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The Last Page

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The Last Page

Dear friends,

This year, 2009, and the previous one, 2008, marks the 200th anniversary of the parting of Finland from Sweden.

That this happened was due to the Russians conquering the whole of Finland and defeating the Swedish army. Sweden had opposed Napoleon, and one of the consequences was this war, which was a tragedy.

Many families did not want to stay in Finland under Russian rule, including some of my own ancestors who moved to Sweden to build a new life.

Still, the bonds between Sweden and Finland remain strong, and Helsingfors, for instance, is a popular goal for a weekend break. You go onboard the boat in the evening in Stockholm harbor, have a nice din-

ner, wake up in a different country, and spend the day exploring the city, where there are many beautiful views, interesting museums, and of course, shopping at *Stockmann's* big department store, and nearby is the gigantic *Akademiska Bokhandeln* (book store). You can go to the old Market Hall (*Saluhallen*) and bring home the black bread or some other Finnish specialities.

We who live in Sweden often assume that we can speak Swedish in Helsingfors, but will soon find out that it is not so. The Finlanders may have studied Swedish in school, but are often reluctant to use it, and prefer English. The native Swedish speakers are a diminishing minority, but fight hard not lose their language

totally. Their main newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet*, founded in 1864, is still published and widely read.

During this period there has been and will be several exhibitions about the war and what happened next, and this year there are even more events to look forward to.

One of the articles in this issue tells more about the history that Sweden and Finland have together, and there is much more to tell.

The annual Day of Genealogy (*Släktforskardagarna*) will be held on 21st March all over the country. A sign of spring: the genealogists are coming out of hibernation!

Till next time!

Elisabeth Thorsell

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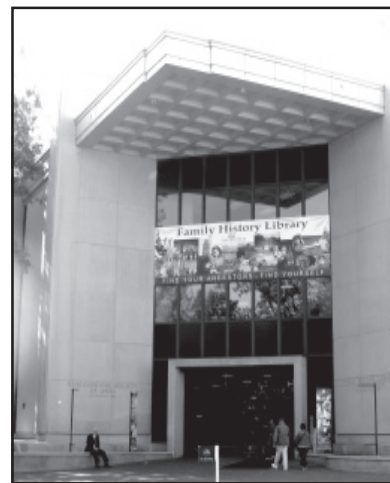
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Contact *Jill Seaholm* at 309-794-7204 or e-mail: <sag@augustana.edu> Limited number of spaces!