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The story of Andrew Peterson, the real Karl-Oskar

The memory of an immigrant pioneer is still kept alive in his home in Sweden

BY ANDERS KÖHLER

Who was Andrew Peterson? Or as he was known in Sweden, Anders Pettersson?

He was born 20 October 1818 at Sjöarp in Västra Ryd parish in Östergötland. His parents were farmer Petter Jonsson and his wife Ingrid Samuelsdotter. During his youth he worked on different farms in his home area. His father died in 1846 and at that time Andrew moved home and took over the farm Sjöarp.

In 1850 Andrew made the big decision to immigrate to America.

journey from Sweden to Burlington in Iowa, and then continued to keep this diary during his whole life as a settler. In Andrew's diaries Vilhelm Moberg found much of the inspiration for his fantastic work about the immigration to America. Moberg found Andrew's diaries in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Today the diaries give us very good information about the circumstances of a Swedish settler in Minnesota in the middle of the 19th century.

Famous diaries

How can we know this 160 years later? Andrew wrote a diary during the

Life in America

When Andrew first came to America he worked first four years in Iowa,



Andrew Peterson in his old age.

then moved to Carver County in Minnesota, where he claimed land and started to farm. The farm still exists, called Rock Isle Farm, half a mile east of Waconia, but does not belong to the Petersons anymore.

Andrew met a woman, Elsa Ingman, and they were married in 1858. The family raised nine children, but they had no grandchildren, which is why the farm is not in the Peterson family today.

Two of Andrew and Elsa's sons took over the farm after the parents so it stayed in the family for two generations.

These are a few facts about Andrew Peterson and his family's history.



Vilhelm Moberg and a local Swedish-born lady regarding Andrew Peterson's tombstone in Waconia, MN. Moberg wrote: "The discovery of Andrew Peterson's diaries in the library in St. Paul was the most important result of my research work."

A new interest in Andrew's home place

In the southern part of Östergötland, in the same area that Andrew came from, lives Jan Hermelin.

Jan and some others started the Andrew Peterson Society, and the society has done a very good job of keeping the memory of Andrew Peterson in both Sweden and Minnesota alive.

In Sweden the Society has created a museum in Asby, Östergötland. On Peterson's farm, Rock Isle Farm, in Carver County, Jan Hermelin and four society members have, together with some local people, repaired an old granary from Peterson's time.

More information about this project can be found on the Society's website:

http://www.andrewpeterson.se/index_eng.htm

Editor's note:

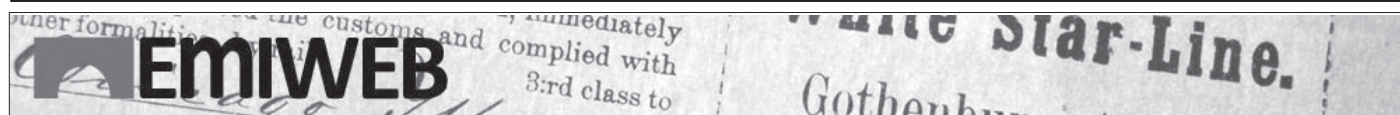
Interestingly enough, well-known author Astrid Lindgren had by then also read parts of these diaries in April 1948, as she writes in a little article, "Andrew Peterson," published as a Christmas greeting in



Andrew Peterson Society members Sven Lindfors and Olle Karlsson are building a new door for the old granary, which is seen in the back of the picture. 2006.

1985 (*Liv kan vara så olika*). She does not seem to have used any of the information in the diaries in her own writing, but says about Andrew, "for a long time I thought that Andrew Peterson was a *smålänning*, his enormous capacity and handiness could point to his belonging to the kind of people that can survive alone

on a rock in the sea. But maybe *östgötar* also can do this, and Andrew Peterson was an *östgöte*. By the way, he was not stranded on a rock in the sea; he settled eventually by Lake Waconia in Minnesota, where he built a model farm from the wilderness."



EmiWeb is here!

During the recent *Släktforskardagar* (Genealogy Days) in Malmö, Sweden, at the end of August *EmiWeb* was launched. *EmiWeb* is right now just at the beginning, but promises to be a great resource for immigration researchers.

EmiWeb is a society and among the founders are The Kinship Center of Karlstad, the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö, the Göteborgs-Emigranten of Göteborg, Örebro City Archives, the Örebro Genealogical Society, and a couple of other institutions.

They have joined together and decided to share some of their databases on the internet. Right now, most emigrants found on *Emibas* are

available, and also death notices from some Swedish American newspapers and from some Värmland newspapers. In the future it will be possible to see photographs, letters, and much more added by society members.

My private research interest is the population of Nordmark in Värmland, where I have so far listed 524 immigrants to Norway (23) and Northern America (501). *Emibas* lists 773 emigrants born in the parish, and 643 that immigrated directly from there, but born both in Nordmark and elsewhere. *Emihamn* lists 508 immigrants coming from Nordmark. Now *EmiWeb* lists 858 immigrants, so it will be an interesting

challenge to find out which figure is the more correct one (if possible).

The parish of Dals Ed in Dalsland has been overlooked when the immigrants were inventoried. Some 100 immigrants are listed in *Emibas*, 40 in *EmiWeb* and 232 in *Emihamn*, also intriguing differences in the figures.

Subscription to *EmiWeb* is right now only 300 SEK for a year. An English interface will be posted in October, with credit card facilities.

More information on *EmiWeb* will come in a future issue of SAG, when it has been tested more.

Elisabeth Thorsell

www.emiweb.se