

Dear **SILA** Readers,

Constance L. Jackson, President/Producer of Permanent Productions, Inc. in Rolling Hills Estates, CA contacted Rev. Clark Echols, pastor of the La Crescenta New Church in La Crescenta, CA inviting him to the premiere of *Over the River...Life of Lydia Maria Child, Abolitionist for Freedom*. She wrote and directed it. (Jackson was not aware that he does not live in CA, but in Ohio and is also pastor of the Glendale New Church—Glendale, a northern suburb of Cincinnati.)

“Emanuel Swedenborg,” she emailed “and the church during the early 1800s is mentioned favorably in the documentary.”

Rev. Echols is one of two Swedenborgian ministers in the area where Swedenborgians had played a role in the abolitionist movement. *The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center* is in Cincinnati—opened in 2004. There is another Swedenborgian Church in Montgomery, OH.

November 17, I attended the movie screening, Q&A, and reception following at the *Jimmy Stewart Theater* at *Sony Studios* in Culver City, CA. The film is narrated by Diahann Carroll, but unfortunately, she could not attend due to illness.

The Thanksgiving hymn “*Over the River and Through the Woods*”, lyrics by Child from her poem “A Boy’s Thanksgiving”, was played on a keyboard before the screening setting a thoughtful mood. It was thrilling to watch with an audience the first showing of *Over the River*, a 3-part documentary on Lydia Maria Child—film tells that she went by “Muh-ri-ah”—not Lydia.

Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880) was born in Medford, Massachusetts. The Boston New Church began in 1784 when James Glen, from Scotland, gave a lecture on Swedenborg at the *Green Dragon Tavern* in Boston and several were inspired to read Swedenborg’s books. In 1818, twelve readers organized a Swedenborgian Church in Boston.

Chartered in 1823, *The Boston Church of the New Jerusalem* (Swedenborgian) counts among its former members: Timothy Harrington Carter, founder of the *Old Corner Bookstore*; Sampson Reed, mentor of Ralph Waldo Emerson; Clarence Barron, editor of the *Wall Street Journal*; George James Webb, cofounder of the *Boston Academy of Music*; Malcolm E. Nichols, 44th mayor of Boston; and Lydia Maria Child.

But, Child did not discover Swedenborg in Boston, but in Gardiner, Maine when she went there to teach at the age of 17 in 1819.

But, I must tell you that one does not learn these Swedenborgian facts from this documentary.

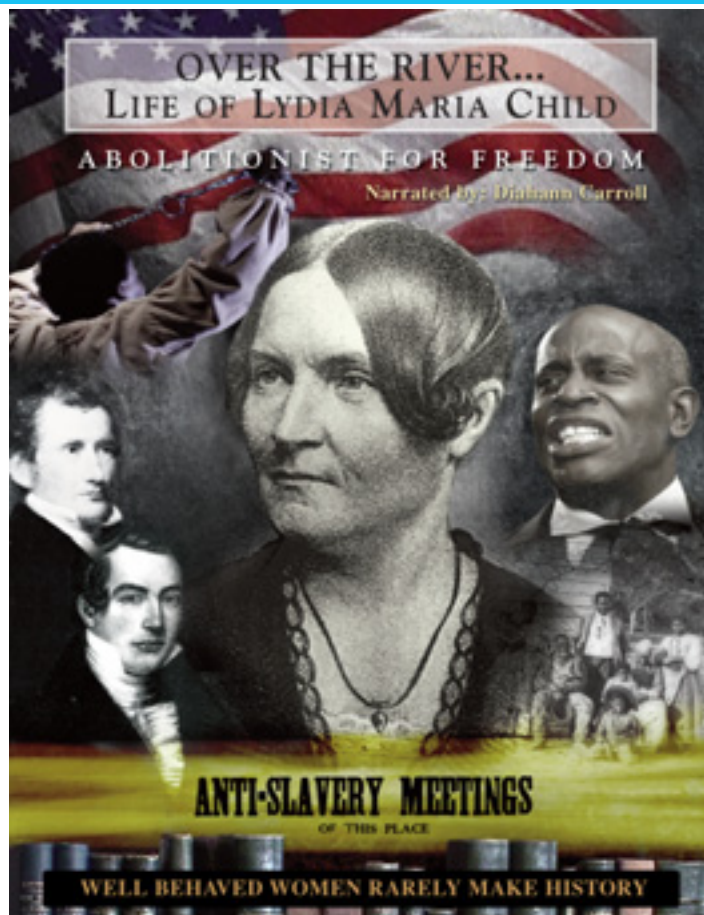
We learn that Maria Child was the 19th century Martha Stewart! She was famous for her book *The American Frugal Housewife*, other advice books, and a children’s magazine. She wrote novels, magazine articles, and pamphlets about the horrors of slavery.

While her work was popular, she was considered personally a fanatic, outspoken, and the press didn’t want to promote her. Constance said at the Q&A that the press preferred to write about Harriet Beecher Stowe, 9 years younger than Child. (Stowe also read Swedenborg—fact not in film.)

What we do learn in *Over the River* is that Maria was not liked much in the Boston New Church either. They were outraged by her fanaticism, so she found another church home.

Swedenborg is mentioned only a handful of times in the film. When I initially spoke with Constance Jackson on the

Constance Jackson



phone, I commented to her that she was mispronouncing “Swedenborg”. She was surprised to learn that.

She said the scholars that talked with her about him, pronounced it that way. I said, they often do, because they haven’t met a Swedenborgian. Constance said that when she spoke with some Swedenborgians, they hadn’t corrected her, either. I said, they often won’t, for kindness. I speak up! It’s my job! (Jackson told me that she knew about the Wayfarer’s Chapel, but not about the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.)

Diahann Carroll says, “Swed-en-borg” and “Swed-en-borg-ean” in the film as do experts, Constance informed me. Can you change it, I asked? (Yes, I said it!) No, she replied.

A few days later Constance called to tell me that they added this text on the screen the first time Swedenborg’s name is mentioned:

THE CORRECT PRONUNCIATION IS
SWE-DEN-BORG.

Constance Jackson is one dynamite producer! She stands by her work! When I saw the words come up on the screen, my heart warmed. Someone cared enough and respected Swedenborgians to right a wrong. Well... Constance was following Maria’s lead! Thank you, Constance Jackson!

During the Q&A someone asked why Maria Child was not more known today, if she was so big in her time. Because she had no children, replied Constance. No family

to pass on her legacy, unlike Stowe’s children who created a heritage for her remembrance.

Emanuel Swedenborg had no children. Fifteen years after his death, an Englishman, Robert Hindmarsh led a handful of men in forming a religion in London based on Swedenborg’s books.

Now there are several branches of Swedenborgianism. While the religion grows steadily, however slowly, it has remained under the populous radar. Yet, we know that Swedenborg’s influence is bigger than a man-made religion. His teachings moved Child, Stowe, and Lincoln to stop Africans from enslavement. That’s the Lord working through Swedenborg.

“I had to include Swedenborg in the film,” Constance told me. As the only Swedenborgian in the audience, I was privileged to see this. Watch for *Over the River* to be shown on TV in the future. Watch the trailer now: <http://www.overtherivermovie.com/>

Thinking of you,

Candace Frazee
Madam Chair

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[of Los Angeles](http://www.swedenborg.org/losangeles/)