

9-1-1981

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Recommended Citation

Olsson, Nils William (1981) "Naturalized Scandinavian Seamen in Boston 1815-1840," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 1 : No. 3 , Article 5.

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Naturalized Scandinavian Seamen in Boston 1815–1840

Nils William Olsson

Scandinavian seamen, serving aboard American merchantmen in the first part of the 19th Century, soon learned of the advantages of becoming American citizens. One of these advantages lay in the preferential treatment they received in the hiring policy of U.S. masters. These were required by U.S. law to employ American sailors, if such were available. It was only when the master of an American vessel could not find a U.S. citizen to fill a vacant berth, that he could hire a foreign seaman legally.

The second advantage lay in the access to the seamen's protective certificate, a very important document on the high seas and in foreign ports during the Napoleonic wars, when British masters often would board U.S. vessels at sea for the purpose of impressing seamen to man their own ships. British officials held the view that a British subject could not renounce his citizenship. Since most American sailors had been born in the American colonies before the U.S. Declaration of Independence, and thus born on British soil, Britain's view was that such persons legally were British citizens.

Seamen's protective certificates had been issued in various forms prior to 1796, but in that year American public opinion was inflamed by the British boarding of the U.S. vessel "Lydia" and impressing five American seamen. The U.S. Congress, stung by this affront to the U.S. national sovereignty, promptly passed a law May 28, 1796, which spelled out a national policy in the hopes of stemming or stopping the British harassment.

The law directed the customs collectors in various U.S. port districts to keep a register of all American seamen, who presented some proof of U.S. citizenship and, for a fee, to issue a seamen's protective certificate to the sailor in question. In order to get a certificate the seaman had to show some form of citizenship proof, such as a birth certificate, a passport, an old seamen's protective certificate issued at another port, or to take an oath, administered to him by a port official or an alderman. For foreigners, who had been naturalized American citizens, it was usually sufficient to produce the naturalization document.

British naval authorities did not always honor these certificates, and it was the end of the Napoleonic wars and the lessened need for sailors aboard British

warships which gradually stopped the impressments. Actually the British did not formally drop the principle of the right to impress until 1870, but by that time the danger of impressment had all but vanished. Nevertheless, the U.S. Government continued to issue seamen's protective certificates up to the beginning of the Civil War.

The law of 1796 specified that the collector of customs in each port district was to issue the certificate and to keep the applications and proofs of citizenship on file, which at stated intervals were to be sent to the Secretary of State in Washington. In addition the customs collectors were to forward lists of registered seamen, also called abstracts, to the State Department.

Today the National Archives in Washington houses all of the abstracts from the various port authorities. Seemingly the original applications have been preserved only for the port of Philadelphia.

Known as Record Group 36 these records are a part of the collection of the Bureau of Customs in the National Archives, where they are available to the researcher and scholar alike.

So far as is known, very little research has been done with this important genealogical source, except for the work of Ira Dye, a Washington researcher, who has utilized the Philadelphia applications for seamen's protective certificates for the years 1812-1815 and has computer processed the tabulations, coming up with some very interesting statistics covering some 790 applicants for the Port of Philadelphia.¹

In order to determine to what extent Scandinavian seamen availed themselves of the opportunity to procure these protective certificates, it was decided to go through a series of abstracts for the port district of Boston and Charlestown, Massachusetts. All abstracts for the period 1815-1840 were carefully examined and all Scandinavians extracted and tabulated — 117 names in all. The following information can be gained from a study of these abstracts — the name of the seaman, his date of application for a certificate, the application number, (which is academic, since the original applications for this port district seem to have been lost), the sailor's age, his height in feet and inches, (within a quarter of an inch), his color of complexion and the city of his birth and the country of which he had been a citizen before his naturalization.

Some of the names of the cities have been badly garbled, and though these can be reconstructed fairly accurately, a few defy solution. The place names are rendered as written, but with the intended or modern spelling within parentheses. In the case of the two cities of Copenhagen and Gothenburg, the accepted English forms have been retained.

Of the four Scandinavian nationalities represented here — Danes, Finns, Norwegians and Swedes, the Danes easily outdistance the rest, by having 65 applicants, the Swedes are in second place with 37, the Norwegians have seven and the Finns two. Since Norway and Sweden were joined in a dual monarchy from 1814 to 1905, it is sometimes difficult to determine the applicant's nationality. In three instances the place name is given as being in Sweden, yet the names

are doubtless Norwegian, as for instance Arundel for Arendal, Crocker for Kragerö and Draman for Drammen. In one instance the nationality is given as Norwegian-Swedish, which automatically places that seaman in the Norwegian category, thereby raising the Norwegian score to eleven. One name is listed as Danish-Swedish and one person has no nationality given for him at all, but since his name is Lunneburgh, it almost surely places him in the Swedish category. One Swede, John Peterson, seems to have applied twice, first in 1838 and then again in 1839, and Frederick Wentt, a Dane, applied both in 1837 as well as in 1840.

The heavy preponderance of Danish applicants may have as one of its reasons that before 1866, Denmark included large sections of north-west Germany, Schleswig-Holstein, which today is included in the German Republic. This is corroborated by many of the Danish applicants who came from such German cities as Holstein, Grossenbrode, Flensburg, Glückstadt and Elmshorn.

It has been possible to further identify a number of the Swedish applicants, by consulting the naturalization records in Boston. These records have yielded such information as birth date, sometimes place of birth, as well as the date of naturalization and the court where such naturalization took place. This additional information is given in notes at the end of this article.

<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Name of Seaman</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Complexion</i>	<i>City of Nativity</i>
1815						
Oct. 2	6215	William Edlund ²	30	5 10½	Light	Stockholm, Sweden
1818						
Nov. 13	8593	Christian Freeman	25	5 6	Light	Barhum Hollum, Denmark (Bornholm)
1819						
Oct. 2	8452	Lawrence Lungreen ³	50	5 6½	Light	Carlsham, Sweden (Karlshamn)
Nov. 20	9411	Wm. R. Shurtleff	20	5 4½	Light	Norway
1820						
Oct. 13	10312	Anders Bloom ⁴	40	5 10½	Light	Gothenburg, Sweden
1821						
May 12	10798	Niles Hasselborn ⁵	37	5 8¼	Fair	Calmar, Sweden (Kalmar)
June 12	10862	Peter Lawrence ⁶	35	5 1½	Light	Carlsrona, Sweden (Karlskrona)
Nov. 2	11189	Soren Ingwort Bork	35	5 3½	Fair	Fundren (?), Denmark
1823						
Aug. 19	12675	Nicholas C. Doltz	49	5 5	Light	Sweden
1824						
March 26	13183	Oliver P. Brown	26	5 8	Light	Stockholm, Sweden

July 29	13475	John Anderson	37	5 5½	Light	Norway
1825						
Jan. 10	13878	Frederich Gibson	37	5 6	Light	Feire, Denmark (Föhr Island or per- haps the Faeroes)
1826						
Feb. 23	16254	John Lunneburgh ⁷	41	5 5½	Light	-----
Nov. 15	16964	Charles Saunders, Jr.	33	5 5	Light	Helsingford, Finland (Helsingfors)
1827						
March 23	17309	John A. C. Holme	28	5 7½	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
1828						
April 23	18457	Henry Shoof	26	5 9	Light	Elmshorn, Denmark
June 2	18582	Thomas Stevens	26	5 6	Light	Christiansand, Norway (Kristiansand)
1829						
Jan. 1	19300	Andrew Green ⁸	21	5 4½	Light	Gothenburg, Sweden
April 18	12	Thomas Simmons	47	5 6¾	Light	North Bergen, Norway
April 27	55	John Dens	29	5 6½	Light	Stockholm, Sweden
July 16	349	Alexander Johnson	51	5 5¾	Light	Arundel, Sweden (Arendal, Norway)
July 28	405	John H. Franksen ⁹	31	5 7½	Light	Charleshamn, Sweden (Karlshamn)
Dec. 14	821	Regnauldt Chapman	24	5 5	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
1830						
Jan. 14	938	Peter Pentheny	21	5 7½	Dark	St. Croix, Denmark (St. Croix, Danish West Indies)
Dec. 3	2327	Peter Johnson	47	5 8½	Light	Crocker, Sweden (Kragerö, Norway)
1831						
Jan. 4	2713	Frederick Veith	23	5 7½	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
April 22	3185	Thomas L. Fernald ¹⁰	29	5 9¼	Light	Stockholm, Sweden
July 6	3735	Henry Martin	43	5 5	Light	Holstein, Denmark
Oct. 11	4122	Jacob Heisser	28	5 9	Light	Grossenbrode, Denmark
Oct. 11	4123	Peter Otto	28	5 4½	Light	Flensburg, Denmark
Oct. 28	4232	Peter L. Alling	31	5 7	Light	Bornholm, Denmark
Dec. 20	4540	Charles Bennett ¹¹	27	5 6½	Light	Stockholm, Sweden

1832

Oct. 3	7168	John Peter Goldbranch	29	5 5¼	Dark	Christiansand, Norway (Kristiansand)
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1833

May 30	8505	Benjamin Anderson ¹²	34	5 10	Dark	Gothenburg, Sweden
Oct. 9	9318	Peter Johnson	40	5 5½	Dark	Moss, Norway
Oct. 14	9345	Lawrence W. Wihr	36	5 6½	Dark	Orsens, Denmark (Horsens)
Oct. 16	9349	Wm. Holst	48	5 10	Light	Draman, Sweden (Drammen, Norway)
Oct. 25	9417	Charles Stevens	26	5 4½	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Nov. 9	9577	Frederick Norstram	36	5 7	Light	Jävel, Sweden (Gävle)
Nov. 15	9630	Jacob F. Gustus	39	5 6¾	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark

1835

Jan. 2	13200	John Torsleff	28	5 5¾	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
April 8	13780	Harck Williams	53	5 3¾	Light	Fore Island, Denmark (Föhr Island)
Sept. 10	14845	Peter Peterson	25	6 ¾	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Sept. 29	14972	James Andrew Kragh	38	5 5	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
-----	---	John Brown	49	5 6	Dark	Neuster (?), Sweden
Nov. 7	15342	John Nichols	35	5 6½	Light	Gothenburg, Sweden
Nov. 10	15352	James E. Johnson	31	5 3	Light	Denmark
Nov. 28	15432	Rudolph G. Foy	23	5 9	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Dec. 12	15550	John P. Beeman	35	5 6	Light	Gothenburg, Sweden

1836

Feb. 12	113	Wm. Gordon	43	5 10½	Light	Tunburg, Norway (Tönsberg)
March 29	456	Antony R. Warning	23	5 8½	Dark	Copenhagen, Denmark
April 14	530	Wm. Reed	23	5 10	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
April 30	621	Henry Brown	40	5 11½	Dark	Denmark/Sweden
May 14	711	Robert Jackson	24	5 3½	Light	Carlskrona, Sweden (Karlskrona)
May 18	643	Charles I. Chindrof	23	5 5½	Light	Stockholm, Sweden
June 24	972	Johannes W. Bornholm	21	5 11	Dark	Elsinore, Denmark (Helsingør)
July 8	1066	John T. Wahlgren ¹³	24	5 7¾	Light	Stockholm, Sweden

Aug. 4	1267	Charles Smith ¹⁴	34	5 5	Light	Gothenburg, Sweden
Aug. 5	1274	Charles F. Smith ¹⁵	30	5 5½	Light	Carlsrona, Sweden (Karlskrona)
Sept. 27	1519	Cecilius Worsoe	28	5 5½	Light	Berga (?), Denmark
Sept. 29	1545	Lewis Anderson	36	5 6	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Oct. 28	1703	Charles H. Lantbom	32	5 5	Light	Hittern (?), Norway
Dec. 3	1939	Peter H. Lughton	25	5 9	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
1837						
Jan. 23	91	Lars Tammer Nalson	29	5 4¾	Light	Elsinore, Denmark (Helsingør)
Feb. 23	164	Peter Hanson	24	5 8	Light	Sanderberg, Denmark (Sønderborg)
April 25	415	James Brant	25	5 11½	Light	Halston, Denmark (Holstein)
June 22	640	Henry Bloom	26	5 3½	Light	Elsinore, Denmark (Helsingør)
July 25	780	Edward J. Albrechtsen	21	5 8	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
July 25	781	John Johnson	22	5 9	Light	Elsinore, Denmark (Helsingør)
July 31	824	Wm. Champion	29	5 8	Light	Stockholm, Sweden
Sept. 13	1013	Andrew Nelson	24	4 11	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Sept. 13	1014	Wm. Smith	29	5 9	Light	Grosambrode, Denmark (Grossenbrode)
Sept. 13	1042	Andrew F. Bornholm	25	5 7	Dark	Elsinore, Denmark (Helsingør)
Oct. 9	1123	John Chase	30	5 8	Light	Carlmer, Sweden (Kalmar)
Oct. 19	1184	Frederick Wentt	27	5 5½	Light	Glickstatt, Denmark (Glückstadt)
Nov. 4	1300	Henry Thompson	26	5 5	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Nov. 13	1351	Wm. Billisson	32	5 6½	Light	Elsinore, Denmark (Helsingør)
Nov. 18	1394	Andrew Anderson	37	5 5	Light	Gothenburg, Sweden
Dec. 7	1508	Nicholas Lawson	29	5 8	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
1838						
Jan. 6	25	Jacob P. Holm	22	5 5	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Jan. 12	39	David Wilson ¹⁶	26	5 5½	Dark	Stockholm, Sweden
Jan. 18	64	Stephen Pettersson	34	5 6½	Dark	Stockholm, Sweden

Feb. 26	140	John Smith	34	5 5½	Light	Aspanrita (?), Denmark
March 23	215	Frederick Lendholm	24	5 8½	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
March 28	230	Thomas Peterson	29	5 6½	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Sept. 20	1020	Martin Lewis	25	5 11½	Light	Elsinore, Denmark (Helsingør)
Oct. 19	1180	John M. Boysen	23	5 6½	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Nov. 9	1348	Lueva Berry	22	5 6¼	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Nov. 9	1365	John Peterson ¹⁷	46	5 6	Dark	Giffe, Sweden (Gävle)
Dec. 11	1674	Lars Weilbye	27	5 9	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Dec. 29	1789	Nicholas Hermanson	33	5 2½	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
1839						
Jan. 18	83	Lewis F. Miller	23	5 4¾	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Jan. 18	85	William Nelson	25	5 6	Light	Elsinore, Denmark (Helsingør)
Feb. 1	160	Henry Patterson	44	5 9	Dark	Copenhagen, Denmark
Feb. 22	233	Charles F. Wallberg	38	5 4	Dark	Stockholm, Sweden
Feb. 22	236	Rasmus Johnson	29	5 11	Light	Swendborg, Denmark (Svendborg)
March 1	257	Charles Fram	29	5 3¼	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
July 10	966	John E. Lynn	22	5 6¾	Dark	Jaffe, Sweden (Gävle)
Aug. 20	1129	John P. Bistrup	35	5 6¾	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Sept. 24	1268	Henry Armstrong ¹⁸	62	5 7½	Light	Amagrun (?), Sweden
Oct. 9	1364	John Peterson ¹⁹	47	5 5½	Dark	Gefle, Sweden (Gävle)
Oct. 9	1366	Charles G. Anderson	35	5 8½	Light	Gothenburg, Sweden
Dec. 2	1680	Mattias Lilliquist ²⁰	45	5 7½	---	Orboland, Finland (Åbo län)
Dec. 5	1703	Erick Batts	43	5 8¾	Light	Stockholm, Sweden
Dec. 7	1727	Elias Chase ²¹	26	5 6½	Light	Gothenburg, Sweden
Dec. 14	1764	Charles A. Rosenlov	24	5 9	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark

1840

Feb. 4	133	Peter Nelson	27	5 8	Dark	Hulker (?), Denmark
April 27	666	Louis Peterson	28	5 8	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
May 30	815	Jorgen Daniells	22	5 5	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
June 26	918	Christian Strand	45	5 6½	Dark	Lemveg (?), Denmark
July 9	987	Matthias Hauchild	27	5 7¼	Light	Eaterson, Denmark (Uetersen)
Aug. 8	1143	Peter Pall	40	6 0	Light	Gluckstadt, Denmark (Glückstadt)
Aug. 21	1200	Charles Watson	27	5 6	Light	Copenhagen, Denmark
Sept. 2	1238	Edward Nelson	37	5 6½	Light	Helsingborg, Sweden
Oct. 12	1463	Frederick Wentt	27	5 6	Light	Glickstadt, Denmark (Glückstadt)
Nov. 4	1634	Charles Wheeler	23	5 6½	Dark	Ume, Sweden (Umeå)
Nov. 23	1819	Christian F. Markham	28	5 6	Dark	Flanchberg, Denmark (Flensburg)

¹ Ira Dye, *Computer-Processed Tabulations of Data from Seamen's Protective Certificate Applications to the Collector of Customs for the Port of Philadelphia 1812-1815*. National Archives Microfilm Publications, Pamphlet Describing M 972 (Washington, DC, 1976). The gist of the introductory material to this article was gathered from this document.

² Probably identical with Wilhelm Edlund of Newburyport, MA, master of the brig "Mary" of New Orleans, who d. in Charleston, SC in 1819. *The Columbia Centinel*, November 13, 1819.

³ Probably identical with Lorentz Lundgren, master of the Swedish schooner "Anna Maria" of Gustavia, St. Barthélemy, who with his ship were seized in 1814 between Bermuda and St. Barthélemy by the American privateer schooner "Chasseur". Information courtesy Rolf Lam-born, Winter Park, FL.

⁴ Probably identical with Andrew or Andreas Bloom, native of Gothenburg, b. ca. 1780, who signed aboard a number of U.S. merchantmen out of New York during the years 1821-1825. National Archives, New York Crew Lists, Record Group 36.

⁵ Nils Hasselborn, b. in Kalmar June 16, 1784, arrived in New York in December 1805 and was naturalized in the U.S. District Court of Boston March 20, 1821. Federal Records Center, Boston, U.S. District Court Naturalizations, No. A-245.

⁶ Peter Lawrence, b. in Karlskrona in 1786, arrived in Eastport, ME in 1801. He became a U.S. citizen in the U.S. District Court of Boston June 11, 1821. *Ibid.*, No. A-247.

⁷ Perhaps identical with a Swedish sailor named John Peter Lundberg, who signed aboard the ship "Calpe" of New Orleans in New Orleans Feb. 11, 1822, bound for Falmouth, England. "New Orleans Crew Lists" (Unpublished MS in the National Archives), Vol. XI.

⁸ Andrew Green, b. in Gothenburg Oct. 14, 1807, arrived in Boston Oct. 15, 1823, and was naturalized in the U.S. District Court of Boston Dec. 2, 1828. Federal Records Center, Boston, U.S. District Court Naturalizations, No. B-80.

⁹ John H. Franksen, b. in Sweden Jan. 29, 1791, was naturalized in the Boston Municipal Court in 1828. State House, Archives Division, Boston, Boston Municipal Court Naturalization Records, Vol. 16, No. 278.

- ¹⁰ Thomas L. Fernald, also spelled Femald, b. in Norrköping Nov. 7, 1802, arrived in Norfolk, VA in 1819 and was naturalized in the U.S. District Court of Boston Jan. 15, 1830. Federal Records Center, Boston, U.S. District Court Naturalizations, No. B-121.
- ¹¹ Charles Bennett, b. in Stockholm Nov. 28, 1803, arrived in Boston in 1822, and was naturalized in the U.S. District Court Dec. 6, 1831. *Ibid.*, No. B-200.
- ¹² Benjamin Anderson, b. in Sweden July 24, 1799, was naturalized in the U.S. Circuit Court of Boston May 20, 1833. Federal Records Center, Boston, U.S. Circuit Court Naturalizations, No. B 2-284.
- ¹³ John Theodore Wahlgren, b. in Sweden April 2, 1812, was naturalized in the Boston Municipal Court July 7, 1836. State House, Archives Division, Boston Municipal Court Naturalizations, Vol. 24, No. 1467.
- ¹⁴ Charles Smith, b. in Sweden Jan. 27, 1803, was naturalized in the Boston Municipal Court Aug. 1, 1836. *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, No. 1436.
- ¹⁵ Charles F. Smith, b. in Sweden Aug. 21, 1806, was naturalized in the Boston Municipal Court Aug. 5, 1836. *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, No. 1437.
- ¹⁶ David Wilson, b. in Norway or Sweden Dec. 27, 1811, was naturalized in the Superior Judiciary Court of Boston Jan. 12, 1838. State House, Archives Division, Superior Judiciary Court Naturalizations, Vol. 10, No. 411.
- ¹⁷ Probably John Peterson, b. in Sweden Aug. 17, 1793, who arrived in Charleston, SC in 1813 and was naturalized in the U.S. District Court of Boston July 16, 1833. Federal Records Center, U.S. District Court Naturalizations, No. B-292.
- ¹⁸ Henry Armstrong, b. in Amaginn (?), Sweden Dec. 25, 1777, arrived in New York in 1816 and was naturalized in the U.S. District Court of Boston Sept. 20, 1839. *Ibid.*, No. B-406.
- ¹⁹ Doubtless identical with John Peterson in note 17.
- ²⁰ Mathias Henriksson Liljeqvist, b. in Nagu Parish, south of Åbo (Turku), Finland March 13, 1793, s. Henrik Liljeqvist. He arrived in the U.S. in 1830, but returned to Sweden in 1840. On Sept. 6, 1843, he, his wife and s. Matthew emigrated to the U.S. and settled in Boston, where he was living 1854–1858. Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820–1850* (Stockholm and Chicago, 1967), pp. 56–57; Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in U.S. Ports 1820–1850* (except New York) (Stockholm and St. Paul, MN 1979), pp. 10–11.
- ²¹ Elias Chase, b. in Sweden Sept. 29, 1813, was naturalized in the Superior Judiciary Court of Boston Dec. 7, 1839. State House, Archives Division, Superior Judiciary Court Naturalizations, Vol. 11, No. 505.