

6-1-1981

## Corrections and Additions to Genealogical Books

Erik Wikén

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

Wikén, Erik (1981) "Corrections and Additions to Genealogical Books," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 1 : No. 2 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol1/iss2/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@augustana.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@augustana.edu).

# Corrections and Additions to Genealogical Books

Erik Wikén

## POSSE

According to all Swedish genealogical sources, Count Arvid Posse (b. 1782), chamberlain to the Royal Swedish Court, emigrated to Brazil after his divorce 1824 from Christine Bonaparte, daughter of Lucien Bonaparte, and supposedly died in Buenos Aires in 1826.<sup>1</sup> So far as I know, the only person who has not accepted this version of events is Dr. Nils F. Holm, Deputy Archivist of the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm, who makes this statement in the introduction to his unpublished register of the Posse Papers in the Sjöholm Collection in the National Archives. According to Holm, Posse returned from Brazil, which easily can be proved by the petitions he wrote while in Sweden in 1827. It was after this date that he is said to have gone to the United States.

In a petition to King Carl XIV Johan, dated March 4, 1827, Posse mentions his desire to leave Sweden and go to America. He is hopeful of receiving some employment there or in one of the new South American republics.<sup>2</sup> In letters written to Gustaf af Wetterstedt, Swedish Foreign Minister, dated March 3, July 3, and Nov. 27, 1827, he likewise expresses his wish to leave Sweden and go to America.<sup>3</sup> On April 10, 1828 he received a passport from the Foreign Minister to travel abroad (the destination is not given).<sup>4</sup> He presented this passport to the police authorities in Göteborg on June 3, 1828, when he left Sweden.<sup>5</sup>

At first he seems to have remained in Europe and in the fall of 1839 he arrived in Le Havre, France, to prepare himself for the journey to North America. Completely bereft of financial means, he borrowed money from the Swedish Norwegian Consul in Le Havre, Carl Niclas Boström. As security for the loan Posse deposited a letter of credit, which assured him of 2,400 *Riksdaler* per annum, which he in turn had received from a relative, to whom Posse had given the sum of 60,000 *Riksdaler*, given him by the British Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart, who had married his former wife, Princess Bonaparte.<sup>6</sup>

The Swedish American newspaper *Hemlandet* contains three articles concerning early Swedes in Texas. The first of these is anonymous and is dated Aug. 27, 1857. The other two articles were published July 24 and Aug. 14, 1866 and were written by Swen Pärson of Austin, TX. The editor of *Hemlandet* hints that Pärson was also the author of the article published in 1857. There is no doubt in my mind that back of the *nome de plume* Swen Pärson is the well-known Austin Swede and later Swedish. Norwegian consul in Austin. Svante (Sven) Palm.<sup>7</sup> Both in 1857 and in 1866 the author relates what he had heard concerning a Swedish count in Texas named Posse. In the 1857 article he refers to a Mrs. Bell

in Columbia (probably Columbus, TX), who spoke of Count Posse with much admiration, who often visited her in her home, when he wasn't fighting Mexicans or Indians. She mentions that he was supposedly shot in San Antonio some time between 1830 and 1836.

In the *Hemlandet* article, dated July 24, 1866, the author also refers to Mary Austin Holley's book on Texas, where she writes the following:<sup>8</sup>

Our readers will doubtless be interested in the following truly affecting tale of a distinguished foreigner, who had sought, but unsuccessfully, an asylum in Texas.

The Count de Posse, the friend, kinsman, and companion in the arms of Napoleon,<sup>9</sup> had been for two or three years a wanderer in America, recommending himself, in the various places of his short sojourns, by the refined and amiable qualities of his mind and heart. Overwhelmed by domestic afflictions and pecuniary troubles, he suffered excessive depression of spirits, some say, mental derangement. It was perhaps under such partial alienation that during the summer of 1831 he found his way to Texas. While in Brazoria his means were exhausted. Some humane persons befriended and assisted him, and soothed him as far as they could. But he was ill calculated to sustain the evils of so comfortless and hopeless condition. He passed on to San Antonio, proposing, it is said, to go to the city of Mexico, where after remaining a few weeks, moneyless and dejected, he put an end to his miserable existence by blowing out his brains. Before the fatal moment, while he stood on the banks of the river premeditating the last desperate act of his life, he called a boy to him and gave him his splendid watch, his rings and trinkets (probably keepsakes and relics of his happier days) telling him to carry them to a person he named, and probably owed for means of subsistence while in that place. He then applied the fatal pistols one to each ear, meaning, it is thought, that his body should fall into the river, and thus further trouble about him be saved. But his delicacy on this point might have been spared, for the orthodox Mexicans concern themselves little about heretics and charities. The last rites to his neglected and mangled remains were performed, where they fell, by the birds or beasts of prey. Nor were they the first vultures that knawed (sic!) at his too tender heart. All who knew him speak with kindness and respect of the unhappy Count de Posse.

There can be no doubt that it is the royal chamberlain, Count Arvid Posse, whom Mrs. Holley refers to in the above excursus.

<sup>1</sup> See Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, 9 vols. (Stockholm, 1925–1936), VI: 11; Axel Paulin, *Svenska öden i Sydamerika* (Stockholm, 1951), pp. 291–293.

<sup>2</sup> Papers of Carl XIV Johan, Vol. 97 in the Bernadotte Archives, Stockholm. I am indebted to Dr. Nils Holm for his courtesy in permitting me to examine this document.

<sup>3</sup> *Kabinetet för utrikes brevväxling* (The Cabinet for Foreign Correspondence), E. II n: Vol. 5, National Archives, Stockholm.

<sup>4</sup> *Hovkanslersämbetet* (The Royal Chancery Proceedings), Vol. 87, National Archives, Stockholm.

<sup>5</sup> *Göteborgs poliskammars journal över inrikes resande 1828* (The Journal of the Police Chambers of Göteborg dealing with domestic travelers 1828), *Landsarkivet* (The Provincial Archives), Göteborg.

<sup>6</sup> In a memorandum from the Swedish Norwegian Minister in Paris, Count Gustaf Carl Fredrik Löwenhielm to the Foreign Minister, Count Gustaf af Wetterstedt, dated Jan. 21, 1831 in *Kabinetet för utrikes brevväxling* (The Cabinet for Foreign Correspondence), E II f: Despatches from Paris 1831, National Archives, Stockholm.

<sup>7</sup> This is also the opinion of Eric Norelius in *De svenska luterska församlingarnas och svenskarnes historia i Amerika* (Rock Island, IL, 1890), I, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Austin Holley, *Texas* (Lexington, KY, 1836), p. 141, note.

<sup>9</sup> The information that he served under Napoleon can scarcely be correct.