

Augustana College

## Augustana Digital Commons

---

Augustana Seniors Fall 1885 (Class of 1886)

Historical Augustana Student Biographies

---

5-20-2022

### Augustana Seniors Fall 1885: Nicanor Benelius

Hannah Maurer

*Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois*

Farah Khan Brinto

*Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/fyibio1886>



Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Genealogy Commons](#)

---

#### Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Maurer, Hannah and Brinto, Farah Khan. "Augustana Seniors Fall 1885: Nicanor Benelius" (2022).

*Augustana Seniors Fall 1885 (Class of 1886)*.

<https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/fyibio1886/9>

This Student Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Historical Augustana Student Biographies at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Augustana Seniors Fall 1885 (Class of 1886) by an authorized administrator of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@augustana.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@augustana.edu).

**Augustana Seniors Fall 1885:**

Nicanor Benelius

Farah Khan Brinto

Hannah Maurer

11 May 2022

## Nicanor Benelius

Nicanor A. Benelius was born and baptized on 9 January 1861, in Lekåsa, Sweden.<sup>1</sup> The parish he was baptized in was the Jällby, Älvsborgs län in Stommen, Sweden.<sup>2</sup> Nicanor's birthname was different from the current name.<sup>3</sup> He met a German priest, who was Josef Erik Paul Benl, who changed his name to Benelius later.<sup>4</sup> Nicanor took the same name later, possibly being inspired by Erik. His original name was Nicanor Andersson.<sup>5</sup>

Nicanor immigrated to the U.S. on 7 November 1884.<sup>6</sup> He belonged to the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hjellby, Björke.<sup>7</sup> His parents were Swedish and worked as farmers in his hometown of Lekåsa.<sup>8</sup> Anders Nilsson was his father and he was born 29 January 1827, in Skövde, Skaraborgs, län.<sup>9</sup> Christina Eriksdtr is Nicanor's mother and she was born on 2 March 1824.<sup>10</sup> Her birthplace is unknown. Christina and Anders had a total of 3 children, Nicanor, August and John.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Registration card for Nicanor A. Benelius, 1883, Folder 10 1883 A – Z, Box 1 Early Registration Records, MSS 241c, Augustana College Office of the Registrar records, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. The registration card is a printed form with hand-written information, almost certainly filled in and signed in 1883 by Nicanor A. Benelius.

<sup>2</sup> "Jällby AI:5 (1874–1886)", ArkivDigital, page 19, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>3</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>4</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>5</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>6</sup> "Jällby AI:5 (1874–1886)", ArkivDigital, page 19, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>7</sup> Class Record, Senior Class, 1885-1886, Box 15, MSS 241, Augustana College Office of the Registrar records.

<sup>8</sup> Class Record, Senior Class, 1885-1886, Box 15, MSS 241, Augustana College Office of the Registrar Records, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. This Records of Members is hand written information, containing written information about Nicanor Benelius.

<sup>9</sup> "Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)", database of images, ArkivDigital, (<http://www.arkivdigital.net> : accessed 16 March 2022), image 57 / page 98, Anders Nilsson, wife Christina Eriksdtr, and family in Lekåsa, Sweden; Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. The image is a photograph of Anders Nilsson Family and who he lived with.

<sup>10</sup> "Jällby AI:5 (1874–1886)", ArkivDigital, page 19, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>11</sup> "Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)", ArkivDigital, page 98, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

Nicanor A. Benelius came to be a student at Augustana College in 1883 making him a sophomore his first year here.<sup>12</sup> He arrived in America on 6 May 1883 and started studying at Augustana on 4 September 1883<sup>13</sup>. In college Benelius was a very good student getting majority A's and B's as grades.<sup>14</sup> At Augustana he lived in room 18 in the west wing of the school in a building known as the First College Building<sup>15</sup> with Peter O. Hansen as his roommate.<sup>16</sup> He was part of the senior class of fall 1885.<sup>17</sup>

After graduation, Nicanor went to New Britain Connecticut.<sup>18</sup> He was a student pastor at the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church Maria from 1886 to 1887.<sup>19</sup> He planned on studying at the English Lutheran Seminary before coming back to Augustana.<sup>20</sup>

On 2 October 1888 he went to London, England where he was trying to get financial assistance from a priest named Johannes Palmér from a church called Swedish Church.<sup>21</sup> Johannes did not provide financial assistance to Nicanor, as to Johannes, Nicanor seemed suspicious.<sup>22</sup> Two days prior to Nicanor asking for financial help, a woman who was receiving financial aid from the church got killed by a serial killer named Jack The Ripper.<sup>23</sup> On 4 October

---

<sup>12</sup> Class Record, Senior Class, 1885-1886, Box 15, MSS 241, Augustana College Office of the Registrar records

<sup>13</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Records of Class - Testimonials at Augustana College from the Scholastic Year 1875-1876, Box 2, MSS 241, Augustana College of the Registrar Records, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. This is a handwritten grade book that kept track of each student's academic grade for the year 1875-1876.

<sup>15</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Catalog of the Officers and the Students of Augustana College and Theological Seminary 1883-1884,

<sup>17</sup> Class Record, Senior Class, 1885-1886, Box 15, MSS 241, Augustana College Office of the Registrar records.

<sup>18</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>19</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>20</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018. letters that he sent to Tuve Nilson Hasselquist at Augustana College

<sup>21</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>22</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>23</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

1888 Nicanor sent a strange letter to the City of London Mayor, but it is not easy to read the letter.<sup>24</sup> He got a reply from the mayor too but this letter cannot be found.<sup>25</sup> On 18 October 1888, he sent a second letter to the mayor and this was also not readable.<sup>26</sup> On 8 November 1888, Palmér went to speak with the secretary of the City London, who assured Palmér that Nicanor has a good reputation because they have contacted the current Augustana president, Hasselquist. But despite this they decided to send him back to America, of which Palmér personally paid for a part of the ticket money.<sup>27</sup>

But Nicanor did not end up going back to America and on 17 November 1888, he was arrested by the police for strange behavior.<sup>28</sup> He entered a house on Buxton Street and frightened the woman who lived there.<sup>29</sup> He entered the house without saying anything and when the women asked him what he wanted, he grinned.<sup>30</sup> Upon questioning he said he was asking for a street, later he was questioned about Jack The Ripper murders but was released on 23 November 1888. He was sent to America after that.<sup>31</sup>

Back in America, Benelius wrote many letters to Hasselquist, the Augustana president at the time.<sup>32</sup> He mentioned that he has been traveling a lot and that he planned not to come back to

---

Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>24</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>25</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>26</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>27</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>28</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois Times(London) The WhiteChapel Murders. Monday 19 November 1888

<sup>29</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, Times(London) The WhiteChapel Murders. Monday 19 November 1888

<sup>30</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Times(London) The WhiteChapel Murders. Monday 19 November 1888

<sup>31</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Times(London) The WhiteChapel Murders. Monday 19 November 1888

<sup>32</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

Augustana later.<sup>33</sup> On 1 February 1889, he wrote his final and third letter to Hasselquist, where he talked about his depression and sadness, but it is difficult to read through the letters properly as it is written in old Swedish, so the reason for his sadness is unknown.<sup>34</sup> He also mentioned that he wanted to continue to preach and that he wanted to get married to an English lady.<sup>35</sup>

Nicanor later was found that he was temporarily restrained in county jail, pending his admission to the Northern Illinois Hospital and Asylum for the Insane on 2 October 1890.<sup>36</sup> He passed away on 31 July 1910.<sup>37</sup> Nicanor is buried in Peoria State Hospital Cemetery in Bartonville, Peoria County, Illinois.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> “Benelius, Nicanor” Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow’s email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>34</sup> “Benelius, Nicanor” Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow’s email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>35</sup> “Benelius, Nicanor” Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow’s email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>36</sup> “Augustana College: An Educational Institution of which Rock Island is Justly Proud” Rock Island Argus. (Rock Island, Illinois), 2 October 1890, pg. 1; web archives (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92053945/1890-10-02/ed-1/seq-3/> : March 2022); image provided by Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress; Part of a special insert about the history of Nicanor Benelius.

<sup>37</sup> “Find A Grave Index”, FamilySearch, database entry for Nicanore Bornelius (d.1861), Peoria State Hospital Cemetery in Bartonville, Peoria County, Illinois, United States of America.

<sup>38</sup> “Find A Grave Index”, database, FamilySearch (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/200481876/nicanore-bornelius> : 16 March 2022), Nicanore Bornelius, 1861-1910; Burial, Peoria State Hospital Cemetery in Bartonville, Peoria County, Illinois, United States of America. Find a Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com>. FamilySearch includes a transcription of information

## Ancestors of Nicanor Benelius

### Generation 1

1. Nicanor A. Benelius. See main biography for more information.

### Generation 2

2. Anders Nilsson. Anders Nilsson was born 29 January 1827, in Skövde, Skaraborgs, Iän.<sup>39</sup> He was baptized at Algutstorp, Älvsborgs Iän in Kilatorp Hägrunga Rote.<sup>40</sup> The date of his baptism is unknown. Anders Nilsson married Christina on 29 January, 1827<sup>41</sup>. They got married at the Jällby, Älvsborgs Iän in Stommen, Sweden.<sup>42</sup> Anders Nilsson died on 4 August 1894.<sup>43</sup>
3. Christina Eriksdtr. Christina Eriksdtr, was born on 2 March 1824.<sup>44</sup> The birthplace is unknown. Her baptism and the date of baptism is unknown. Christina and Anders had 3 children. Christina died on 10 December 1911.<sup>45</sup>
  - I. Nicanor A. Benelius. See 1 above.
  - II. August. August was born 13 March 1863.<sup>46</sup> All other information is unknown.
  - III. John Alfred. John was born 21 August 1866.<sup>47</sup> Nicanor's younger brother John Alfred started to act strange in 1871 and went to Gothenburg Mental Hospital in

---

<sup>39</sup> "Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)", ArkivDigital, page 98, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>40</sup> "Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)", ArkivDigital, page 98, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>41</sup> "Anders Nilsson (1800–1947)", ArkivDigital, database image of Anders Nilsson, born 1827-01-29 BiS (Population of Sweden)

<sup>42</sup> "Anders Nilsson (1800–1947)", ArkivDigital, database image of Anders Nilsson, born 1827-01-29 BiS (Population of Sweden)

<sup>43</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>44</sup> "Jällby AI:5 (1874–1886)", ArkivDigital, page 19, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>45</sup> "Benelius, Nicanor" Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow's email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>46</sup> "Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)", ArkivDigital, page 98, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>47</sup> "Jällby AI:5 (1874–1886)", ArkivDigital, page 19, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

1896.<sup>48</sup> He was later sent to Vadstena Asylum where he stayed until 1897 and died.<sup>49</sup> All other information is unknown.

### Generation 3

6. Eric Johnson. Eric was born 31 January 1796.<sup>50</sup> His place of birth is unknown. He married Stina Larsdotter.<sup>51</sup> Their place and date of marriage is unknown.

7. Stina Larsdotter. Stina was born 16 February 1795.<sup>52</sup> Her place of birth is unknown. Stina and Eric have 3 kids.<sup>53</sup>

I. Christina Eriksdtr. See 3 above.

---

<sup>48</sup> “Benelius, Nicanor” Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow’s email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>49</sup> “Benelius, Nicanor” Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Stefan Rantzow’s email to Augustana College Special Collections on 21 Jul 2018.

<sup>50</sup> “Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)”, ArkivDigital, page 98, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>51</sup> “Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)”, ArkivDigital, page 98, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>52</sup> “Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)”, ArkivDigital, page 98, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.

<sup>53</sup> “Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)”, ArkivDigital, page 98, database image of household of Anders Nilsson.



## **Descendants of Nicanor Benelius**

### Generation 1

1. Nicanor A. Benelius. See main biography for information.

Nicanor had no known descendants.

## Questions for further research

How did Nicanor come to America? After being released Nicanor came back to America. However the date or how he came to America is not known

What were in the letters that Hasselquist sent to Nicanor? What happened to the lady he was willing to marry? There were a lot of letters sent between Nicanor and Hasselquist (the president of Augustana *date*). The letters are not readable as they were written in old Swedish. And the letters that Hasselquist sent to Nicanor are not found. In the letters he talked about liking a lady and wanting to get married to her. It is worth researching what happened further with the lady and the reason for the close relationship between Hasselquist and Nicanor, and what they talked about.

How were his last days at the mental hospital? What happened to his family? Did his family try to look for him? There is nothing more known about Nicanor after coming to the US, except that he was waiting on his admission to Illinois mental state hospital and then that he died in the mental hospital. The cause of his death is not known. It is known that he was buried in Peoria Mental State Hospital but his picture of his gravestone is not found. It is not known even if he has a gravestone, if not, why was he not given one?

We have created a record for Nicanor Benelius in the family tree on *FamilySearch*. The record locator is G6V1-GPR.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the draft written by Adwoa Adoma Bawuah, Henrietta Mensah, and Eunice Agyemang. We thank them for their allowance of us to use their draft to help further our information in getting to know our alum.

No. \_\_\_\_\_ Records for 1883 *Sophomore* Class. ✓

AT

## Augustana College and Theological Seminary.

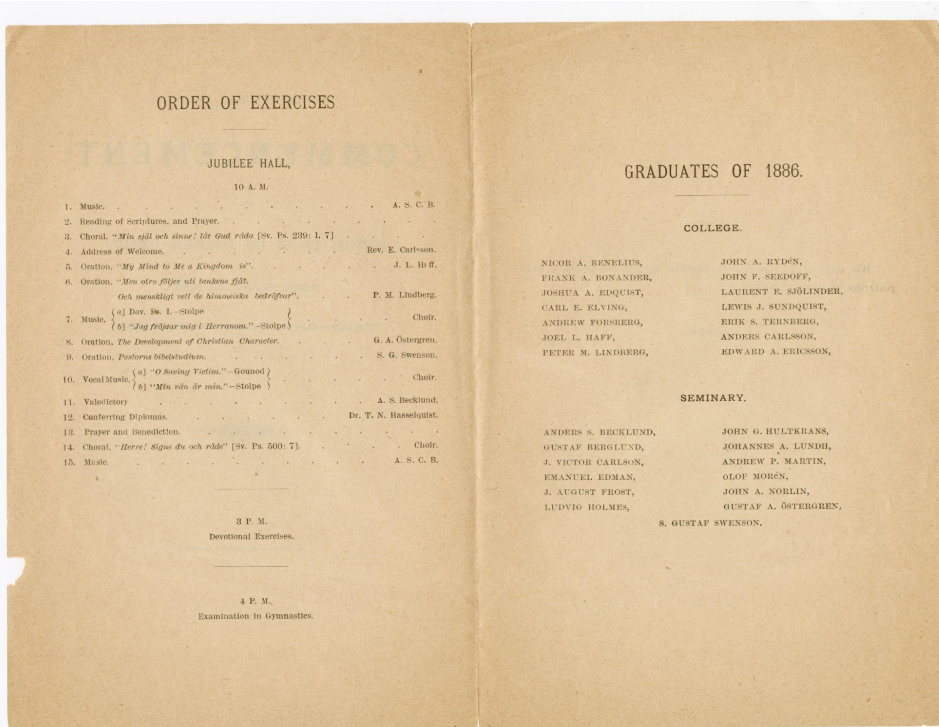
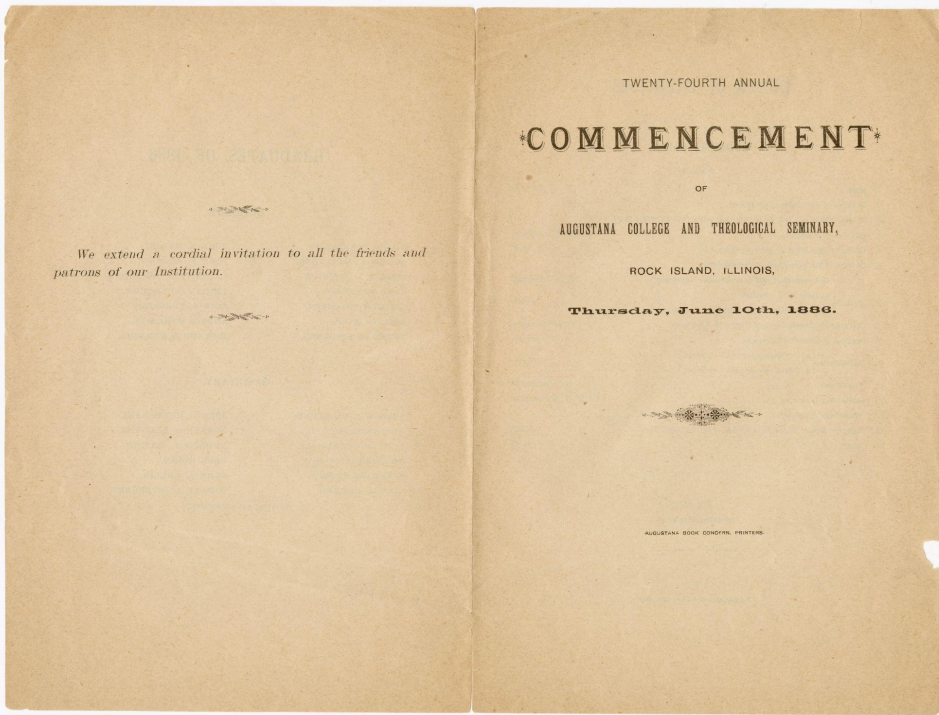
Please, fill out this blank legibly, and return it without delay to your Class Guardian.

1. Write your name and surname in full (underlining your name of familiar address):  
Nicanor Benelius
2. State your parents' nationality: Swedish  
Your father's name: Anders Nilson  
Occupation: Farmer Residence: Hjelteby  
Ljung Whether he is living or dead: Living
3. Where were you born?  
Lekisa, Eksholmen, Sweden
4. When were you born? Year 1866, month January, 9 day.
5. What was your occupation before entering this institution? at school in Stockholm  
Studying, preaching, working of industries
6. Where did you receive instruction before entering this institution?  
at Anders Nilson's school in Upsal
7. When did you ~~or your ancestors~~ arrive in this country?  
Arrived on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1883.
8. Where is your present home?  
Hjelteby, Ljung, Alingsås.
9. When did you enter this institution? Aut. Term 1883  
When did you enter this class? on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 1883.
10. What course of studies do you pursue here? (State in what class, and whether Classical, Scientific, or selected; if selected, state what topics, and in what class or classes).

Classical Course

11. To what church and congregation do you belong?  
Sw. Evng. Luth. Church at Hjelteby, Björke.
12. Do you receive any beneficiary aid, and how much?  
Two beneficiary aid
13. In what room do you live? No 18, Anders' West Wing.
14. Subscribe your usual signature:

N. Benelius.



55 Commencement Program, 1886, Folder 1 1868-1899, Box 1 Commencement Programs 1868-1936, MSS 248, Augustana College Office of the President Records, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. The twenty-fourth annual commencement program for Thursday, June 10th, 1886, is a small printed leaflet of four pages.

## Source List

- Augustana College Office of Registrar Records (MSS 241), Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.
- Augustana College Office of the President Records (MSS 248), Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.
- Augustana College Records of Members (MSS 241), Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.
- Augustana College Vertical Files, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.
- Rock Island Argus. (Rock Island, Illinois), 2 October 1890. Web archives. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Library of Congress
- “Algutstorp AI:7 (1861–1880)”. Database of images. ArkivDigital.  
<http://www.arkivdigital.net> : 2022.
- “Anders Nilsson (1800–1947)”. Database of images. ArkivDigital.  
<http://www.arkivdigital.net> : 2022.
- “Benelius, Nicanor” Vertical File [4537] [4809], Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.
- “Find A Grave Index”. Database. FamilySearch. <https://familysearch.org> : 2022.
- “Jällby AI:5 (1874–1886)”. Database of images. ArkivDigital.  
<http://www.arkivdigital.net> : 2022.