In 1849, Lars Paul Esbjörn, a Lutheran pastor from northern Sweden, and 146 Swedish pioneers left their homeland and sailed for seventy days on the crowded freighter, *Cobden* to New York. From there, more than 100 immigrants from Sweden continued their journey for another 26 days along waterways of the Hudson River, the Erie Canal, around the Great Lakes, to Chicago and then by canal boats to Peru, Illinois. From Peru, the baggage, the women, and the children were put on wagon trains to Andover, Illinois. The rest of the party went on foot.

Due to illness, lack of food, and lodging, the majority left the group in Andover and went their separate ways. Only Pastor Esbjörn and a handful of his faithful followers remained in Andover to build the first church. Construction began in 1851. Lumber which was to have been used for the church was lost when cholera struck. The basement of the church became a hospital for the people with cholera. There is no steeple because the wood was needed for coffins. The 45-by-30-foot church was finished in 1854.

The church was later named after world-renowned Swedish singer Jenny Lind, who donated $1,500 toward its construction while she was on a concert tour in the eastern United States. However, she never saw the church or visited Andover.

The church was considered a masterpiece when it was new and could accommodate, at the most, 300 people. At one time, a rectangular hole was cut in the sanctuary floor so that people in the basement could hear the service.

Hundreds of settlers died of cholera in the early 1850s and are buried in mass graves in the chapel cemetery and a block south and a block north of the chapel.

The photograph above shows a base relief by Bror Hjort depicting Paul Esbjörn and his wife Amalia standing in front of the chapel. The relief is located in the Lutheran Church, Ostervåla, Sweden.

The congregation grew so large that Augustana Lutheran Church was built, across the street a block away. Construction began in 1867 and the building was completed in 1870. Church members traveled from all around the area, from the Quad-Cities to Galesburg, to worship in the new church.
In 1870 a meeting occurred in Andover at which the Norwegian group separated from what had been known as the Scandinavian Lutheran Augustana Synod. It was a peaceable event. After the last joint session in the new church, the Norwegians went over to the chapel to organize their own body. There was disagreement among them with the result that one part eventually founded Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and the other, Augsburg College and Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. They formed the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod; and, "on both sides the fervent hope was voiced that, as hitherto we had been united in love, so henceforth we might sustain toward each other the relationship of sister synods."

The little chapel continued to be used for various church functions until 1947. The chapel was given its name in 1948 as it was presented to the Augustana Synod.

Over the years it fell into disrepair. In 1973, the late Conrad Bergendoff, president emeritus of Augustana College, spearheaded a drive to restore and maintain Jenny Lind Chapel. The work paid off with a listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. The Chapel, on a seven-acre site, is now owned and managed by the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Part of the brick foundation on the west wall is exposed, as is one of the huge timber support beams in the basement ceiling. The bricks were made by the settlers from clay on land near the Chapel.

During restoration, the Chapel's basement was converted into a museum through the work of Hortense and Everett Lindorff. The museum has many artifacts and much history of the early settlers, including immigrants' letters written in Swedish, which Dr. Bergendoff translated to English.

Dr. Bergendoff's contributions to the restoration and museum live on today in an audiotaped narration of the history of the settlers and Chapel, which museum visitors can listen to.

The Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, located at Augustana College, is a national archives and research institute providing resources for the study of Swedish immigration to North America, the communities the immigrants established, and the role the immigrants and their descendants have played in American life. Here is a tabulation of the records they have archived for the Jenny Lind Chapel.