The Chapel is owned and managed by the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Synod elects the Jenny Lind Chapel committees that are responsible for the maintenance of the building and cemetery, arranging worship services, and the management of funds.

The Chapel houses a museum that offers exhibits of the early immigrant experience, as well as audio and video presentations.

Jenny Lind Chapel also hosts special events throughout the year, including services in Swedish and English, and Sunday evening vespers in English are held June through August at 7 p.m. You may call Augustana Church (309) 521-8127 for current schedule information.

The support for the Chapel has been and is dependent upon gifts of individuals like you. Your support may be sent to: Jenny Lind Chapel, c/o Augustana Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 157, Andover, IL 61233

Please make your check payable to: Jenny Lind Chapel

Also, consider making the Chapel a part of your estate plan.

Partial funding for this brochure provided by the West Rock Island County Chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.
Photos courtesy of Austin Oaks Portrait Studio in Andover.
On the prairie at Andover, about halfway between the Quad-Cities and Galesburg at exit 24 of Interstate 74, stands the Jenny Lind Chapel, the first church of the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America, a predecessor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Behind this place lies a story of heroic pioneer faith and courage. It began in Sweden in 1849 when Pastor Lars Paul Esbörn, accompanied by his family and a small group of Swedish immigrants, arrived in Andover. Pastor Esbjörn was the first pastor of the Swedish state church to emigrate to America. He founded the Swedish Lutheran congregation on March 18, 1850, with a charter membership of ten adults. Ecclesia Plantanda - “The Church must be planted!” was their motto.

Soon other immigrants arrived, and the tiny congregation began to grow. They needed a place to worship, but no funds were available for a church.

In 1851 Pastor Esbjörn journeyed extensively through the eastern states to plead the cause of the Swedes in the Midwest. Many small gifts were received. The greatest contribution came from the “Swedish Nightingale,” Jenny Lind, the world renowned singer, who was on a concert tour of America. While in Boston she met Pastor Esbjörn, and was deeply moved by his story. She presented him with $1,500, a contribution toward the cost of construction.

Work on the structure, measuring 45 feet long and 30 feet wide, began in the fall of 1851. It took three years and untold sacrifice to complete the building. There is no steeple because that lumber had to be used for coffins for those stricken in a cholera epidemic.

In 1870 the congregation moved to their new church. In 1948 the Andover Lutheran congregation presented the landmark Chapel and adjoining cemetery to the Augustana Synod, and named it Jenny Lind Chapel.

Pastor Esbjörn was one of the founders of the Augustana Synod, and served as the first president of Augustana College. The Chapel became the mother church for hundreds of other churches of the Augustana Lutheran Church in America that primarily served Swedish immigrants and their descendents. It had over one-half million members in 1962 when it merged into the Lutheran Church in America, later to become part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

After the congregation moved to the “new church,” the Chapel deteriorated. In 1973 the Chapel was restored with the leadership of Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, President Emeritus of Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, and Mr. Birger Swenson, also of Rock Island. As funds were raised and work was completed, the Chapel was added to the National Register of Historic Places.