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Who Was Daniel Larsson of Haurida?*

Nils William Olsson

Early commentators on Swedish American history, particularly that portion which deals with the subject of immigration history during the middle of the 19th century, have singled out Daniel Larsson (Larson, Larsen, Lawson) of Haurida Parish in the county of Jönköping as being one of the first Swedish settlers to arrive in the East. In fact all agree that Daniel Larsson was the first immigrant to lead a party of Swedes to the East Coast.

These printed sources all state that Daniel Larsson arrived in Boston in 1844 with his travelling companions totalling fifty persons and though these did not remain in the East, but left for the West, including Daniel Larsson's father, Lars Larsson, Daniel, himself, remained behind, settling in North Bridgewater, Massachusetts, where he received employment as shoemaker.¹

Seven years later, according to Norelius, Larsson returned to Sweden and by the end of 1851 had brought back with him to the United States another contingent of immigrants, totalling some sixty souls. Some of these late-comers scattered to the four winds, but others stayed with Larsson in North Bridgewater and nearby Campello (parts of which were renamed Brockton in 1874).

Since Daniel Larsson's arrival in 1844 predates that of Peter Cassel, who brought his Swedish party to Iowa in 1845, and the Erik Janssonists, who began arriving in Bishop Hill, IL in 1846, it is quite surprising that so little is known concerning Daniel Larsson, especially since he seemingly was responsible for the arrival in the United States of more than one hundred immigrants.

We are here faced with two major questions when it comes to analyzing the events which led up to and took place during both of Daniel Larsson's journeys to Boston. The first deals with Larsson's identity, long a question mark in the minds of Swedish American historians. The second question deals with the sources surrounding the episodes of Larsson's arrivals in Boston in 1844 and 1851.

The first question, concerning Daniel Larsson's identity, is quite easily disposed of. The actual facts are, that while Larsson was born in Haurida, he emigrated to America from the neighboring parish of Lekeryd, to which his family had moved already in 1839. This fact explains why the Haurida records for the 1840s are totally silent as to Daniel Larsson's existence and his eventual emigration to America.

* The author is indebted to the following persons for kind assistance in providing pertinent data for this article — Mrs. Ruth Anderson Lemée of North Bridgewater, MA; Ronald J. Johnson, Madison, WI; Erik Wikén, Stockholm, Sweden; Sigvard Faag, Tenhult, Sweden, and Prof. Kenneth Lagerstedt, Buzzards Bay, MA.

He was born in Haurida Oct. 23, 1821, the son of Lars Larsson, a wealthy land owner, living on a farm named Haurida Södergård, and Lovisa Svensdotter. The father had been a juror (*nämndeman*) and vestryman (*kyrkvård*) and had been quite prominent in parish affairs. Soon after the birth of Daniel Frans, however, the family seems to have suffered financial reverses, for Lars Larsson moved to a nearby smaller farm, Klockarehemmet in the village of Fråstorp. In 1839 he moved again, this time to the neighboring parish of Lekeryd, where he installed himself, his wife and children in a much more modest home, Östra Höreda Byagård.

In 1844 both Lars and Daniel Frans Larsson, father and son, decided to leave for America. For the son, the clergyman noted in the parish exit register that "since he doubtless will not return, he has been recorded as having moved away permanently". The father left with the proviso, that he would return within the year, if he did not like it, or could not find employment.

Upon arrival in Boston, the father and son parted company, the son staying in the East, while the father, who also went by the name of Lars Landberg, continued on to Wisconsin, where he and his supposed "travelling companions" settled down in Sheboygan. Unfortunately, the father and son never met again, for in the fall of 1845, Lars Larsson succumbed near Milwaukee. We possess a comprehensive report dealing with Larsson's demise, thanks to the clergyman in Lekeryd, who made a special note in the Lekeryd Parish records, dealing with Larsson's death. Since it is an unusual entry, it is reproduced here:

"Dead 1846

The month of March, date of death unknown, date of funeral unknown. Lars Larsson, widower from Västra Höreda Västergård in Lekeryd Parish, has died, cause of death unknown, at the age of 65. He emigrated together with his son, Daniel Frantz Larsson, to North America in the fall of 1844, having decided to return to Sweden after one year, if he did not like it there, or could not find employment. From a letter, dated Milwaukee County in America in January 1846, a Swede residing there (his name was not given) had asked a friend of his, residing in Göteborg, by the name of Napoleon Vinberg, a banking clerk there, to apprise the relatives in Sweden of Larsson's death. An extract from this letter has been forwarded to the parish office here by Vinberg, dated March 24, 1846. This extract tells us that 'Lars Larsson, accompanied by the Swede, mentioned above, had left Boston for Milwaukee County, and then died there a few months later.' He was buried in a consecrated cemetery there by a Swedish Lutheran minister² and was accompanied to the grave by all of the Swedes resident there. It is not known what month or what day Lars Larsson died. Probably he died toward the end of 1845. The death will be registered here, since Lars Larsson, who departed from Sweden for an unspecified time, did not take out the usual exit permit. His son, Daniel Frantz Larsson, supposedly lives in the State of Massachusetts, in the Boston area, according to a notation in the letter. He was not present at his father's death nor funeral".

In the meanwhile Daniel F. Lawson (the name form he used in America) stayed in North Bridgewater until 1851, when he returned to Sweden, according

to Norelius and his obituary, and brought back with him about sixty of his neighbors and friends to America. He arrived in Boston, supposedly, late in the year, together with his fiancée, Catharina Fredrika Nordquist, whom he married in North Bridgewater Dec. 14 of that year. She was born in Gränna Nov. 30, 1823, the daughter of Anders Nordquist, a blacksmith, and Christina Börjesdotter. She was living in Språxmålen in Vireda Parish (Jön.) at the time of her emigration.

Larsson remained in North Bridgewater until 1868, when he purchased a farm in Goodhue County, MN and moved there with his wife and six children. During his stay in Bridgewater he had received his U.S. citizenship April 25, 1854 in the Boston Municipal Court of Suffolk County, MA.³ He died in Goodhue County, MN May 10, 1907 and his wife followed him in death exactly two weeks later.

One additional bit of information concerning Larsson's early period in North Bridgewater is contained in a church program, marking the diamond jubilee of The First Lutheran Church of Brockton, MA in 1942. According to this program

"the first Swedes who came to North Bridgewater were three brothers, John, Daniel and William Lawson, who arrived from Gothenburg in 1844. Daniel soon left for the West, but John and William remained. Descendants of William are still living in Brockton".

This information is obviously erroneous, since Daniel remained in North Bridgewater for 24 years. The brother named William is identical with Adolf Wilhelm Larsson, born in Haurida May 16, 1830, who remained in Sweden and did not emigrate until Aug. 28, 1851. The third brother John is probably his brother Sven Johan Larsson, born in Haurida April 18, 1819. He was residing in the village of Brunstorp in Lekeryd Parish as late as 1845. He may also have emigrated but his name has not been found in the passport lists.⁴

Let us now turn to the second question — the facts surrounding Daniel Larsson's arrivals in Boston 1844 and 1851. The evidence we have for his first coming to the U.S. is quite scanty, in fact it is based almost solely upon Norelius' statement in his work on the Swedes in America, which apparently has been the source for most subsequent historians. The first volume of Norelius' work came out in 1890, when Daniel Larsson was close to seventy years of age. We have no information as to when Norelius interviewed Larsson, but it must have been after Larsson's move to Minnesota (Norelius was residing in Vasa, Goodhue County from 1884 to 1890). At the very best, the facts related by Larsson lay twenty five years back in time.

What makes the Larsson statement to Norelius so critical is the fact that we possess no manuscript source to back up the Larsson statement so far as the 1844 arrival is concerned. No passenger manifest for Boston has been found to corroborate the arrival of the *Superior* in 1844. The passport lists in Sweden give no clue and neither do the various parish exist registers.

If we examine the passport lists for the county of Jönköping for 1844, we find that the total number of Swedes, who received passports in Jönköping for travel to America amounted to six - four from the city of Gränna and Lars and Daniel Larsson from Lekeryd. If we examine the exit rolls for the parishes involved, such as Lekeryd, Haurida, Vireda, Svarttorp and Ölmstad, etc., we get the same negative results.

What about the evidence on American soil? Norelius mentions that of the fifty persons who came with Larsson, forty nine including Lars Larsson, left for Sheboygan, WI, where the father supposedly died. From the death notice in the Lekeryd Parish records, however, we learn that Larsson died in Milwaukee County, sixty miles from Sheboygan. From the same death entry we also learn that the informer of the death to the parish priest was Napoleon Vinberg, who furthermore stated that

“Lars Larsson, accompanied by the Swede (who had written to Vinberg) had left Boston for Milwaukee County”.

There is no mention of Sheboygan, nor the others in the party.

The U.S. Census for 1850 for the State of Wisconsin lists a total of eighty eight Swedes living in the entire state in that year. Of these, less than a hundred Swedes, it is possible to document virtually all of them as having come over in the 1840s, but via New York. Only a handful had come via Boston, and these can also be documented. In 1850 there were eleven people living in Sheboygan of Swedish background, a single person, Fredrik Thott, who had arrived in Boston June 13, 1842 and a doctor by the name of Adolf Fredrik St. Sure Lindsfelt and his family of ten members. Lindsfelt had arrived already in 1842.

Although we are dealing with a time interval of a little more than five years between the “arrival” of the *Superior* and the year of the census, it is difficult to believe that close to fifty persons would have completely disappeared, either by death or moving to another state. Had they settled in Sheboygan, one would have expected some evidence of this fact as mirrored in the Census of 1850.

If we look once more at Norelius’ reference of the Larsson statement, we note that Larsson could offer no information as to what had happened the rest of his forty eight travelling companions. This is strange considering the statement that he brought with him persons “from his locality”. One would have expected that Larsson would have kept some kind of contact with one or more of them, since they shared the same background and had participated in the same emigration experience.

What about the 1851 arrival? Here we are more fortunate in that we possess documentation. While there are no passenger manifests extant for Boston for this time, the end of 1851, we do have the roster of immigrants and on which ships they arrived, as documented by the port authorities in Boston. For Nov. 19, 1851 there is an entry for the ship *Montreal* out of Göteborg, Sweden. The list contains 43 names, of which two were Norwegian. It is reproduced here:

*Passengers who arrived in Boston on board the
Montreal Nov. 19, 1851*

<i>Name of Passenger</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>From Where</i>	<i>Last Residence</i>
1. Jacob Johnson	55	Cotter	Sweden	Sweden
2. Jonas Orn ⁵	56	Farmer	"	"
3. Johanna Orn	40	Lady	"	"
4. Maria Carlsdotter	14	Servant	"	"
5. Carl Anderson ⁶	39	Farmer	"	"
6. Martha Anderson	36	Lady	"	"
7. Per Anderson	12	Child	"	"
8. Sven Anderson	6	"	"	"
9. Marg. Anderson		Infant	"	"
10. C. J. Carlson ⁷	26	Cooper	"	"
11. J. Pherson	44	Cab. Maker	"	"
12. Johanna Pherson	44	Lady	"	"
13. A. Pherson	19	Farmer	"	"
14. Augustus Pherson	12	Child	"	"
15. John Pherson	9	"	"	"
16. Anna Pherson	7	"	"	"
17. Chs. Pherson	5	"	"	"
18. Hans Rampson ⁸	27	Farmer	"	"
19. Orlofs Nilson ⁹	25	"	"	"
20. Lars Jepson ¹⁰	19	"	"	"
21. Carol Rampson ¹¹	20	Servant	"	"
22. (?) Rampson ¹²	18	Farmer	"	"
23. Jonas Anderson ¹³	35	"	"	"
24. Anders Anderson	27	"	"	"
25. Nels Anderson	29	Carpenter	"	"
26. J. Anderson	25	Farmer	"	"
27. G. Anderson	27	Lady	"	"
28. Carl Anderson	1	Child	"	"
29. Per Larson ¹⁴	25	Farmer	"	"
30. Danl Larson ¹⁵	30	Shoemaker	"	"
31. A. W. Larson ¹⁶	21	Farmer	"	"
32. J. C. Larson ¹⁷	23	Lady	"	"
33. C. Nordqwest ¹⁸	28	"	"	"
34. C. J. Hulbeck ¹⁹	26	Clerk	"	"
35. W. Frobeck	27	"	"	"
36. W. L. Engren ²⁰	19	Baker	"	"
37. Lars Mc Ihelson ²¹	50	- - -	"	"
38. Martha Mickelson	45	Lady	"	"
39. Jonas Mickelson	12	Child	"	"
40. Orlofs Mickelson	7	"	"	"

41. Anders Anderson	8	"	"	"
42. Ovar (?) Peterson	21	Clerk	Norway	Norway
43. Ann Reb. Nilson	28	Servant	"	"

What has hampered the investigation so far is Larsson's statement that he returned to Sweden to lead a second contingent back to the U.S. and that these persons supposedly were recruited among friends and neighbors in the area surrounding Lekeryd and Haurida. The statistics do not tally with this concept. For the county of Jönköping we find that only 36 passports for America were issued between July 3, 1851 and the end of the year. For those, for which a home address is shown, only one came from Vireda Parish, Catharina Fredrika Nordquist, Larsson's fiancée, eight came from Ölmstad Parish, one from the city of Gränna and one from Lekeryd, Daniel Larsson's brother, Adolf Wilhelm Larsson.

When we examine the tabulation of the *Montreal* passengers against passport records for all of Sweden, the story is entirely different, for here we find emigrants, not only from Jönköping län, but also from Kalmar, Göteborg and Ystad. How extensive were Larsson's contacts in Sweden? We shall probably never know, but from the evidence to be found on the *Montreal* roster, they must have been extensive, that is, provided we are to take Norelius' statement literally. Based upon the available evidence it is more likely that Larsson sailed aboard the *Montreal* with his family group, which in fact was but a small fraction of the entire shipload. This would account for the fact that, that so far as we know, so few followed Larsson to North Bridgewater — only his immediate family, his fiancée, whom he married in North Bridgewater on Dec. 14 of that year, his brother and his sister.

In summing up the story of Daniel Larsson there is no doubt concerning his identity. We know when and where he was born, when he emigrated and when he re-emigrated. We can follow his career in the United States, up to his time of death. The same is true of his wife.

So far as the statement made by Norelius that he brought over two shiploads of immigrants, we are on more unsure ground. Since we cannot document the arrival of the *Superior* in Boston in 1844, we are at a loss in interpreting his statement to Norelius. While we now have the evidence for his return to Boston in 1851 with forty Swedish immigrants, we cannot be sure what motivated these to emigrate. We are not sure of how many Larsson recruited. What we do know is that he returned to North Bridgewater, where his presence seems to have been a focal point for the influx of later Swedish immigrants, not only from his native Småland, but also from other areas in Sweden. This small nucleus of well-trained artisans doubtless had a small, but important role, in the building up of the famous shoe manufacturing industry of North Bridgewater and Campello, later to become the city of Brockton.

Corroborative evidence for his having brought over two shiploads of Swedes to Boston in 1844 and 1851 has not been found. There are many unanswered questions and until we have the answers to these, we shall have to rest the case for the time being.

P.S. As this article is going to press, the author's attention has been called to an article in *The Brockton Daily Enterprise* (Brockton, MA), dated May 15, 1981, in which the writer alludes to information supplied by the late Dr. Ewald B. Lawson, that Larsson returned the second time to Boston Nov. 19, 1851 aboard the ship *Montreal* with 43 passengers.

¹ Writers like Florence Janson, *The Background of Swedish Immigration 1840-1930*; John S. Lindberg, *The Background of Swedish Emigration to the United States*; Nels Hokanson, *Swedish Immigrants in Lincoln's Time*; Karl Hildebrand & Axel Fredenholm, *Svenskarna i Amerika*, I-II and Allan Kastrup, *The Swedish Heritage in America*, all apparently base their references to Daniel Larsson on Eric Norelius' account in his *De Svenska Luterska Församlingarnas och Svenskarnes Historia i Amerika*, I-II (Rock Island, IL, 1890-1916), I, pp. 26-27:

"Daniel Larsson, born in Haurida Parish Småland in 1821 and now residing in the town of Goodhue, Goodhue County, Minnesota, has conveyed the following to me — Through Unonius' letters in the Swedish newspapers, he and others in his locality, amounting to fifty persons, had decided to go to America. The trip was made in the fall of 1844 with the Swedish ship *Superior* and had cost 60 Riksdaler per person. After ten weeks at sea, they had landed in Boston at Christmastime. Larsson's father, Lars Landberg, continued the journey with the rest, except Larsson, to Sheboygan in Wisconsin, where he ended his days in 1846. Concerning the others in the party Larsson had no news. Larsson, himself, settled in Brockton (North Bridgewater and Campello), near Boston and worked there as a shoemaker for seven years. In 1851 he returned home to Sweden and when he returned he had sixty persons with him. Some of these were scattered far and wide, but a part of them settled down with Larsson in Brockton. Thus the Swedish community in Campello or Brockton was founded. During subsequent years new immigrants arrived, who became employed in the shoe manufacturing industries. Daniel Larsson moved from Brockton in 1868 and settled on a purchased farm in Goodhue County, Minnesota, where he still is living and doubtless is one of the oldest immigrants still alive."

² Possibly Peter Wilhelm Böckman, ordained Swedish Lutheran clergyman, who had arrived from Sweden in Oct. 1844 and who during 1845 and 1846 attended the spiritual needs of the Swedish settlers in and around Pine Lake, WI, who did not wish to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church. Two letters written by him from Pine Lake, were published in Sweden, one in *Afton-bladet* Sept. 13, 1845 and the other in *Östgöta-Correspondenten* March 11, 1846. -Carl Sjöström, *Skånska nationen före afdelningarnas tid* (Lund, 1897), p. 635; Gustaf Unonius, *A Pioneer in Northwest America 1841-1858*, I-II (Chicago, 1950, 1960), II, pp. 59-63, 330n.

³ *U.S. Naturalizations for Massachusetts*. Federal Records Center, Boston, MA.

⁴ Possibly identical with Sven Johan Larsson, apprentice mason from Jönköping County, who emigrated to the United States in 1853. — *Personregister till Statistiska Centralbyråns i Stockholm förteckning över emigranter 1851-1860* (typescript in the Göteborg Landsarkiv, Göteborg.)

⁵ Probably Jonas Örn, farmer, and his wife, who with two minor children, received passport in Kalmar July 21, 1851 for travel to America. — *Svenska Flottans Pensionskassas verifikationer* (manuscript in the Royal War Archives, Stockholm) (SFP).

⁶ Carl Andersson, b. in Sweden June 5, 1812; emigr. to America 1851 with his wife, Margareta Göransdotter, who was b. in Sweden Sept. 17, 1815, and four children, all b. in Sweden — Pehr, Dec. 5, 1840, Anders, Feb. 25, 1843, Göran, July 5, 1846 and Margareta, Aug. 18, 1850. The family settled in Chicago and joined the St. Ansgarius Swedish Episcopal Church Dec. 12, 1851. The three youngest children d. in Chicago during the week Dec. 12-19, 1851 and were buried at the county's expense. The rest of the family left Chicago in 1852. — *St. Ansgarius Parish Register* (manuscript in a private collection).

⁷ Possibly Carl Johan Carlsson, servant from Jönköping län, who emigr. to America in 1851. — *Personregister till emigranter*, A 118:60.

- ⁸ Hans Rasmusson, farmer, emigr. to America from Ystad in 1851 — *Personregister till emigranter*. A 118:232.
- ⁹ Ola Nilsson, servant, emigr. to America from Ystad in 1851. — *Ibid*.
- ¹⁰ Lars Jeppsson, servant, emigr. to America from Ystad in 1851. — *Ibid*.
- ¹¹ Karna Rasmusdotter received passport to America in Ystad June 3, 1851. — *SFP*.
- ¹² Lena Rasmusdotter received passport to America in Ystad June 3, 1851 — *Ibid*.
- ¹³ Jöns Andersson emigr. to America from Ystad in 1851. — *Personregister till emigranter*. A 118:232.
- ¹⁴ Pehr Larsson, servant, emigr. to America from Ystad in 1851. — *Ibid*.
- ¹⁵ Daniel Frans Larsson (see above).
- ¹⁶ Adolf Wilhelm Larsson, Daniel Larsson's brother, (see above).
- ¹⁷ Probably Johanna Christina Larsdotter, Daniel Larsson's sister, b. in Haurida Parish Nov. 21, 1827. She had left Lekeryd Parish for Järsnäs Parish (Jön.) in 1849, but may have emigr. at the same time as her brothers. — *Vadstena Landsarkiv*.
- ¹⁸ Catharina Fredrika Nordquist, Daniel Larsson's fiancée, (see above).
- ¹⁹ Probably Charles G. Hallbeck, Swedish immigrant, who was received into the St. Ansgarius Church in Chicago at Eastertime 1855. He soon left Chicago. — *St. Ansgarius Parish Records*.
- ²⁰ Probably Wilhelm Laurentius Enegren, journeyman baker, who received passport in Göteborg for America Aug. 29, 1851. — *SFP*.
- ²¹ Lars Mickelsson was b. in Sweden July 17, 1801. He emigr. to America in 1851 together with his wife, Margta Larsdotter, b. in Sweden Jan. 8, 1805. Their two sons, b. in Sweden, were Jonas, March 19, 1840 and Olof, Nov. 26, 1842. The family was received into the St. Ansgarius Church in Chicago in December 1851 but left Chicago already the following year. — *St. Ansgarius Parish Register*.