

3-1-2012

## Chicago, Chicago!

Elisabeth Thorsell

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

Thorsell, Elisabeth (2012) "Chicago, Chicago!" *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 32 : No. 1 , Article 13.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol32/iss1/13>

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).

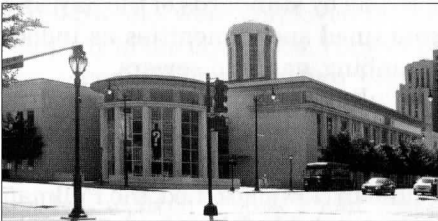
# Chicago, Chicago!

By ELISABETH THORSELL

Last year, in September of 2011, my friend and colleague, Ingrid Nilsson from Trelleborg, and I travelled together in the U.S.

We started by flying into Springfield, IL, to take part of the annual conference of the Federation of Genealogical Societies, which was very interesting. In the fine early fall weather we walked around and saw many sights, and it felt good to be back in the U.S. again.

Among other things we went on a tour of the *Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (ALPL)*, which seems to be a very good place for Illinois research. They even told us that they had old Swedish language newspapers.



*The ALPL in Springfield.*

One of the benefits of going to these conferences is all the people you meet, and the interesting items in the exhibition hall. In the evenings there were all kinds of social events that did not remind us of Sweden at all.



One evening we had the opportunity to see Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, but we could not hear his speech, because of the “genealogical noise” in the room.

## To Chicago

Some of our Chicago friends that come to Salt Lake City thought we needed to be updated on our knowledge of the “Windy City,” where so many Swedes made their homes (several visits to O’Hare Airport did not count), and arranged many inter-

esting things for us to see during a couple of days.

The first day we spent in the company of *Julie Benson*, who had made the plans.



*Julie and Ingrid.*

Julie took us on a walk along Michigan Avenue, which ended at the Architectural Cruise on the Chicago River. The boat and the guide took us to see many of the skyscrapers. Many of them were designed by famous architects, but probably built by Swedes. Next we walked around the Millennium Park and saw many modern sculptures and old fountains, a perfect walk on a sunny day. Then a bus down to the Hancock Building, with its 94 floors one of the tallest buildings in Chicago. An incredible

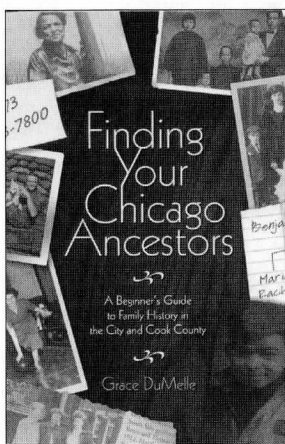


*Part of the Chicago shore.*

view from up there! By now we were tired, so a horse-and-buggy ride back to the hotel was just perfect.

Next day (Monday) was a day of rest; we just explored the area of the hotel just a block off Michigan Avenue.

Tuesday our friend *Wayne Nelson* picked us up and drove us to the Newberry Library, where a librarian told of their resources for Chicago research, which were extensive, even some Swedish church records. We also met with *Grace DuMelle*, whom we talked to in Springfield, and who has written an informative book, *Finding Your Chicago Ancestors*.



The next stop was North Park University, where the Archives and Special Collections are located in the lower level of Brandel Library. Researchers will find records of historical value and significance regarding North Park University, the Evangelical Covenant Church, and Swedish-Americans in the Chicago area.

We met with archivist *Anne Jenner*, who used to work at the Swenson Center, and who showed us lots of interesting archives that are very valuable for all serious scholars on



*Ingrid and Anne Jenner in the stacks.*

the Swedes in Chicago.

Lunch at the Tre Kronor restaurant was also a treat.

Wednesday Wayne again picked us up and took us to the Swedish American Museum on 5211 North Clark Street in the old Swedish area, where a nice young curator showed us several interiors that also gave an insight into the life of the immigrants, or at least those that succeeded.



*Waiting was a big part of the immigrants life. The plaques on the wall are inscribed with immigrant names.*

This was a rainy day, so we could not walk around in the area, which would otherwise have been fun.

In the evening Wayne took us to *Sue Jackson's* house way north of Chicago, where she had invited us and some other friends for a meal, and a nice social evening.



*Gene Anderson, Wayne Nelson, Sue Jackson. Louise Anderson was also there.*

Thursday *Shirley Koelling* came and took us south of the city. First we saw the statue of Carl von Linné (Linnaeus) on a high pedestal in the garden of University of Chicago. We had seen the day before in the North Park Archives the boxes of records of making the statue and then the records from when it had to be moved in 1976.

## Pullman next

The rest of the day was mostly spent in visiting the town of Pullman.

“Historic Pullman was built in the 1880s by George Pullman for his eponymous railroad car company, the Pullman Palace Car Company. Pullman's architect Solon Spencer Beman was said to be so proud of his creation that he asked George Pullman if the neighborhood could be named for himself. Pullman responded to the effect, “Sure, we'll take the first half of my name, and the second half of yours.”

“In a day when most workers lived in shabby tenements near their factories, Pullman seemed a dream, being voted “the world's most perfect town” by the jury of the second International Hygienic and Pharmaceutical Exposition in 1896. Everything, from stores to townhouses, were owned by the company. “The design was pleasing, and all of the workers' needs were met within the neighborhood. The houses were comfortable by standards of the day, and contained such amenities as indoor plumbing, gas, and sewers.

“Pullman's misfortune came during the depression which followed the Panic of 1893. When demand for Pullman cars slackened, the Pullman company laid off hundreds of workers, and switched many more to pay-per-piece work. This work, while paying more per hour, reduced total worker income. Despite these cutbacks, the company did not reduce rents for those that lived in the town of Pullman. The Pullman strike began in 1894 and lasted for 2 months, eventually leading to intervention by the U.S. government. The Strike Commission set up in 1894 thought that the aesthetic features admired by visitors had little monetary value for employees.

“George Pullman himself died in 1897. The Illinois Supreme Court required the company to sell off the town because the running of the town was outside the company's charter. It was then annexed by the city of Chicago. Within ten years, all non-manufacturing property – the

houses, the public buildings – were sold off to the individual occupants.

“Pullman Car Works manufactured its last car in early 1981. In 1991 the state of Illinois purchased a section of the plant intending to create a museum of the history of the company and the Pullman community. This plan was called into question as the result of a fire in December 1998.

“In 1960 the original town of Pullman, approximately between 111th and 115th Streets, was threatened with total demolition for an industrial park.

“By 1972 the Pullman Historic District had obtained national, state, and city landmark status to protect the original 900 rowhouses and public buildings built by George Pullman.”

(Wikipedia, accessed 23 Apr. 2012)

We went to the Visitors’ Center, which was full of tools, pictures, plans, and many other things.

Pullman was a place that attracted many Swedish carpenters, and some 1,100 Swedes were employed by the company in the late 1800s. They were the second largest foreign ethnic group in Pullman; only the Germans were a larger group.

Swedish ethnologist *Allan T. Nilsson* has written a book about those of the Pullman Swedes that came from a special area in Västergötland, Ryfors in Mullsjö community. Mr.

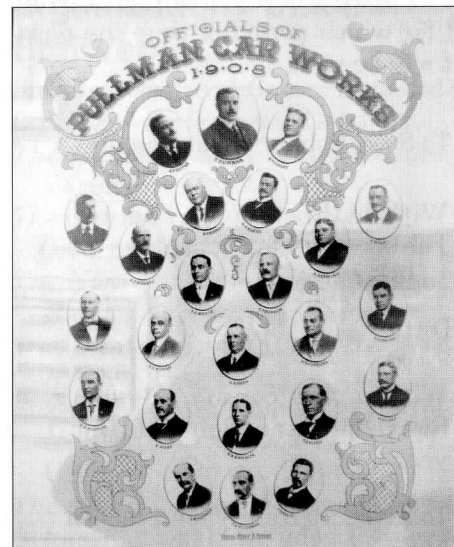


Some of the restored rowhouses in Pullman.

Nilsson’s book is called *De byggde järnvägsvagnar – Emigranterna från Ryfors hos Pullmans i Chicago* (1999).

After having spent most of the afternoon in Pullman we went on to the South Suburban Genealogical and Historical Society (SSGHS) in Hazel Crest, Illinois, where we visited their library. Our friend Shirley is the 1st vice president, and another friend, Judy O. Baouab, is the 2nd vice president. The society has a large library and seems to be quite active. They have published several volumes of clippings of interest from local newspapers, and even translated two chapters from the above-mentioned book by Allan T. Nilsson. They have also published “The Greater Roseland Area of Chicago – Svenska Evangelical Lutheran Elims Församlingen (Elim Lutheran Church) 1885 - 1900,” which has extracted records for this period.

Perhaps the most valuable documents in the possession of the SSGHS are the *Pullman Car Works* records. The collection holds records for about 200,000 individuals. A record might be just a card with a name on it, or an entire employee file, including birth certificate, military records, pictures, family relationships, work history, education, and cause of death. The collection is not open to the public. Research can be requested by the web site.



Among this group of company officials from 1908 one can find names like Berg, Pearson, and Swanson.

### Contact information:

South Suburban Genealogical and Historical Society  
3000 West 170th Place, Hazel Crest, IL. 60429 - 1174, USA.  
E-mail to: [ssghs@usa.net](mailto:ssghs@usa.net)  
Web: <http://www.ssghs.org/>

### An example of an employee record:

30569 30937 30937 30937 FILE No. Olsson J

NAME AS SHOWN ON PAY ROLLS 30569 John W. Olsson

IN CONSIDERATION OF EMPLOYMENT SHOWN BELOW THE UNDERSIGNED AGREES TO PROMPTLY COMMUNICATE TO THE COMPANY THROUGH HIS SUPERIOR OFFICER AND TO THE COMPANY CONCERNING ALL INVENTIONS OR IMPROVEMENTS MADE BY HIM RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE COMPANY DURING SUCH EMPLOYMENT, AND TO GIVE TO THE SAID COMPANY WITHOUT ROYALTY OR OTHER COMPENSATION, EXCEPT SUCH AS THE COMPANY MAY ELECT TO GIVE TO HIM, THE FULL AND FREE RIGHT TO USE SAID INVENTION OR IMPROVEMENT IN ALL PRODUCTS MADE BY SAID COMPANY FOR ITS OWN USE, AND TO GIVE TO SAID COMPANY CONTRACT WORK AT ONE-HALF THE LOWEST ROYALTY OBTAINED BY HIM FROM THIRD PARTIES.

NAME IN FULL *Johan Valentin Olsson*

ADDRESS *20937 W. 170th St. Hazel Crest, Ill.* TEL. No.

NO. DAY YEAR AGE, JAN. 1, 1915 YEAR MO. DATE OF BIRTH *12 2 1862* TOTAL SERVICE, JAN. 1, 1915 *57* CONTINUOUS SERVICE, JAN. 1, 1915 *18 10* OVER ONE YEAR TO TOTAL CONTINUOUS SERVICE, JAN. 1, 1915 *37 1* COUNTRY WHERE BORN *Sweden* RACE YEARS IN U. S., JAN. 1, 1915 *41*

SINGLE  MARRIED  WIDOWER  CHILDREN OR DEPENDENTS *4 1*

CHECK No.	DEPARTMENT	OCCUPATION	DAY RATE	RATE	HIRE	DROPPED	SERVICE PERIOD	TOTAL	ABSENT	KEY
30569	Machine Shop	Mill	21	21	12/2/1862					
30937			21	21	12/2/1862					
30937			21	21	12/2/1862					
30937			21	21	12/2/1862					
30937			21	21	12/2/1862					
30962			21	21	12/2/1862					
			4	48	9/1/18	80/19				
				48	7/5/19					

FOR PREVIOUS SERVICE SEE FILE No. THIS CARD TO BE RETURNED TO THE STATISTICAL DEPARTMENT FILES Form 3000 11-18-18 Rev. 11-18-18 G.H.F.C.

This is for Johan Valentin Olsson, born 2 Dec. 1862 in Hycklinge (Östg.).

Next day we flew to SLC!