

Tom Sandlund

Concluding Remarks



This seminar concludes a series of seminars held during the last year, in which the Institute of Migration has been involved in various ways, concerning both Delaware and Australia.

Let me thank all the speakers today for their contribution and the stimulating discussion these led to. It is not my task here to comment on the papers, perhaps more to draw some conclusions concerning the research and the Institute's role here.

Not being a historian myself, I can only notice with great interest that the history of the colony of Delaware has been fruitful ground for research co-operation between scholars from the U.S.A., Sweden and Finland. Many speakers here are living examples of ties between these countries – and Australia, which we have dealt with to a somewhat lesser degree today as the focus has been on common Swedish/Finnish history.

As some speakers pointed out, today's interpretations are always seen through today's spectacles and perspective, perspectives that have been formed and have been changing, sometimes slowly, sometimes more rapidly, during the intervening years, in the case of Delaware 350 years.

Tom Sandlund, Assistant Professor, Chairman of the Administrative Board of the Institute of Migration

There are at least three perspectives that influence the stimulating, interesting and sometimes somewhat heated debate on Delaware concerning the origins of the individual settler, and the importance of the colony of Delaware for further American history. These three perspectives are often held in various combinations by the same researcher so we cannot easily classify individual researchers according to these perspectives.

The first perspective is what I would call the scientific one. This perspective starts from a search for the truth but it comes in various forms. One starts from theories that can explain in general terms what was happening at a certain period. In describing and explaining a particular phenomenon this phenomenon is put into a wider frame and a certain detachment from the phenomenon is considered a hallmark of science. Another perspective is a less academic one, often held by people who are looking for their history, their origin and have a less detached attitude towards their subject. This second approach, a "dig where you are" –approach, often gives us insights that are impossible to reach through "ordinary" academic approaches and when the main driving force here is looking for truth I would not deem it less scientific as long as a rigorous methodology is employed, which, in parenthesis, certainly is the case

as far as the research in this seminar is concerned.

The second perspective is the national perspective formed by history, the intervening history between the event under study and the time at which certain study is carried out. Today's perspective on Delaware is different from that which prevailed in e.g. the 1930's. The intervening 350 years of history has meant that opinions and positions of researchers in Finland and Sweden have perhaps somewhat differed from each other and different schools might have evolved. Some of these schools are perhaps tied to national or ethnic perspectives particular to one country, others to school of history that might unite researchers from different countries.

The third perspective is that of national interest today. To my mind there is a clear distinction between the second perspective and this third perspective in that in the third perspective the interest in the phenomena itself is very small. The question is rather how it can be used to "sell Finland", "sell Sweden", or "sell U.S.A.". I am not denying that such sales campaigns may as a result bind the concerned countries closer together and, skilfully employed, also further international cooperation in research as a side effect. But it is clear that that is not the main aim nor is it the main aim to look for truth, rather – in a market economy world – to

cut as big a slice of the cake with advertisements where the truth behind the argument is not always of foremost importance, to say the least.

The Institute of Migration has many functions. To a certain extent one can say that it is influenced by all these three perspectives. It has a scientific orientation, its researchers are certainly influenced by national history, various schools and scientific traditions and to a certain extent it has also been involved in "selling Finland" to U.S.A. and Australia by participating in and arranging or co-arranging seminars, but above all, in building two exhibitions, one for the Delaware anniversary and one for the Australian anniversary. This "selling" has, however, been motivated by the idea of revealing the events and importance of those events. Thus the first and the second perspectives are reflected in these exhibitions but the third is not. In this matter the Institute of Migration has a scientific orientation as it at the same time is trying to enlarge the knowledge of history and show the contribution Finns have made abroad. In these efforts the Institute draws on both traditional academic research and the interest of scholars not tied to academic institutions in order to be able to present a fuller picture of the history and life of earlier generations. Our seminar today has been an example of this approach, a successful example. Thank you all.