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Ruth Nathorst

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Ruth's Diary from the 1938 New Sweden Jubilee

A forgotten Swedish diary tells about the earlier celebrations

BY RUTH NATHORST

translated by Elisabeth Thorsell, great-niece of Ruth

In 1938 it was 300 years since the founding of New Sweden, and it was celebrated in big style. The celebrations took place during the summer with the participation of Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf, Crown Princess Louise, and Prince Bertil, the son from the crown prince's first marriage. Unfortunately the crown prince fell ill and could not attend, but Prince Bertil took over his father's place and carried out all his appointments in good style.

One of the participants in the celebrations was *Ruth Nathorst* from Sweden. She was born in Stockholm in 1881 Aug. 14, and died in Uppsala in 1961 Jan. 19. She was a missionary of the Church of Sweden in China, where she was a teacher. Now she was on her way back to Sweden and took a route via Delaware.

Ruth wrote a diary during her time in the U.S., but had a difficult handwriting, which makes the first pages of the diary hard to read. She seems to have gotten ahold of a little typewriter just before she came to Wilmington, without the Swedish letters, and used that for the rest of her travels.

This is what she wrote, starting out in New York:

Sunday June 26. Morning service in a church in Brooklyn. Bishop Ljunggren preached, very good. I was taken home in a car. In the church I met with Dr. Bersell, the president of the Augustana Synod. He had just

received a letter from Archbishop Eidem about me, and gave me a ticket for the inauguration of the Swedish monument to commemorate the landing of the *Kalmar Nyckel* in 1638. I also got a ticket to the cemetery in Wilmington and to the oldest Swedish church, where a sermon would be delivered.

So as soon as I got home, I packed and hurried to the train station and got on the 3 o'clock train. The journey took about two hours. In Philadelphia I got a room at the Y.W.C.A. It was not as good as in other places, for instance in San Francisco where it was excellent. But I did meet several nice people there. Among others I met with Miss Hildegard Swanson from the Augustana [Mission] field in India. I heard her speak at the Women's Conference in New York. Augustana's female workers had a conference at the same time as the clergymen had one in Brooklyn.

Many had come in their cars and were going on to Wilmington to take part in the festivities there. A nice clergyman, Pastor Alström of Seattle, tried to arrange for me so I could travel with some car there, but he could not get it done. During Sunday afternoon I tried to get in touch with the leader of the festivities who had left New York, to try to get tickets for some other things. But he had already travelled to Wilmington. The weather did not look very promising. It rained quite a bit.



Ruth Nathorst (1883–1961).

Monday June 27. A historical day. Left early in the morning for Wilmington. That took about one hour. It rained. Had the company of a Swedish-American housewife, and we had the company of some others as well.

After we had had breakfast we went to the place where the monument was to be unveiled. An enormous group of people was waiting outside the place where the inauguration would take place. This place had been a dump for garbage, but was now to be a park. Only the week before it had looked horrible, we were told. It took a long time before the gates were opened, and we had to stand in the pouring rain outside. It dripped from all of our umbrellas, I had galoshes and it helped somewhat but not totally. By and by the gates

were opened; the chairs were placed in the open air, so they were wet through and through. There were downpours. The royal pavilion, where the delegates also had seats, was the only protected place.

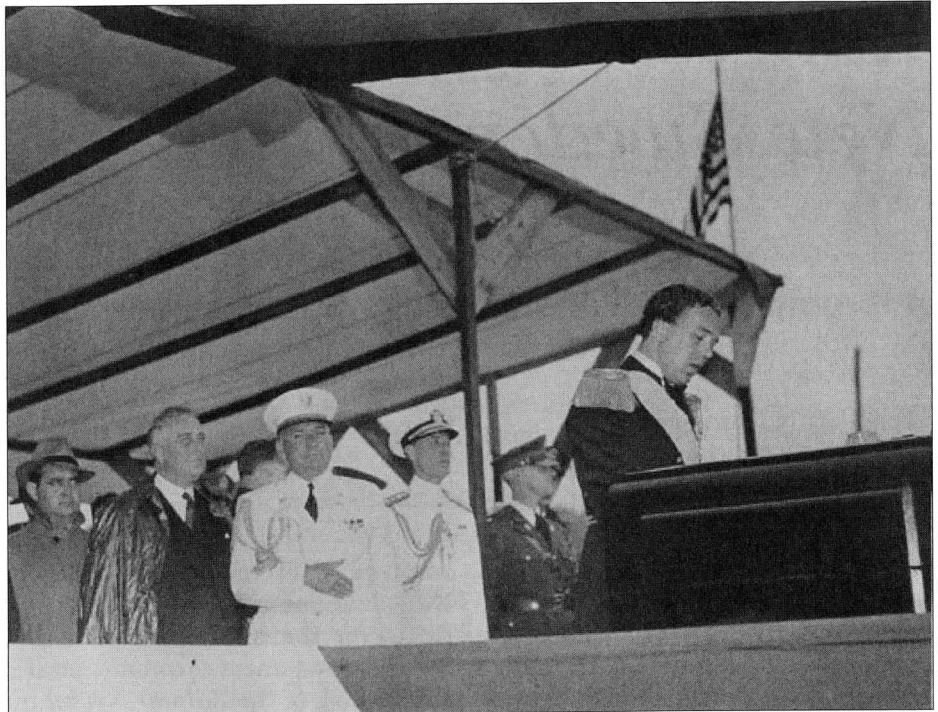
We had heard through the newspapers that the crown prince had become ill during the voyage, a kidney complaint, so Prince Bertil would represent him. Was able to get a good seat. Saw everything very well, the crown princess and Prince Bertil were heard well, just as was President Roosevelt. The singers sang very beautifully, and everything would have been moving, if only the powers of the weather had been more accommodating.

When everything was over we had to wait for a long time before the iron gates were opened and we could leave again. I was wet all over. Then we came to the church. One could hear from the outside what was said inside, but I felt too wet to stand in the cemetery in the rain. The church was so small that only a few persons could get a place there. Luckily it was arranged to have box lunches available and you also got coffee in a nearby house. Pastor Karlström offered me coffee.

Then we went back to the Hotel Du Pont by car, where the royals and the delegates had rooms, and had lunch. I met with the Rodhes and



Crown Princess Louise (1889–1965).



Prince Bertil giving his father's speech at the inauguration of the jubilee. In the background is President Roosevelt in his raincoat.

Stanny von Engeström, who came with her husband, an English clergyman.¹ She wanted me to get a ticket for the party at the Du Pont's house, who are supposed to have one of the loveliest homes in America!; there were supposed to be some left. But I felt so wet and uncomfortable, even though the hall porter had dried my coat. Underneath I was still wet. Later I regretted this when I heard that many had come as they were in their travelling clothes, while the hosting couple were dressed festively.

In the afternoon there were many speeches outside the City Hall(?), and then there was a parade showing the arrival of the Swedes and the development of Delaware, etc.

It was quite odd that both in the morning, when the Swedish delegation landed and now, the rain ceased for a while. The main streets were decorated in the Swedish colors and it was a pity for the people of Wilmington that they had such bad luck with the weather, as they had worked so hard to get everything in order.

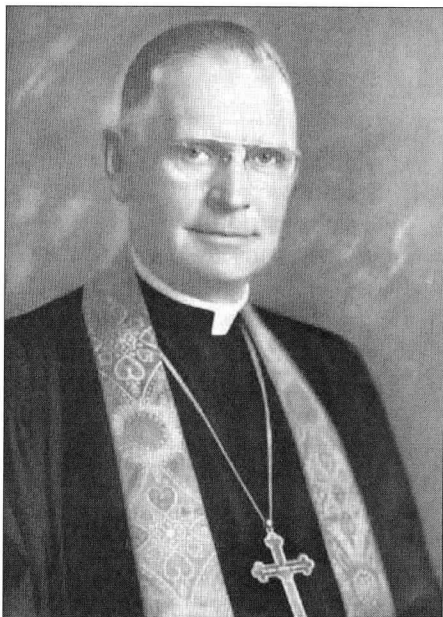
Went back to Philadelphia in the evening.

Tuesday June 28. The Swedish Museum in Philadelphia was to be

inaugurated. It is placed on the outskirts of the city. We went there by buses. We were quite a little group, Hildegard Swanson among others. We got a good place and saw and heard everything. Quite moving with the speech of the crown prince on radio. And then some people spoke, Prince Bertil, the governor of Pennsylvania Earl? [Earle], and more. Went with the bus to restaurant Kungsholm and then back to the



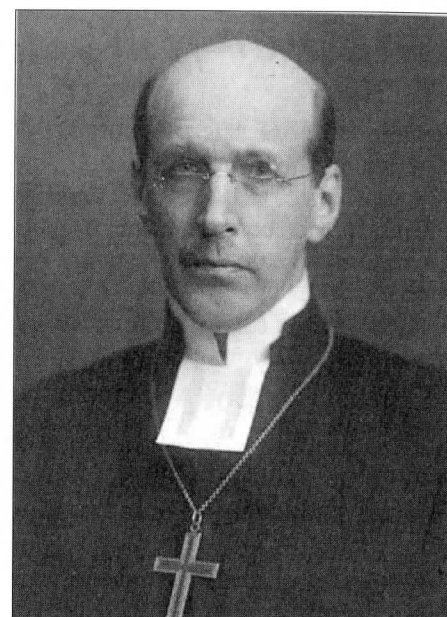
Prince Bertil (1912–1997).



Petrus Olof Bersell (1882-1967), president of the Augustana Synod.



Gustaf Ljunggren (1889-1950), bishop of Skara diocese, Sweden.



Edvard Rodhe (1876-1954), bishop of Lund diocese, Sweden.

museum. There was Swedish folk dancing, etc. I visited the museum. They had borrowed items from Sweden for the inauguration. The crown princess also had a task at the inauguration of the Fredrika Bremer Room. It was really very beautiful.

In the evening the Augustana synod had their big event in Convention Hall, which has room for 14,000 people! There was no room left downstairs, and it was also full on the lower levels of the balconies. Ca 10,000 participants at least had a view of this. It was a most exquisite and solemn occasion. Both bishops from Sweden took part in the event, Rodhe representing the archbishop and Ljunggren. Dr. Bersell presided. It was just a pity that the prince and the delegation from Sweden (excepting the bishops) were missing. The crown prince could certainly have come as this was the great day for Augustana. They felt deeply hurt by this. Their pastors had come long ways as well as had many other Swedes, and here was a hall that could accommodate all that did not have tickets, everyone could attend (the speeches were broadcast by loudspeakers). And then the royals did not come. They felt it as a slap in the face and Bersell later on talked with the prince about this, who apologized. But the scandal was a

fact and caused bitterness. How unnecessary!

Wednesday June 29th. The service was to be held in the oldest Swedish church in Philadelphia. Miss Swanson and I went there thinking we might be able to see the inside of the church before the service as we had no tickets and had no thought of getting any or being able to enter. We were surprised to see that the church was open and that we could get excellent places in the middle forward in the church. The reserved places were not many. This church as well as the one in Wilmington are both Episcopal. These have taken over much of the old work and are regarded as "fishing" among the Swedes, which hurts Augustana.

This was all most solemn and festive. After lunch we went to the art museum in Philadelphia, where a Swedish exhibition was arranged. We thought the prince's visit was ended and hoped to see the exhibition. When we came he was still there, and we stayed on the stairs. The museum has an exquisite location, and it was a grand sight when Prince Bertil came down the stairs and the blue and yellow and the black and red horsemen mounted their horses, at least fifty before and fifty after the car. The sun glittered and

the trees looked so fresh in their summer greenery. It was really splendid. It was nice that the weather was so beautiful.

In the evening there was a Swedish concert and I had telephoned Mary Russel's good friend Mary Bentley and asked her if she wanted to come along. She invited us to supper first. It was a beautiful concert, I thought, but the singers that I met later thought it was their worst concert. The tenor, Beyron of the Swedish opera, had a wonderful voice. It is a really fine choir that came to America this time. After the concert I travelled to Germantown with Mary Bentley, who had ordered a room for me at the Y.W.C.A. A very pleasant place.

After this visit to Philadelphia and Wilmington, Ruth continued her travels to Washington, D.C., and to New York, where she boarded the *S/S Drottningholm* on the 14th of July and came to Göteborg the following week.

Footnote:

1) *Stanny* was b. 1890 Sep. 20 at Närke, Björklinge, (Upps.), d. 1986 Oct. 5 in Lund, Sweden. Married 1928 Jan. 16 to *Horace Fort*, b. 1890 Nov. 9, d. 1976 Aug. 19. Vicar of Bedford, England.