to promote and advance our Swedish heritage and culture with each other and with our children. Members are welcome visitors at any of the over 200 local lodges within the United States, Canada, and Sweden. Members come together in their Local Lodges monthly, Districts either annually or biennially and in the Grand Lodge every four years.

**Cultural Events:** Midsummer and Santa Lucia are the biggest celebrations of the year throughout the VOA. Activities involving many other holidays and traditions are also planned throughout the year. Food plays a central role in most Swedish festivities; some of our favorites include semlor, crayfish, and the ever-popular smörgåsbord. Folk dancing and singing groups, sports activities, art exhibits, and language studies round out the cultural activities of many lodges. In addition to learning about our past, we have many opportunities to learn about the Sweden of today through our contact with our Sister Lodges in Sweden, magazines, newspapers, and visitors.

