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# Carl Roos travels to America in 1853

BY ELISABETH THORSELL AND CARL ROOS

Some time in the early 1800s a little boy was born and was baptized Carl. He was born Aug. 28, 1801,<sup>1</sup> in Långbanshyttan in Färnebo parish in eastern Värmland. His mother was the servant Anna Olsdotter, who already had a daughter Maria out of wedlock. The father was, according to Carl's memoirs, the mine overseer Nils Bruse, also of Långbanshyttan, who was not married then, but later on married a mining farmer's daughter, Anna Ersdotter.

Carl first lived alone with his mother, who received some child support from the boy's father, but she had a hasty temper and soon quarrelled with him. From then on she had to support herself and her son by doing housework for wealthy farmers.

When Carl was about 4 years old, his mother married a poor mining farmer, Petter Jansson Ros, from nearby Gåsborn parish, and later on Carl took his surname. Carl did not like his stepfather, who was a rough and brutal man. His mother on the other hand adored her younger husband, and always served him the best food, while Carl had to look on.

Carl went to school in Långban, and also claims that he was a playmate of the Ericsson brothers (John, the inventor, and Nils, the railway builder). As a young man he first worked as a clerk at the Stöpsjön blast furnace, and also for a short time at the Persberg mines. In 1830 he enlisted in the Värmland Riflemen (*fältjägare*), and was a noncommissioned officer for a short time. Then he changed course again and went to the Filipstad mining school (*Bergsskolan*), and after this education was a bookkeeper in Brattfors at the blast furnace.

He was an unruly soul, and in 1839 he suddenly moved to Västra Ny in

Östergötland to learn to be a surveyor. Then in 1841 he moved back to Värmland and leased a farm near Arvika, where he married and had children.

Finally he decided to emigrate, and ended up in Vasa, Goodhue County, in Minnesota, where he started his own farm, and helped build the community. He enlisted in 1861 in Company "D" of the Third Minnesota Infantry Regiment. He became a POW at Murfreesboro, and was then sent back to Minnesota and took part in the putting down of the Dakota Uprising.<sup>2</sup>

He was by now in his mid-sixties, and spent his last years in writing his memoirs. He wrote a very detailed history of his childhood and upbringing, and did not hide his views of his mother and stepfather and the people of his childhood village. He wrote in good Swedish and it is unusual to find anglicisms in his stories. His manuscripts are now kept in the library of the Goodhue County Museum in Red Wing, MN, and on microfilm at the Minnesota Historical Society.

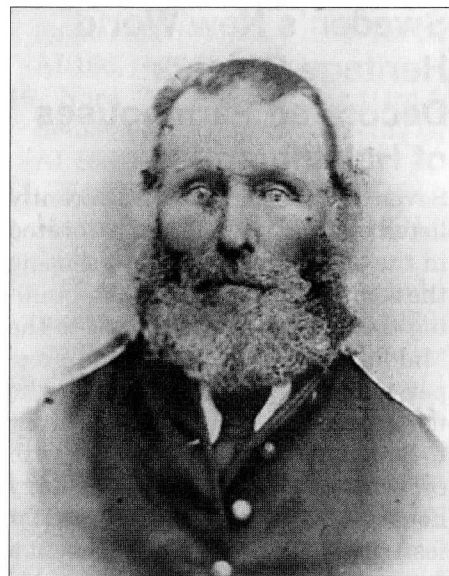
Carl Roos died 1889 May 29 in Vasa. His wife Clara died 1910 Oct. 19 in Vasa.

## Carl writes his own story

The following is a rough translation and summary of what he wrote about his travels to America:

"As it now is almost 23 years since I left my home in Mellgården of Älgå parish, many details have been forgotten. Before leaving I tried to put my affairs in order, as suits a considerable property owner. I left at least 2/3<sup>rds</sup> of my assets for the benefit of my family, and asked my wife to have the court assign her a guardian.

"The evening before my departure, I went around the area and had



Carl Roos, around 1860. (photo from the Minnesota Historical Society).

people give me money that they owed me, as well as for my wife's keep for the year. When we were dividing the money, there was a difference in the amounts in bills and coins, and my wife wanted the larger share, saying that she would put it to good use.

"As she was slow to do all her chores, I told her numerous times to mend and get my clothes in order, (there were not many, not more than I could pack in a satchel, as I wanted to go to the gold mines, where a lot of luggage would be a problem. But when packing late that night she had still not mended my socks, and I became very upset that on my last day at home I should still not be obeyed, even though I had planned my departure for a long time. I had not forgotten to remind her about these chores, chores that she should have been able to perform without reminders.

"As we slept in separate beds, I had in mind to punish her for her idleness by leaving her without saying goodbye very early in the morning, but

COPY OF REPORT AND LIST OF THE PASSENGERS taken on board the <i>Bark Christiana</i> a <i>Göteborg</i> (17) 1719							
whereof <i>Olsson</i>		is Master, burthen		470 55th tons, bound from the Port of <i>Göteborg</i>		for <i>Boston</i> (10)	
NAMES	AGE	SEX	Occupation, Trade, or Profession.	Country to which they severally belong.	Country of which they intend to become inhabitants.	Remarks relative to any who may have died or left the vessel during the voyage.	

The first part of the passenger list, when Carl left Sweden. (www.ancestry.com)

COPY OF REPORT AND LIST OF THE PASSENGERS taken on board the <i>Ship Christiani</i> (15) 1719							
whereof		is Master, burthen		55th tons, bound from the Port of		for <i>Boston</i> .	
20 Cabin	NAMES	AGE	SEX	Occupation, Trade, or Profession.	Country to which they severally belong.	Country of which they intend to become inhabitants.	Remarks relative to any who may have died or left the vessel during the voyage.
	<i>Mattias Almg</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>Sweden</i>	<i>Widow</i>	
	<i>Milla</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>F</i>				
	<i>Pack</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>M</i>				
	<i>Bergström</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>F</i>				
	<i>So Olsson</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>M</i>				
	<i>S. Björnkullas</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>✓</i>				
	<i>Hans Larsson</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>✓</i>				
	<i>Egil Ross</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>✓</i>				
	<i>Petta Larsson</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>M</i>				
	<i>Carrie</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>F</i>				
	<i>Carl Gustaf Larsson</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>M</i>				

The upper half of the the fifth page of the passenger list, when Carl left Sweden. (www.ancestry.com)

my plan failed, even though I left at 2 o'clock in the morning of May 23, 1853. My travel started by walking on foot with my satchel on my back to Otterbol in Gillberga parish, from where I went in an innkeeper's wagon and arrived the same night in Åmål, where I stayed the night at the publican Bergström. In the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> I arrived in Vänersborg, from where I went by a steamship to Göteborg and arrived there on the 25<sup>th</sup>. I lodged with a longshoreman, which only cost me 12 skilling (7 cents) for the night.

"My idea was to immigrate to Australia, where the gold harvest was at its peak at that time. But the ships that had this destination, both from Göteborg and Copenhagen, had already left. So I had no other resource than travel to England, and perhaps there find a ship destined for the South Seas. But I found that my money was insufficient; I might even have to wait for a month or two in London. My money at that time consisted of 797 riksdaler riksgälds (ca \$200), so I decided to go to America and from there go on to my desti-

nation, or stay there for the winter, learn the language, and augment my monetary resources.

"On the 29<sup>th</sup> of May I went on board the Norwegian barkp *Christiana*.<sup>3</sup> I had already slept a few nights there to save money. I had to pay 120 riksdaler for my fare, including my food on board. As I had no bedding, I supplied myself with the simplest I could find, a bed of such value that I could toss it overboard without a loss on arrival.

"Not until the 31<sup>st</sup> of May did we leave Vinga-Sanna, and the last glimpse of the land of my fathers' disappeared in the blue sky.

"Twenty years ago such a departure would have happened with a sense of loss, and with a wish to return there. Now this happened to me without a sense of caring; nothing worse could happen to me in my new homeland than it had done in the old. I now had no special fortune left to lose in my life, and the friendships that I had worked so much for in my youth and valued so much, I now found were just a delusion, as my best friends became the biggest

fraudsters, and caused the wreck of my fortune.

"At sea I did not have an especially good time; according to my contract I was to live on the middle deck, or rather below deck, as were the other emigrants, but have my meals with the crew. Those men were Norwegians, except for two Swedes, and a very rough gang with whom I could not avoid coming in conflict. If I was polite and submissive, as I was in the beginning, they thought they could handle me as they pleased with incivilities and dirty language. If I kept silent, that was not to their liking either, as they then tried to make fun of me. My patience ran out, and I threatened them with a beating, and they did believe that for a while, as I grabbed the Captain's brother and the cook, one in each hand, and threatened to throw them overboard. Their hearts were in their mouths and they immediately changed their tune. This was a much better method than being civil, as they, after some incidents such as this, left me alone, and finally even became civil. To have as little to do with them as possible,

I arranged with the constable to give me as much as possible of my food to keep with me below deck, where I was given a chest to keep it in, so I only had to come in contact with the crew just a few times in their mess.”

### What happened next

Carl then describes the rest of his voyage and writes unflattering comments on his fellow passengers. He arrived in Boston 1853 Aug. 10 and had planned to go on to New York and from there continue to Australia, but found out that his funds were almost

gone.

Instead he went with some of his fellow passengers to Chicago, and finally ended up in Minnesota where he settled in Goodhue County.

His wife *Clara Sophia Persdotter* and his son *Carl Emil* (b. 1848) and daughter *Carolina Gustava* (b. 1853) joined him in 1854, and then more children were born: *Cecelia Fredrica* (twin, b. 1856); *Cornelia Sofia* (twin, b. 1856); *Camilla Rosalia* (b. 1860); *Carline Hjalmar* (b. 1862); *Celinda Armida* (b. 1866); *Clodamir Nino* (b. 1867); and *Tialinda Cassandra* (b. 1874).<sup>2</sup>

### Notes:

1. Carl's birth is not found in any church records, neither in Färnebo, nor in Gåsborn, where he was baptized, according to his memoirs.
2. Details from *Descendants of Carl Roos and Clara Sophia Persdotter*, by Arthur Louis Finnell (1992).
3. There were several Norwegian barks with names like *Christiana* at this time, but none fits Carl's description. *See link on p. 30.*

## On Swedish names, and why they were changed

An incitement for Swedes to change their names might have been that they often had patronymics, which are very common.

Still today in Swedish statistics of surnames for 2011 the 16 most common surnames are patronymics.

The leading surname – if variations on the name *Johan* like *Johansson*, *Jonsson*, *Jansson*, and *Jönsson* are counted – today totals more than 410,000 bearers. Most of these variations became *Johnson* in the U.S., so there could be a number of *Johnsons* on the same street, causing confusion. This might have led some of them to change surnames, and then often to typical Swedish surnames like *Lindberg* or *Berglund*.

Surname #17 is *Lindberg* (27,000), a non-patronymic name, but still followed by some less common patronymics, like *Jakobsson*, *Magnusson*, *Axelsson*, and *Fredriksson*.

Swedish genuine male patronymics are always spelled with the double “ss”, as they really mean *Fredriks son* (son of *Fredrik*) with the first “s” being the genitive marker.

In the table to the right the two first columns shows the “ranking” for 2010 and 2011. The two columns to the right shows the number of name bearers for those years. Remember that the Swedish population is just over 9 million.

**Source:** Swedish Bureau of Statistics (SCB). [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se)

2011	2010		2011	2010
1	(1)	Johansson	255 205	(258 785)
2	(2)	Andersson	254 909	(257 994)
3	(3)	Karlsson	226 049	(228 794)
4	(4)	Nilsson	173 483	(175 392)
5	(5)	Eriksson	148 969	(150 296)
6	(6)	Larsson	126 061	(127 403)
7	(7)	Olsson	115 828	(117 401)
8	(8)	Persson	109 320	(110 618)
9	(9)	Svensson	103 208	(104 689)
10	(10)	Gustafsson	98 592	(99 693)
11	(11)	Pettersson	97 232	(98 475)
12	(12)	Jonsson	74 630	(75 353)
13	(13)	Jansson	50 800	(51 412)
14	(14)	Hansson	44 389	(44 900)
15	(15)	Bengtsson	34 682	(35 047)
16	(16)	Jönsson	32 775	(33 225)
17	(17)	Lindberg	27 542	(27 584)
18	(18)	Jakobsson	26 896	(27 030)
19	(19)	Magnusson	26 705	(26 935)
20	(20)	Olofsson	26 611	(26 820)