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An “America Letter” from 1846

TRANSLATED BY JOHN E. NORTON

This is a translation from a publication called *Beskrifning öfwer Norra Amerikas Förenta Stater och ser-skildt öfwer Staden Newyork, jemte Anteckningar och Bref... ..Andra tillökta Upplagan*, Westerwik, Tryckte hos D.C. Ekblad et Comp. 1846 [Description of the North American United States and especially of the city of New York, and notes and letters, 2nd augmented edition, Västerwik, printed by D.C. Ekblad & Co. 1846].

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One of the young tradesmen¹ who a few years ago emigrated from Gefle to North America, has, in a letter dated Louisville, Kentucky, 7 January 1846, provided a relative living in Gefle information about his fate after arrival in America. The emigrants went from New York to Wisconsin, with the thought of settling there, but changed their minds upon seeing the situation in which the Swedes there, the well-known Frimans and (Gustaf) Unonius, found themselves. The economic condition of these persons was described as far from good. Our emigrants sold here at auction the ironware they had brought at a considerable loss, since neither the designs nor workmanship met American demands. Upon seeing the emigrants' axes, they asked us about the purpose of those tools, and when they were informed, they laughed heartily at the clumsy work. From here, the emigrants returned to Buffalo, where they, during their travel inland, had become acquainted with a Swede named Mosell(?), upon whose advice

the writer and one of his followers bought various small articles, like knives, books, etc., which they sold around the nearby area. This activity appears to have succeeded in no small way, since the writer, after a year, had earned about \$200.00, which however was spent when he became infected with fever. After recovery, the same work was continued in the state of New York, Canada and other locations. During these trips he became acquainted with a trader in Louisville, for whom he worked from April to December last year, when he himself opened a little general store in that city, which he hopes will succeed, since work possibilities in relation to the country's natural riches, and the yearly increasing means of communications, are much better there than in the homeland. Most of the writer's comrades have followed his example, and have put farming out of their minds. The first winter, however, the writer and another native of Gefle worked for a farmer, for food and tutoring in English. This farmer gave them plenty of work, but was described as an educated person, and their time with him was considered very useful to them. The writer could not complain about the people. The Americans have appeared generally to him as friendly, well-mannered, industrious and hard working, but not always so principled, so a stranger should be watchful in order to avoid being cheated.

Endnote:

1) Translator's note: this was probably Georg Henrik Collini, who emigrated in the spring of 1843 together with Nils Fredrik Åström, Jonas Svedberg, Fabian Fränell, and Carl Magnus Flack, aboard the *Carolina*. They arrived New York City 28 August 1843. An unsigned letter dated Buffalo, New York, 20 August 1846 appeared in the *Östgöta Correspondenten* of 28 October 1846. It states that Collini was then in Louisville, while Nils Fredrik Åström and Jonas Svedberg were operating a restaurant in Chicago, where Carl Magnus Flack was also living.

Editor's note: More information on Georg Henrik Collini and his fellow emigrants can be found in notes 799–803 in *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in the United States 1820–1850*, by Nils William Olsson and Erik Wikén (Stockholm 1995).

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