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Carl Johan Ahlmark — Early Swede in Louisville, KY

Nils William Olsson

About a year and a half ago Tell G. Dahllöf of Stockholm, Sweden, inveterate collector of Swedish Americana, came upon a small packet of American documents in a Swedish antiquarian book shop, which turned out to be the personal papers of an early Swedish immigrant in Louisville, KY by the name of Carl Johan Ahlmark, who was active in that city in the middle of the nineteenth century. The documents in question are quite interesting in that they present a very positive view of how an immigrant Swede was able to establish himself as a successful merchant in a southern American city, as well as how he became accepted into the social and financial fabric of that city.¹ The packet in question contains the following documents:

1. A United States passport, No. 11,684, issued in Washington, DC 16 Feb. 1856, signed by the Secretary of State, W. L. Marcy.²

2. A diploma for Charles J. Ahlmark as a Royal Arch Mason in the Royal Arch Chapter No. 5 of Louisville, KY, executed 27 March 1856.

3. A diploma for Charles J. Ahlmark, issued by the Louisville, KY Encampment of Knights Templar No. 1, naming him a member of the Knights Templar and Knights of Malta, issued in Louisville 1 April 1856.

4. A diploma for Charles J. Ahlmark, naming him Master Mason, issued by the Masters and Wardens of Mount Moriah Lodge No. 106 of the Free and Accepted Masons, dated Louisville, KY 14 March 1856.

5. The Last Will and Testament of Charles J. Ahlmark and Charlotte W. Ahlmark, signed and witnessed 4 April 1856.³

6. A receipt from the secretary of the Mount Moriah Lodge No. 106 attesting to the fact that Charles J. Ahlmark was a member in good standing, having paid his dues for 1855.

7. A letter to C. L. Braune & Son in Bremen, Germany, dated New York 18 April 1856 and signed by Charles Kentgen, alerting the German firm that Charles J. Ahlmark was embarking for Sweden and Germany on board the *Washington* and asking that any credit, which Mr. Ahlmark should require, should be extended to him, this recommendation being based on "our long connexion (and) I consider Mr. Ahlmark worthy of any credit which he may have occasion to ask, independent of the above letters of credit."

8. A draft of a letter in which Charles J. Ahlmark constitutes and appoints an attorney (not named) to "sell and assign (an undetermined amount) of shares of stock in the Southern Bank of Kentucky, standing in my name on the books of said corporation." This document is dated 1856.

Who was this Swede, who seems to have made it big both in the financial as well as social world in Louisville? He was born Carl Johan Ullström in the St. Nikolai Parish in Stockholm 11 Nov. 1816, the son of Eric Ullström, a master tailor (*skräddaremästare*) and Catharina Margareta Nyman.⁴ We know very little concerning his early life or why he assumed the name Ahlmark. At first he was a spice merchant (*kryddkrämare*) in Stockholm, but later moved to Ed Parish (Stock.). In the household examination roll for Ed for 1841–1845 he is listed as living in Lövsta, a farm in Ed, together with his brother Nils Gustaf Ullström. His name has later been crossed out, but without any indication as to where he moved.⁵

Carl Johan Ahlmark had a younger brother, Bengt August Ullström, born in the Nikolai Parish in Stockholm 19 July 1823. He became a sailor and arrived in New York 29 Feb. 1840 aboard the *Norden*. He perished at sea during the night between 26 and 27 Jan. 1843, en route from Rio de Janeiro to Stockholm.⁶

We first locate Carl Johan Ahlmark in Buffalo, NY, from where he wrote a letter on 6 July 1844 to the then Swedish-Norwegian consul in New York, Ernst Zachrisson.⁷ In 1846 we find him settled in Louisville, KY, where on 10 July of that year he married Charlotta Wilhelmina Collini, who had arrived in New York from Sweden 8 Aug. 1845.⁸ The marriage in question was performed by the Rev. Charles H. Page, rector of the Episcopal Church in Louisville.⁹ The bondsman on this occasion was John Peterson, undoubtedly also Swedish.¹⁰

From now on it is possible to document Ahlmark's career in Louisville quite accurately. In the United States Census of 1850 Carl Johan Ahlmark is listed, but erroneously as C. G. Elmark, a merchant, who owned \$2,100 worth of real estate.¹¹ From the various city directories beginning in 1848 we also learn that Ahlmark was a dealer in fancy goods, wholesale and retail, and that he was located at 178 Water Street. In 1852 he had moved to No. 431 on the South side of Main Street, between Fifth and Sixth Streets, and was still listed as a wholesale merchant in fancy and variety goods. By 1855–1856 he owned a house on Fourth Street, between Chesapeake and Broad Streets.¹²

In 1848 Ahlmark became an American citizen, indicating that he must have resided in the United States at least since 1843, in order to be eligible for citizenship.¹³

He most certainly is also identical with the individual, whose initials C.J.A. identified him as an American subscriber in 1853 to the Stockholm daily newspaper *Aftonbladet*.¹⁴ In the same year, a Swede, who signed himself as C.J.A.-k, living in Louisville, donated a sum of money for the

relief of cholera stricken victims in Sweden.¹⁵

We know of at least three prominent Swedes who visited Ahlmark in Louisville in the 1850s. In May of 1851 Eric Norelius¹⁶ and Lars Paulus Esbjörn,¹⁷ two pioneer Swedish American Lutheran clergymen, stopped off in Louisville as their river steamer, the *Genesee*, was passing through the locks of that city. They paid a late night call on Ahlmark and his Swedish partner and brother-in-law, Georg Henric Collini,¹⁸ who at first thought they were dealing with burglars, and would have shot them, if it had not been for the Swedish spoken by the strangers. They were immediately invited in and were warmly received, as well as entertained.¹⁹

In May of 1855 Rosalie Roos, that intrepid Swedish lady, who had dared convention to set out on her own in order to discover America, arrived in Louisville, principally to view the renowned Mammoth Cave. She knew of Ahlmark, since she had asked that her mail be forwarded to Louisville, in care of her compatriot. She spent an evening with the Ahlmark family, Carl Johan seems to have been absent that evening, and she has the following description of the visit in her book of travels:

“In Ahlmark’s delightful little home, in the company of his wife and a young Swedish lady, both of them natural and warmhearted individuals, the evening passed quite pleasantly. Everything was typically Swedish: Mrs. Ahlmark and the young lady, Caroline Petterson,²⁰ who was there as an assistant or companion; Ahlmark’s little foster daughter named Mimi,²¹ whom they have brought from Sweden as their very own child; the maid servant²² and the hired man,²³ yes, even the Swedish pancakes and the salted ham were Swedish. Mrs. Ahlmark has been in America ten years, but longs for Sweden with all her heart, convinced that everything is better there than here in America.”²⁴

It was doubtless Carl Johan Ahlmark’s wife’s unhappiness with life in America, which a year later convinced him to return to his native land. All of the documents cited above, save one, are dated in the spring of 1856, when he, his wife and foster daughter left for Sweden.

After their return to Sweden Carl Johan Ahlmark settled first in a small place named Hamre in Bollnäs Parish (Gävl.) in Sept. 1856. Later the family moved to the city of Uppsala, where Carl Johan died 28 Aug. 1866, not quite fifty years of age. His widow survived him for many years and was still alive in 1896.

Ahlmark’s estate inventory (*bouppteckning*) lists as accounts receivable a mortgage for his brother-in-law, Georg Henric Collini, for a piece of property named Heden in Bollnäs. Another claim, listed as uncertain, were the dividends from his shares of stock in the Southern Bank of Kentucky (see item No. 8 above).

In 1865 a letter to the editors of newspapers in central Sweden, signed C.J.A., responded to an order put out by the central Swedish government to the various county (*län*) administrations warning citizens against emigrating.²⁵ The author of the letter speaks of his fifteen years’ residence in the

United States, which if accurate, would place Carl Johan's emigration to America around 1841.

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One of the obvious genealogical lessons to be learned from the find of this cache of papers, is that every type of document has its intrinsic value in adding contours and a sense of reality to the life of an otherwise half-forgotten Swedish immigrant.

¹I am indebted to Dr. Dahllöf for his generosity in allowing me to present these documents to the readers of *SAG*.

²William L. Marcy of the State of New York, served as Secretary of State from 1853 to 1857, during the administrations of both Presidents Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan. — *The World Almanac & Book of Facts* (New York 1983), p. 301.

³This document is quite interesting from a genealogical point of view and is here quoted verbatim from the original, as written by Ahlmark, spelling errors and all.

“The Last Will & Testament of Charles J. Ahlmark & Charlotte W. Ahlmark, His wife, of the City of Louisville & State of Ky, Both being of sound mind and disposing memory, do make, ordain, publish & declare this to be our last will & Testament —

That is to say — First after all our Lawfull debts are payed & discharged, the residue of our Estate, real or personell, we give, bequeath & dispose of as follows, to wit, The Survivor to have & take absolutly & in fee simple all our Estate both real & personell, except the sum of three thousand Dollars, which we give to our Adopted Daughter Ingrid Maria Ahlmark & which sum is to be set apart to her, on the Decease of either of us. The Survivor to be the Guardian of s(ai)d Ingrid Maria & to use the interest of the same for her Education & support untill she marries or attain full age.

On the decease of both of us the residue of the Estate we dispose of as follows, viz — The five fourthent part of our Estate we give to our adopted Daughter the said Ingrid Maria; The three fourthent part we give to the children of George H. Collini of Böllnäs (sic!) in Sweden;^a The three fourthent part to the children of Nils Gustav Ullström^b of Upsala in Sweden; The last three fourthent part to the children of Richard Ture Ullström,^c of (blank) in Sweden — If the said Richard Ture Ullström, shall have no children in ten years from this date, then He shall take that part in his own righth, in case of his death within the ten years without children His wife if she survives, shall have that part.

In case of want to sattisfye necessitiez occasioned by accident or otherwise, then the Interest on the three thousand dollars, given to our oversaid adopted Daughter, is to be used and Enjoyed by such Survivor, so long as such want and necessity may require.

If we and the said Ingrid Maria shall perish on our Journey or all three of us depart this life, without Codicil or other last will & Testament, Then we will, give & bequeath our property as follows, viz:

The one fourth part to the children of George H. Collini; The one fourth part to the children of Nils Gustav Ullström; The one fourth part to the children of Richard Ture Ullström, with the foregoing provisions, relative to the devise to Him; and the remaining one fourth part to Ernest F. Wood^d Merchant of the City of Louisville, Kentucky, with our desire, that He will use a part thereof to assist His brother Wil Wood^e to commence Business, whenever he may wish, leaving to the discretion of E. F. Wood, as to the amount of assistance as well as wether such assistance shall be a Gift or a Loan — In case it be a Loan we desire, that it shall not be for a less time than Six years and at no higher rate of Interest, than five per cent pr annum.

For such of our Estate as may be situated in the United States of America we constitute & appoint as our executors James B. Wilder Merchant & J. B. Allexander Banker & Wm. A. Hauser Attorney at Law all of Louisville, Ky.^f

For so much of our Estate as may be in Sweden, we constitute & appoint as our Executors — George H. Collini of Bollnas Nils Gustav Ullström of Upsala & C. D. Arfvedson^g of Stockholm in Sweden.

Given under our Hand & Seal this the fourth day of April 1856 in the city of Louisville, State of Kentucky, U.S. of America.

C. J. Ahlmark
Charlotte W. Ahlmark

Witness

Joh. Jones

H. S. Buckner^{7f}

^aGeorge Henric Collini, the brother of Carl Johan Ahlmark's wife, was also b. in Mörkö Parish 18 Feb. 1820. He had married Catharina Wilhelmina Fraenell, also b. in Mörkö 11 April 1821, the dau. of Anders Fraenell, the local clergyman, and his wife, Christina Charlotta Åkerblad. The Collinis returned to Sweden in 1851 with their s. Anders Lessler Algernon, b. in Louisville 18 Aug. 1849, and settled in Heden, Bollnäs Parish, where another seven children were born. All eight children were included in Ahlmark's will. — Bollnäs Parish records in *Landsarkivet*, Härnösand.

^bNot identified.

^cRichard Ture Ullström was a half-brother of Carl Johan Ahlmark, b. in his father's second marriage. — Nikolai Parish records, *Stadsarkivet*, Stockholm.

^dErnest F. Wood, whose original name was Ernst Fredric Areschoug, b. in Kristianstad Nov. 1823, the s. of Johan Jacob Areschoug, a merchant and city councillor (*rådman*) in Kristianstad, and his wife, Maria Christina von Bergen. He became a wholesale merchant in Louisville, where he d. 9 July 1857. — (L.M.V. Örnberg), *Svenska släkt-kalender* and *Svenska ättartal*, I–XIV (Stockholm 1884–1905), X, p. 60.

^eWilliam Wood was in reality Carl Wilhelm Areschoug, the younger brother of Ernst Fredric, b. in Kristianstad 14 March 1832. He emigr. to the United States in 1854. — *Ibid.*

^fAll the Louisville names except L. B. Alexander, as well as John Jones and H. Buckner, the witnesses to the will, are listed in the Louisville City Directory for 1856; information courtesy Nettie Watson, The Filson Club, Louisville, Ky.

^gC. D. Arfvedson is doubtless identical with Carl David Arfwedson, who was b. in Stockholm 25 Nov. 1806, the s. of Carl Abraham Arfwedson, wholesale merchant, and Maria af Sandberg. He made three visits to America — in 1834, 1839 and 1848. During the years 1838 to 1855 he served as the American consul in Stockholm. He d. in Wiesbaden, Germany 25 June 1881. — Holger Rosman and Arne Munthe, *Släkten Arfwedson* (Stockholm 1945), pp. 480–546.

⁴I am grateful to Dr. Erik Wikén of Uppsala, Sweden for furnishing much of the data on Carl Johan Ahlmark's life in Sweden, both before his emigration, as well as after his return to Sweden.

⁵Ed Parish records in *Landsarkivet*, Uppsala.

⁶Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820–1850* (Stockholm and Chicago 1967) (*SPANY*), pp. 32, 33, 38; —, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in U.S. Ports 1820–1850 (except New York)* (Stockholm 1979), p. 87.

⁷*Beskickningar i Förenta staterna, korrespondens medenskilda 1844–1849 (Diplomatic Agencies in the United States: Correspondence with Private Individuals 1844–1849)* in *Riksarkivet* (The National Archives of Sweden).

⁸Charlotta Wilhelmina Collini was b. in Mörkö Parish (Söd.) 5 Aug. 1826, the dau. of Per Collini, the local church organist, and Gustava Fogelgren. She and her sister, Maria Elisabeth Collini, b. in Mörkö 13 Oct. 1822, arr. in New York 8 Aug. 1845 aboard the *Washington* from Stockholm. Their brother, Georg Henric Collini (see note 3a above) had arr. in New York 28 Aug. 1843 aboard the *Carolina* and had apparently gone to Louisville soon thereafter. This was perhaps the chief reason for his sister, Charlotta Wilhelmina, being there in 1846. — Mörkö Parish records in *Landsarkivet*, Uppsala; *SPANY*, pp. 54, 62.

⁹Jefferson County, KY Register of Marriages, Book No. 4 (1842–1849), p. 124, The Filson Club, Louisville, KY.

¹⁰Unidentified.

¹¹*Seventh U.S. Census 1850*, Jefferson Co., KY, dated 29 Aug. 1850.

¹²Louisville City Directories for 1848–1849, 1852 and 1855–1856.

¹³*Index of Naturalizations*, Book 13, p. 266, The Filson Club, Louisville.

¹⁴*Aftonbladet* (Stockholm), 18 Aug. 1853.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 11 November 1853.

¹⁶Eric Norelius (1833–1916), later president of the Augustana Lutheran Synod, arr. in America in 1850. — Conrad Bergendoff, *The Augustana Ministerium* (Rock Island, IL 1980), p. 15.

¹⁷Lars Paul(us) Esbjörn (1808–1870), arr. in the United States in 1849 and founded the first Swedish Lutheran Church in the Middle West, in Andover, IL in 1849. He returned to Sweden in 1863. — *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁸See note 3a.

¹⁹Eric Norelius, "Personliga Hågkomster af L. P. Esbjörn" in *Tidskrift för svensk Ev. Luth. kyrkohistoria i N. Amerika* (Rock Island, IL 1899), pp. 364–365.

²⁰Probably Carolina Charlotta Pettersson, b. in Karlshamn 20 Feb. 1834, the dau. of Sven Pettersson, master distiller (*brännmästare*), and Catharina Nilsdotter. She arr. in New York 3 Oct. 1849 aboard the *Emilie*. — *SPANY*, p. 200; information courtesy Dr. Erik Wikén.

²¹Mimi Ahlmark's real name was Ingrid Maria Gulliksson, born in Karlshamn 19 Jan. 1849, the dau. of Lars Gulliksson, a sailor of Norwegian birth, and his wife, Petronella Pehrsondotter. Ingrid Maria's parents died when she was but an infant — Lars Gulliksson 3 July 1849 and his wife 20 Sept. 1850, both of them in Karlshamn.

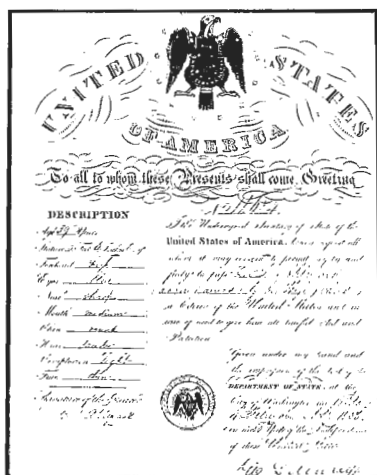
It was on 17 June 1852 that Ingrid Maria Gulliksson left the social welfare institution (*fattigvården*) in Karlshamn and in the company of a merchant named Pettersson of the same city, to begin her journey to America. In the city's exit lists she is recorded as the foster child of Mr. Ahlmark. When Carl Johan Ahlmark left Louisville for Sweden in 1856, his foster dau. accompanied him to Bollnäs Parish. She died less than two years later on 8 Feb. 1858. Soon after her death Ahlmark requested that Ingrid Maria's sister, Fredrica Erica Gulliksson, b. in Karlshamn 13 March 1845, be sent to him at Bollnäs to take the place of the deceased sister. — Karlshamn Parish records, *Landsarkivet*, Lund and Bollnäs Parish records, *Landsarkivet*, Härnösand.

²²The maid servant was probably Ella Andersdotter, who had arr. in New York 11 Dec. 1848 aboard the bark *Louise* in the company of Georg Henric Collini and his wife, Catharina Wilhelmina Fraenell. She was b. in Önneberg, Alfta Parish (Gäv.) 21 March 1818, the dau. of Anders Jonsson, farmer, and Catharina Jonsdotter. In the 1850 Census for Louisville she is listed as Ella Anderson, living in the household of Carl Johan Ahlmark. — *SPANY*, pp. 154–155; *Seventh U.S. Census 1850*, Jefferson Co., KY.

²³Probably Jonas Larsson, b. 29 July 1827, who also returned to Bollnäs with the Ahlmarks from America 1856. — Bollnäs Parish records, *Landsarkivet*, Härnösand.

²⁴Rosalie Roos, *Resa till Amerika 1851–1855*, edited by Sigrid Laurell (Stockholm 1969), p. 192.

²⁵*Dalpilen* (Falun), 29 April 1865.



Carl Johan Ahlmark's passport dated 16 Feb. 1856.