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# Francis J. Plym— a successful Swedish-American

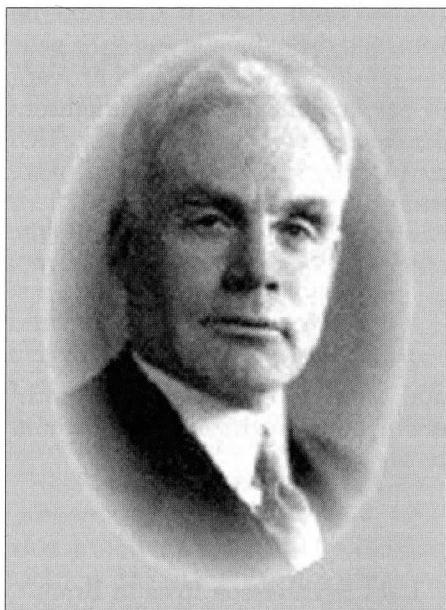
By ELISABETH THORSELL

Francis J. Plym is mentioned in Allan Kastrup's *The Swedish Heritage in America* (1975), p. 440, as an example of the many inventive Swedes that came from relatively humble origins, but still start prosperous companies.

As a young man he developed into a skilled carpenter and cabinet-maker, and by working part-time he was able to enter schools of higher education.

Here is his obituary from the *Niles Daily Star*, published 12 Jan. 1940: "Francis J. Plym, Niles industrialist, philanthropist, and president of the Kawneer company and Star Publishing company, died at 3:15 this afternoon.

"Mr. Plym was 70 years old last September. Active to the last he had continued his executive work at the Kawneer plant, had carried on his daily routine of exercise, work, and recreation until his most recent illness.



"In doing so he had carried out his own theories that work was the all-enduring release from boredom and a means of remaining perpetually young.

"Honors have come to him in professional, educational, and other lines of service. He was knighted in 1938

for his efforts in directing the American-Swedish Tercentenary, an honor conferred upon him by the king of Sweden, Gustaf V.

"His passing came after a pleasant holiday season with his family, four of whom survive--Mrs. Plym, his son, Lawrence, and two daughters, Mrs. Jack Troup and Mrs. George Grimes."

Francis J. Plym was married to *Jennie B. Barber*, born 7 May 1874 in Rantoul, IL, who died 11 July 1970 in Niles, MI.

Her obituary gives more details of the importance of the Plyms to the city of Niles, published in the *Niles Daily Star*, 13 July 1970:

"Mrs. Plym was recognized as an authority on Niles and area history and had collaborated with the late Mr. and Mrs. Ballard in publishing several books describing early Niles history, copies of which are at the Niles Historical Assn. and Niles Library.

"She was also an avid collector of books pertaining to early American history and the expeditions of such explorers as Father Marquette, Charlevoix. An extensive collection of such volumes, including several by French historians, was donated to the Niles Library several years ago by Mrs. Plym.

"Mrs. Plym's keen interest in literature prompted her to donate to the city a new library in 1961. Of modern design, it is located at Main and Seventh Street, and replaced the Andrew Carnegie library on North Fourth Street which had long before outgrown its limited space.

"About the time of her graduation at the University of Nebraska, the Barber family moved to Lincoln, Neb., where she met and married, on March 10, 1903, Francis J. Plym, a young architect getting his start in that city.

"One of the early family gifts to Niles, where they had moved in 1907 was that the city had no hospital, so the Plyms purchased, in 1925, the Dresden home on St. Joseph Avenue,

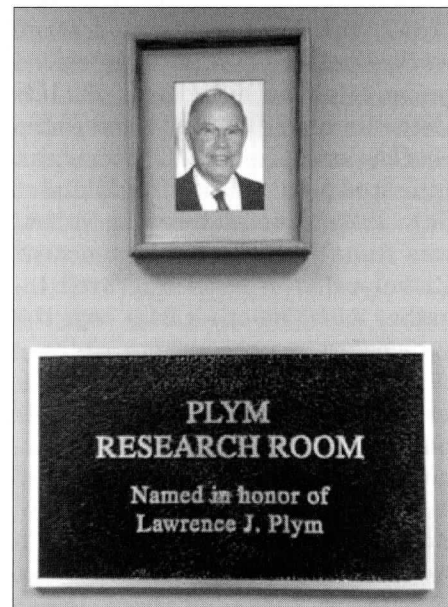
known as "Castle Rest," and remodeled it into a hospital. It was announced on Dec. 24, 1925, as a Christmas gift to the city and remained as one of the family's favorite charities.

"In addition to widespread philanthropics in the Niles area, gifts included the Senior Citizens' Home in Mr. Plym's home parish in Bäcka-by, Sweden; Augustana College in Rock Island, Ill.; and more."

Their son, *Lawrence John Plym*, born in Kansas City, MO, on 28 June 1906, died 12 March 1993 in Florida, followed in the footsteps of his parents. His obituary was published in the *Niles Daily Star* on 15 March 1993.

"He was among other things the president of many companies, including the Kawneer Co. of Niles from 1940 to 1962, which is now merged with Amax Inc.

"In 1992, he received the Swedish government's Order of the Polar Star. Plym was a member of the board of directors of the Swedish Council of America for 15 years and the council's Royal Round Table. At Augustana College, Plym established an endowment in support of Swedish American history studies through the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center."



*The Swenson Center research room.*

# Ancestors of Francis J. Plym (1869–1940)

1) *Frans Johan Åslesson Plym*, born 16 Sep. 1869 in Puketorp, Bäckaby,<sup>1</sup> died 12 Jan. 1940 in Niles, MI. He immigrated as a small child on 21 Aug. 1870 to the U.S. with parents and siblings.

## Generation I

2) f<sup>2</sup> *Åsle (Osley, Osly, Ozly) Johannesson (Johnson)*, born 11 May 1829 in Nässja, Skepperstad, died 13 Aug. 1916 in Aledo, Mercer Co., IL.

Moved with his family 21 Aug. 1870 from Puketorp, Bäckaby, F to U.S.A. He and his 3rd wife Anna Catharine Jonasdatter are in Aledo in the U.S. Census 1900.

Married 1st to *Cajsa Lisa Johannesson*, born 20 Sep. 1809 in Stockaryd, died from smallpox 25 Mar. 1859 in Björnhult, Stockaryd.

Married 2nd 28 Jun. 1860 in Bäckaby, to the following ancestor.

Married 3rd to *Anna Catherine Jonasdatter* (sister of 2nd wife), born 20 Mar. 1823 in Elmesås, Skepperstad, died 14 Apr. 1904, probably in Aledo. She immigrated in 1876 from Asa (Kron.).

3) m *Johanna Jonasdatter*, born 18 Apr. 1829 in Elmesås, Skepperstad, died ca 1871 in Aledo, Mercer Co., IL.

## Generation II

4) ff *Johannes Åslesson (Plym)*<sup>3</sup> born 10 Mar. 1786 in Anderstorp, Hultsjö, died from dropsy 25 Aug. 1866 in Brunstorp, Hultsjö. Around 1810 he is recorded as being in the militia for a short while.

Farmer at Nässja, in Skepperstad. Moved in 1836 to Brunstorp in Hultsjö, where he was a farmer for the rest of his life. In the last cl. survey and in the Hultsjö death record he is called Åslesson Plym. Married 20 Nov. 1814 in Skepperstad to the following ancestor.

5) fm *Lisa Svensdotter*, born 11 Aug. 1790 in Thomasgård, Skepperstad, died 11 Dec. 1853 in Brunstorp, Hultsjö.

6) mf *Jonas Pettersson*, born 12 Aug. 1801 in Pilagården, Hultsjö, died from chest illness 10 Jan. 1877 in Elmesås, Skepperstad.

Farmer first at Hultsjö Pilagård, then at Elmesås, Skepperstad.

Married 29 Dec. 1819 in Skepperstad to the following ancestor.

7) mm *Anna Lisa Andersdotter*, born 23 Feb. 1803 in Elmesås, Skepperstad, died from consumption 18 Nov. 1858 in Elmesås, Skepperstad.

## Generation III

8) ff f *Åsle Svensson, rusthållare*,<sup>4</sup> born 1 Apr. 1747 in Solkaryd Negergård, Skepperstad, died from consumption 18 Dec. 1812 in Anderstorp, Hultsjö.

First owner of a farm at Uppåkra Sörgård in Vallsjö, then at Anderstorp in Hultsjö, then moved in 1802 to Fröderyd, then in 1807 back to Anderstorp in Hultsjö.

Married to the following ancestor.

9) ff m *Annika Jonasdatter*, born 23 Apr. 1753 in Vallsjö, died 26 Dec. 1833 at Anderstorp, Hultsjö.

10) fm f *Sven Samuelsson*, born 26 Mar. 1746 in Fröset, Skepperstad, died 12 Aug. 1814 in Thomasgård, Skepperstad.

Farmer at Skepperstad Thomasgård, Skepperstad.

Married 18 Jun. 1769 in Skepperstad to the following ancestor.

11) fm m *Lisa Andersdotter*, born ca 1752, died 12 Apr. 1833 in Thomasgård, Skepperstad.

12) mff *Peter Jonasson*, born 12 Jan. 1774 in Hultsjö, died 24 May 1860 in Pilagård, Hultsjö.

Farmer at Hultsjö Pilagård in Hultsjö.

Married to the following ancestor.

13) mf m *Brita Jonasdatter*, born ca 1778 in Skatelöv (Kron.), died 29 Dec. 1827 in Pilagård, Hultsjö.

14) mm f *Anders Olofsson*, born ca 1764, died 17 Feb. 1818 in Elmesås, Skepperstad.

Farmer at Elmesås, Skepperstad. He was blind in his old age.

Married to the following ancestor.

15) mm m *Maria Månsdotter*, born 1773 in Fröderyd, died 21 Aug. 1844 in Elmesås, Skepperstad.

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## Notes:

1) Parishes mentioned here are all in Jönköping County, except Skatelöv and Asa, that are in Kronoberg County.

2) The letters before the name of an ancestor are **f** and **m**. **F** means father (*far*), and **m** means mother (*mor*). So mm f means mother's mother's father (in Swedish: *mormors far*).

3) The *Plym* name is a bit of a mystery. It is probably a soldier's name but no such soldier has yet been found. The earliest time it has been known yet is about 1810, when ancestor #5 is supposed to be working with the Plyms in Skepperstad, but not yet found there. Then her husband is recorded with this name, when he dies, and grandson Frans uses it as a family name in the U.S. and so it still seems to be.

4) A *rusthållare* was a man that had a farm big enough to also support a cavalry soldier and a horse.

See also *SAG 1993/2*, which contains an obituary and genealogical information on the Plym family, by Glen Brolander.