

Nuggets of History

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THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD EXPERIENCE IN ROCKFORD 1860-1962 by Robert J. Lindvall

The Swedish Lutherans in Rockford were organized for over 100 years in the Augustana Synod. This synod was the gathering adhesive for eleven congregations in Rockford and Loves Park. The following article will outline the origins of these eleven congregations: First, Emmanuel, Zion, Salem, Tabor, Grace, Bethlehem, Alpine, Gloria Dei, Shepherd of the Valley, and St. Mark.

Recognizing the need for the word to be preached among the Swedish Lutherans in Rockford in 1854, a group of immigrants sent John Lundbeck to the meeting of the United Chicago and Mississippi Evangelical Lutheran Conference held January 4, 1854, to seek a pastor or organize a congregation in Rockford. Responding to this request, Pastor Erland Carlsson of Chicago visited Rockford Sunday, January 15, 1854. Following a communion service, the assembled individuals organized the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Rockford.

To this group, Pastor Andreas Andreen was called to be the pastor in 1856, staying four years. His small parsonage still stands at 408 North First Street. In 1860, realizing the need for a Scandinavian Lutheran Synod in America the Rockford congregation, known as First Lutheran, joined with other Swedish and Norwegian churches at Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin, to form the Augustana Synod. This union with the Norwegians lasted ten years, after which the Norwegian Lutherans left the Augustana Synod to form a separate church. The Augustana Synod was to prove to become, as Todd W. Nichol in the book ALL THESE LUTHERANS states, "a unique ingredient in the American Lutheran mix. It combined a careful confessionalism with a deep piety and rigorous moral code." This would become a cause of strife as this article will explain.

The Swedish population in Rockford in the 1880s in-



FIRST CHURCH AND PARSONAGE



REV. ANDREAS ANDREEN



First Lutheran Church in 1883

creased dramatically with most immigrants becoming members of First Lutheran Church, bringing its membership to over 2000 in the middle 1880s. This large congregation was served by one person, Pastor Gustaf Peters, who in the 1870s had already witnessed the Swedish Evangelical Mission Society of Rockford being formed because some saw a need for the gospel ministry in the Seventh Street area. This led to the forming of the Mission Covenant Church. That break was nothing like the ones Peters would experience in the 1880s. It became so tense that at one point Peters resigned as pastor only to have his resignation refused by the church fathers.

The causes of these strifes has been summarized in the First Lutheran CENTENNIAL book of 1954 as follows:

In order to clarify the very confused picture, it might be well to realize that there were four distinct problems that were causing the splits among the Swedish people. The first problem was overcrowding due to the great influx of immigrants. The second was the question of language. The proposed new church was an attempt to meet both of these problems. The third problem was the one of secret societies and excommunication for drunkenness as over against the constitution of the congregation which has been rather strictly enforced. The new "Free" church was an attempt to meet that problem. A fourth problem and one less easy to define was that of the "preaching deacons" who felt that they were not being given enough opportunity to express themselves...

From this situation came several changes. First on



The present First Lutheran Church edifice

July 20, 1882, eighty-five members signed the charter for the Emmanuel Lutheran Church which became affiliated with the General Synod of the Lutheran Church of America. This group operated under the belief that there was a greater field of believers to be gained through the preaching of the Word of God in the language of the land. Emmanuel stayed in the General Synod into the 1890s when it joined the Augustana Synod, becoming the first Augustana Synod church to conduct services in English in 1895.

Second, the church building First Lutheran was using, built only fourteen years earlier, was torn down in the summer of 1883, and a new sanctuary was raised on the same location at Third and Oak.

Third, the following quote from the centennial history of Zion Lutheran Church explains the origins of Zion:

Imagine the scene in midsummer 1883, when a number of Swedish immigrants who had settled in Rockford, Illinois met in the basement of the Swedish Methodist Church to establish their own place of worship as the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Rockford.

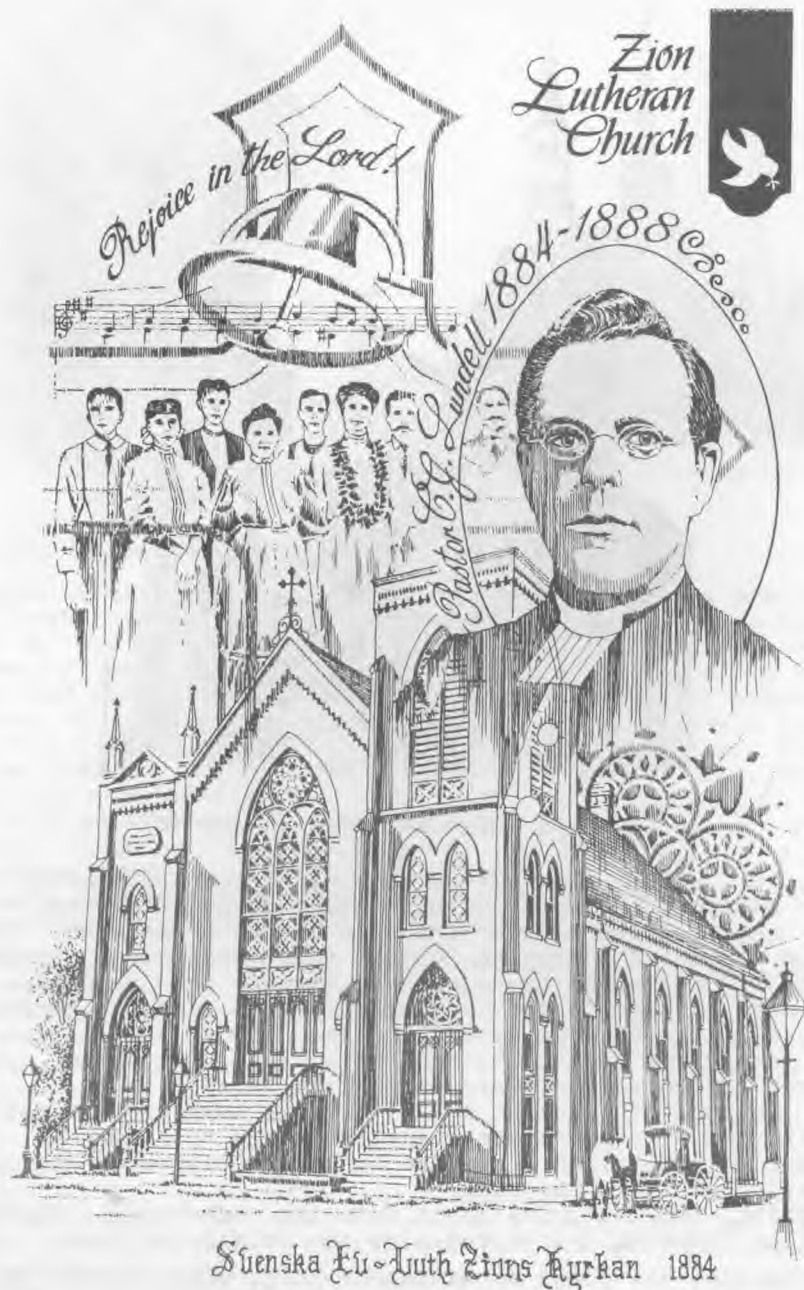


Illustration: Marjorie Carlson

C. F. Anderson presided over the first meeting when the following resolution was adopted: "Whereas the Swedish population of the city has continuously increased, and, Whereas the First Lutheran Church has grown large enough to demand the entire time and work of one pastor, we believe the time has come when a new church should be organized. We therefore, invoking God's help and guidance, and in His name, decide to organize a new congregation on the foundation of the Word of God and the unaltered Augsburg Confession: said church to be known as the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church of Rockford; and to adopt the church constitution of the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod."

First, Emmanuel, and Zion met the needs of the Swedish Lutherans for the next twenty years. During this time the children of the 1880s immigrants were marrying and starting new households. These new families along with others who were new immigrants moved into the area of Rockford known as South Park along and near 14th Avenue (now called Broadway). To meet the spiritual needs of this group First Lutheran built a chapel at the corner of 14th Avenue and 8th Street.

This was not enough to meet the need, for in November of 1906 the Illinois Conference of the Augustana Synod sent Pastor Alfred Appell to the South Park area to start a congregation, which was organized as Salem Lutheran Church January 6, 1907. For the next four years the church met in the 14th Avenue Chapel while its sanctuary was being built at 6th Street and 16th Avenue. Due to illness, Pastor Appell did not become the first called pastor of Salem. The first pastor was Rev. J. A. Benander, who pastored to the congregation of Salem for thirty-eight years.

Again after twenty years the new Swedish families moved on. Some moved to the suburb of Loves Park. The following quote from the 50th Anniversary Booklet of Grace Lutheran tells the origins of Grace:

In the summer of 1923, Mr. Axel Fredriksen informed Dr. Peter Peterson, President of the Illinois Conference of the Augustana Synod, of the possibilities that Loves Park offered for Lutheran activity. Acting on this suggestion, Dr. Peterson, Rev. Carl Solomonson of Zion Lutheran Church and Dr. J. A. Benander of Salem Lutheran Church made several trips to the Loves Park area to look over the prospects. Many people with whom they made contact indicated interest in starting English Lutheran work.

The Executive Board of the Illinois Conference extended a call to theological student Paul Randolph to become a home missionary in this field. He accepted and started house to house canvassing on January 23, 1924.

The first Sunday School and regular services were held January 27, 1924, in the Loves Park Grade

School. Twelve children gathered, and twenty people attended the morning service.

From this beginning, the group decided to build a church across the street from the school on Grand Avenue. The cornerstone was laid August 3, 1924, with the first service being held Christmas Day, 1924.

As First had seen the need for spiritual fulfillment in a new area in the early 1900s, Zion in 1917 saw the need in a new area of Rockford. The Rock View area, now the Broadway and Twentieth Street community. The Zion Anniversary book describes this effort as follows:

At the congregational meeting in January, 1917, Pastor Hemdahl noted that there seemed to be a need for more Sunday School work in Rock View.

Shortly thereafter Oscar Anderson made available an empty store at the corner of 14th Avenue and 20th Street, and a Sunday School was started, with N. A. Nilsson its first superintendent. That first year 70 pupils were enrolled, and enrollment grew each year following.

In 1919 the Zion Church petitioned the Illinois Conference to place a home mission pastor at Rock View. Since no action was taken at that time, Zion continued to sponsor Sunday School there.

In 1922, two lots were purchased by Zion on the corner of 12th Avenue and 19th Street at a cost of \$825. These were to be used as a building site for a new chapel where the Rock View Sunday School could meet and where newly organized societies could hold their meetings. Work began on the new chapel in April, 1924, and it was dedicated in July of that year.

After the chapel was put to use, the mission developed rapidly. Evening services were held there twice a month; a Dorcas Society and Junior Mission Band were organized.

The Zion Church Council recommended to the congregation that this mission be handed over to the Mission Board of the Illinois Conference for further care, and this was accomplished in February, 1925.

In April 1925 the chapel was "sold" to the Tabor Lutheran Church for \$2,000. The original cost to Zion was \$9,000.

In 1927 Hugh Johnson's home on Brooke Road was the meeting place for Pastor Melvin Smith's Sunday School for the area of Rockford which would come to be known as Ken Rock. From this beginning the present-day Bethlehem Lutheran Church began. The Sunday School soon outgrew the Johnson home and met in a small building located at Kishwaukee Street and Sandy Hollow Road.

In July of 1927 two lots located at Brooke Road and Saner were purchased for "home mission activities". At this location a chapel was built which in December of 1927 was organized as Calvary Lutheran Chapel. This chapel

served the area until December 1, 1938, when Bethlehem Lutheran Church was organized with Rev. Smith as pastor.

This congregation existed as an Independent Lutheran Church until April of 1945 when Bethlehem became a member of the Illinois Conference of the Augustana Synod with Pastor Smith receiving his ordination in June of 1945.

In June of 1934 Zion Sunday School began conducting classes at Alpine School located at Alpine Road and East State Street. This Sunday School, first known as Alpine Community Sunday School, changed its name in 1935 to Alpine Lutheran Sunday School. It remained just a Sunday School until June of 1942 when seminarian Paul Frykman conducted the first formal worship service for the group. This change led to the November 1, 1942, organization of Alpine Lutheran Church with 90 charter members. This group continued to grow, with 1943 seeing Paul Frykman being ordained as the congregation's first pastor and the starting of Sunday Schools at Buckbee and Vandercook Schools. The space problems of the church were ended when on November 9, 1947, the former chapel of Camp Grant was dedicated as the church's sanctuary, located on Sylvan Road.

The final phase of new church development by the Augustana Synod was again influenced by the movement of people. By the middle fifties the GIs had either outgrown their starter homes or the two and four family flats they had been living in and started to move into new parts of Rockford either north along Alpine Road and Mulford Road or out into Cherry Valley. These are the final three places the church moved to minister and preach the gospel.

In 1954 the Rockford District of the Illinois Conference of the Augustana Synod purchased 10 acres of land on what was to become Augustana Drive. In 1957 this land was sold to the Augustana Mission Board which in the spring of 1957 called Pastor Elwood Peterson to come to Rockford to start a church in this northeast part of Rockford. This effort was described in the newspaper as follows:

Meeting in the new parsonage with the Rev. Mr. Peterson last Monday night, pastors and laymen of the Rockford District Association of Augustana Lutheran churches voted to turn over title to the lots on which the parsonage is being erected to the Board of American Missions. The Rockford District retains title, however, to the other acreage which was bought as the site of the new church.

The Rockford district group, which is the first district organization of the Augustana Lutheran church to incorporate as "a mission builder," hopes it can erect a church within a reasonable time. Thus the project is a cooperative effort of the Rockford district churches and the Board of American Missions.

In September of 1957 Pastor Peterson held the first service of the group in the basement of the parsonage. This led to the chartering of the church and the dedication of

the new church on November 10, 1957.

The Board of American Missions of the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church acquired property at the corner of South Mulford Road and Harrison Avenue in 1958. Two years later the mission board called Pastor Irvin Moline to start a congregation in this area. The group met at Vandercook School near the church property.

Moving quickly after the first worship January 8, 1961, the church was organized April 9, 1961, with 65 adults and 55 children. A building drive was begun and with the extension of credit by the "mission church" of Rockford, Zion, a sanctuary was dedicated in December of 1962.

In 1959 Rev. Melvin Sjostrand became the pastor of First Lutheran Church. Sjostrand, from LaPorte, Indiana, was brought to First by the Augustana Synod specifically for the purpose of influencing First Lutheran to move to a location on North Mulford Road on which the synod had an option. The vote to move the church split First Lutheran. At the meeting in 1961 to determine whether or not the church should be relocated, the motion to relocate was defeated by less than ten votes. Soon thereafter a group of members of First who were in favor of the move began meeting at Alpine School. This was the beginning of St. Mark Lutheran Church. By late 1961 the group had organized and had begun to build a church at 675 N. Mulford Road. St. Mark was one of the last congregations formed in the Augustana Synod, for on January 1, 1962, Augustana joined with three other Lutheran churches to form the Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

Thus the spirit moved in many ways to meet the needs of the Swedish Lutherans in Rockford for a period of one hundred and eight years. Some were formed by the desire of the people (First and Grace), some by the want of a new language (Emmanuel), some by strife in a church (Zion and St. Mark), some by local mission (Salem, Tabor, and Alpine), some by independent groups (Bethlehem), some by a local group mission (Gloria Dei), and some by a national mission (Shepherd of the Valley).

WINNEBAGO COUNTY SOUGHT TO ANNEX TO WISCONSIN by Hazel Mortimer Hyde

Between 1818 and 1845 Winnebago County was prominent in a movement to secede from the state of Illinois for the purpose of annexation to Wisconsin. The secession sentiment covered the period immediately after admission of Illinois as a state and the admission of Wisconsin to statehood. This time span of about thirty years witnessed widespread agitation which sometimes became bitter.

A copy of official proceedings of a mass meeting in Rockford held July 6, 1840 was brought to light in 1899. This meeting purported to represent the northern fourteen counties. The delegates were instructed to instigate pro-

ceedings for secession from Illinois. They were to investigate means of annexation to the proposed new state.

The apparent motive was to re-establish the boundary line as originally set up between the two states that might be established from the Northwest Territory. It was north of an east-and-west line running through the southerly bend of Lake Michigan. Many claimed this line had been unfairly extended fifty miles north when Illinois became a state.

There was little community of interest existing between the northern and the southern areas of Illinois. The settlers in the northern sector were principally from New England and New York. The southern part of the state was settled by emigrants from the slave holding states of the South. There was a conflict of interest and a lack of mutual understanding.

The northern counties also wished to escape the burden of the enormous state debt occasioned by the building of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. There was a feeling that Southern Illinois dominated state affairs.

The following is quoted from ILLINOIS, A HISTORY OF THE PRAIRIE STATE by Robert P. Howard (1972), pages 234-235: "Wisconsin...upon admission to the Union in 1848 conceded at last that the northern boundary of Illinois would remain where Nathaniel Pope had set it thirty years earlier. In the far northern and northwestern counties, residents had long complained of official neglect and more recently of the immense public debt facing the people of Illinois. A solution would be to transfer allegiance and join the Territory of Wisconsin, which lacked sufficient population of its own, in forming a new state. As early as 1838 Wisconsin officials in a petition to Congress claimed without success that Pope's amendment to the 1818 statehood law...was a violation of the Ordinance of 1787. At a suggestion from Wisconsin officials, delegates from nine counties--Jo Daviess, Stephenson, Winnebago, Boone, McHenry, Carroll, Ogle, Whiteside, and Rock Island--held a convention in Rockford and asserted that they legally and rightfully belonged in Wisconsin. In a referendum that followed, Cook County refused to participate, but elsewhere the vote was surprisingly one-sided in favor of leaving Illinois. Governor Carlin ignored an official notice that the territorial governor of Wisconsin considered the fourteen counties to be under the 'accidental and temporary' jurisdiction of Illinois....By the time the canal had been built to Chicago and telegraph service inaugurated, northern Illinois residents were satisfied to keep the northern boundary at the 42° 30' line."

A PIONEER GENTLEMAN AND HIS FAMILY by Hazel Mortimer Hyde

David Lewis, one-time Rockford citizen, was born in Dedham, Massachusetts, December 25, 1794. His father,

Jesse Lewis, who was the grandfather of Mason (L.M.) Lewis, moved to Ware, Massachusetts, and purchased a farm there in the suburbs of the town. David Lewis was the father of Mary (Lewis) Vaughn and became the beloved step-grandfather of Mary Carolyn (Carrie) Vaughn. It was in Ware that David married his first wife, Polly A. Morse.

With his young wife, David moved to Belchertown, where Polly (Morse) Lewis died, July 27, 1828. The second wife Asenath (Smith) Mason, was born in Palmer, Massachusetts. They continued to live in Belchertown for several years.

While living on a small farm in Belchertown, David had built a sawmill. There was a dependable supply of water power and the enterprise was successful. The year was 1837 when he sold his mill and farm to move to Palmer, living there for a year. Like many people he was constantly watching for chances to better his resources and by 1938 decided to make another move. People talk about itching feet, but actually most pioneers changed locations for economic reasons and with an adventurous spirit.

In 1838, David, Asenath and their six children started in June for the West, where they planned to locate a home. They had a pair of horses and a wagon. The purchased some household goods, and camped on the way, the trip taking six weeks, so that it was August when they reached Marion Township, Ogle County, Illinois. David had made the trip a year before and purchased the land.

Mr. Samuel Patrick lived on the adjoining claim and owned a log house with a frame addition, making it a two room house. The new arrivals moved into this two-room house with the Patricks, who were acquaintances. The father set about, without delay, to build a house. The new home had eight rooms and was constructed of stone. (This substantial structure burned in 1917). The first year the family made improvements. Crops were sold in the Chicago Markets. David entered 320 acres of land at the Land Office in Dixon, as soon as it was available from the government. Later he added eighty acres.

David Lewis was a respected citizen and with his family attended the Congregational Church. He was a charter member of the church at Byron and was a deacon for a number of years. As for his political beliefs, he was a Whig in his earlier years, later an Abolitionist, and at last a Republican.

In 1852 David Lewis moved to Rockford, Illinois, where he erected a starch factory. This burned soon afterward, but with those who constituted his company, he erected a second factory. The business flourished and he became quite prosperous. No location was given for the starch factory.

Making starch is a rather unusual occupation. With the perma press materials of 1986, the housewife is not so dependent upon starch on washday and thinks of starch more often in connection with food. Starch is 10

a white powdery substance found in the seeds of corn, wheat, rice and beans and in tubers or underground stems of potato, arrowroot or cassava (tapioca) plants. While today starch is primarily used in industry to size or stiffen weaving yarn and to finish cloth or used in high quality papers to give a smooth glossy finish, it is probable that Mr. Lewis and later Mr. Cassidy were more concerned with laundry starch. It is possible he also made corn starch for cooking use.

Thomas Cassidy, who came to Rockford from Ireland was listed in 1857 City Directory of Rockford as a starch maker. He resided at Winnebago and Cherry in that year. In 1859 he was listed as spelling his surname Cassidy but was listed as a laborer.

There were five children by David Lewis' first marriage: Columbia; Mary E. and when she became the widow of Edward Vaughn lived in Kansas City being listed in 1883 and 1884 at the same address as Mary Carolyn (Carrie) Vaughn, artist, in that city's directory; Homer D. lived in Stillman Valley, Illinois; Charles F. and Melita. The three children by the second marriage were Juliette, wife of Clark Strong, living in Winstead, Connecticut; Mason (L.M.) and Abbie the wife of Professor Fales, whose home was Ottawa, Kansas.

(Continued in next issue)

GIRL SCOUTS CELEBRATE SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

by Hazel M. Hyde

(Continued from last issue)

This was typical of the community response to the Board's requests for cooperation and assistance! And always there was the support of the newspapers--with John and Molly Grimes and Isadora Haight (later Mrs. Hal Nelson) backing the Board's efforts and with Barney Thompson, Editor, Ken Todd, and others helping.

At the time of the Depression Ken Todd, manager of the Newstower or Business Manager of newspaper, agreed to three months rent-free for the suite occupied by the Girl Scouts in the Newstower Building. In fact, the suite had been built according to Girl Scout Program needs for offices, a large recreation-program room, and a kitchen and dining room for the teaching of Homemaking skills.

In the depression years, at a time when we had been taking the girls to Camp Rotary, we found there was no money for the Camp Rotary fees, so three-day trips took the place of the established camp program. These were trips to Lake Koshkonong, to the North Woods, to nearby sites at a cost ranging from \$1.85 to \$3.00 for all expenses. Later a ten-day trip to northern Wisconsin

for Senior Scouts at a cost of \$10, limited to eight girls, a volunteer leader and myself, using my father's truck, was provided, she continued.

There were all kinds of special experiences including taking 100 girls, ten leaders, and always a nurse and me, to the 1933 Chicago "Exposition of Progress". This was arranged through the B.&O. Railroad. We were housed at the Metropole at 19th South, where we had only to walk two blocks to be at the Exposition gates. We were escorted to these gates each morning of the three-day trip. If a cab or any other service was needed, we had only to ask. The service, the concern over our welfare, and the courtesies extended, were beyond what might be expected. It was not until after our return that I learned we had been housed in the safest place in all of Chicago -- the hotel headquarters of Al Capone!

In the early 1930's we planned with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad a trip to Washington, D. C. for five days. The all expense costs: \$33.00. All fees for 100 Girl Scouts, 10 leaders including me and six women from the community who wanted to take advantage of the arrangements, and a nurse (Geraldine O'Malley, who later became a Nursing Sister of a Catholic Order)--all monies were in the bank the day the Rockford Banks closed their doors. (Third National now known as First National was an exception) The account was assigned to the B. & O. Railroad and the trip continued as planned, thanks to Mr. Myers of the B.&O. who accompanied us. We were received by Mrs. Hoover, conducted through the White House and entertained at tea. Other courtesies were extended to our party through the courtesy and cooperation of Congressman John Buckbee. (The Boy Scouts, under the leadership of George Dreisback, the Blackhawk Council Executive, also made the trip. The Girl Scouts' arrangements were so special that he asked if the boys could be included in these special courtesies). President Hoover was at Rapidan at this time, or he might have met with them as Mrs. Hoover did with the girls.

The story is not complete for each day brings new faces, new programs and new projects since today's Girl Scouts are tomorrow's women. The seeds that are planted will bring the harvest: a group of women carrying forward a respect for the environment, a wholesome attitude, an understanding of the value of working together, and the hope for enlightened citizenship.

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