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Union Station and Washington Square in Worcester, Mass., in 1895 – many immigrants' first view of their new hometown. (From *gå till Amerika*, by Charles W. Estus and John F. McClymer 1994)

The 'Kalender öfver Svenskarne i Worcester'

BY KAY SHELDON

In the mid 1990's, a group of Scandinavian-Americans in New England formed the *Swedish Ancestry Research Association* (SARA). Before that time I had been working on the Swedish families in the town of Auburn, Massachusetts. My mother's family had come from Sweden in 1910 and settled in Auburn. Since I loved to do research, I had expanded my field to include all the neighbors who were Swedes.

By the time SARA was founded in 1994, Nancy Gaudette, the reference librarian at the Worcester Public Library in Massachusetts, had introduced me to the *Kalender öfver Svenskarne i Worcester* (*Kalender*), printed in 1883. Written in Swedish, but in a city directory style, the in-

formation included in the book could be easily understood. At least at the time I thought so!

The *Kalender* lists the *Namn, Födelseår, Ankomst till Amerika, Hvarifrån i Sverige*, and *Adress*. My plan was to identify all those people in the *Kalender* as to where they came from in Sweden and what had happened to them after 1883.

Karen Bickford, another SARA member, transcribed the *Kalender* for me and SARA has it posted on its members'-only website.

By late in the year 2000, Elisabeth Thorsell had sent me a listing from *Emigranten* of the Swedes who had left Sweden before 1883 saying they were going to Worcester. Although the *Kalender* lists over 1,900 people,

some people in the *Kalender* where not on Elisabeth's list.

It was time to create some databases of my own. The 1880 federal census seemed to be a good starting point. The 1880 census for Worcester had about 1,100 people who were either born in Sweden or were children of parents born in Sweden. At that point I knew that not all the 1880 Swedes had made the *Kalender* and that many more had come to Worcester between June 1880 (the date of the census) and 1883 when the *Kalender* was published.

The Old Swedish Cemetery in Worcester was next. Again, many of the *Kalender* Swedes are not in the Old Swedish Cemetery. But these records created another database,

thus another source of information.

At the same time, I began transcribing the naturalization papers for Scandinavians in the Worcester County Superior Court from 1883 to 1890. I am still working on the records from 1890 to 1900.

Each of these databases helps to give a picture of these Swedes.

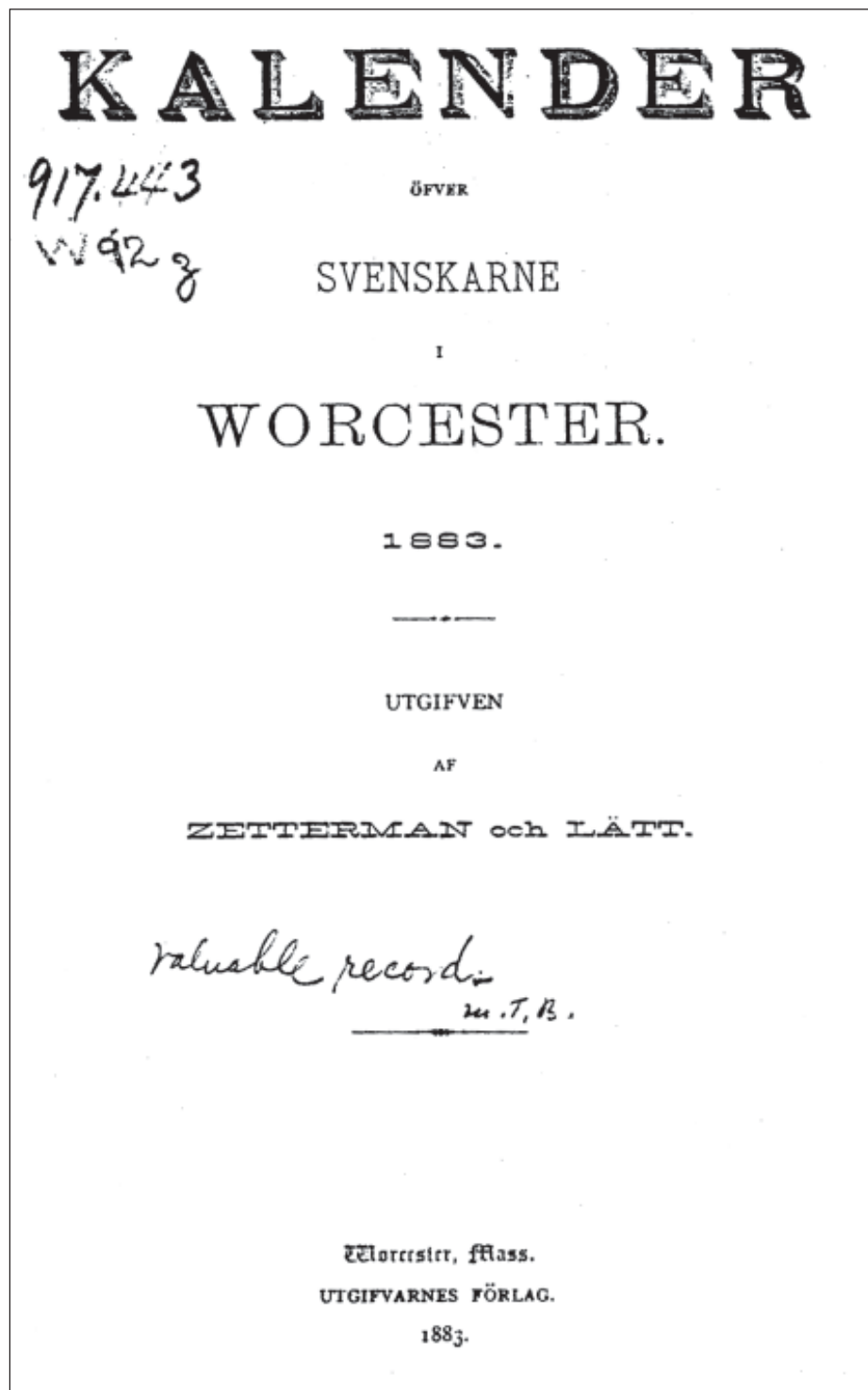
Having access to a Swedish-American newspaper, *SVEA*, published in Worcester in the early 1900's, also has the advantage that Swedish place names are usually spelled correctly. Speaking of spelling, as you all know there was a spelling change in 1906. The *Kalender* was written in 1883. So all of the places are in the old spelling! Example: 'Gefle' instead of 'Gävle', 'Vermland' not 'Värmland', and 'Nerike' not 'Närke'. Even the column headings, '*Hvarifrån i Sverige*' not '*Varifrån i Sverige*'! And of course C's and K's.

Since 2000, I have received the Swedish databases *Emigraten* and *Emibas*. I also have the Örebro emigrants database. Last year I signed up for Genline Family Finder so I have fewer trips to the Family History Center in Worcester or Salt Lake City, Utah. Not that all have been eliminated, but many fewer trips are needed.

People hide

Sometimes these people do not want to be found. I have had some who just keep themselves hidden for years and then when you least expect to find them it's "Here I am."

Most recently a family in the *Kalender*, L.A. Jansson and his wife Maria, one of thirty-one (31) Jansson families, announced themselves in an e-mail from Sweden! Not Lars of course, but someone interested in his son Oscar Edvin. Lars had brought his family back to Sweden in the late 1890's after Oscar Edvin had been born. Over twenty years later Oscar Edvin left Sweden and returned to America! The family in Sweden thought maybe he had come back to his birthplace. Sure enough, he had returned to Worcester in 1923 and then changed his family name from



Jansson to Johnson. Lars knew where his family was, but I didn't. Only an e-mail from a cousin of a cousin in 2006 allowed me to find this family who had left Worcester over 106 years ago.

Research techniques

My usual method of research is to see if an 1880 census family is in the *Kalender*. Sometimes it is necessary

to translate the "English" spelling of a spoken Swedish name such as Colson is Carlsson, Grahl is Agrell, Alstrom is Ahlström, etc. If I say the name the way I think an American heard the name, sometimes I get the correct Swedish name. Sometimes I do not.

The next step is to check the Old Swedish Cemetery records again; most of the names are closer to the

Swedish, but with no 'ä', 'å', or 'ö'. If the cemetery has a burial for the family it's off to the Worcester library to find an obituary. With some luck, the obituary will say something about the family's history in Sweden, such as where they were born and when they immigrated.

The *Kalender* usually gives a year of birth and a year of immigration, but they do not always agree with the records. I believe that some people thought the year they came to Worcester was the year that was requested, not the year they came to America.

Where they came from in Sweden can be where they emigrated from or where they were born. Sometimes it's a parish (*församling*), sometimes it's a village, sometimes it's a county (*län*), and sometimes it's a province (*landskap*). But it is a hint.

As for the year of birth, we all know it can be selective memory when we are asked for that very personal information! We have all looked at U.S. census records. For the majority of these Swedes, they were proud of their age.

The last information for each person or family group listed was their address. Most answered with the area of the city they lived in, such as Quinsigamond, Messenger Hill, or Longblock and Sunnyside, while others gave the address of where they worked, such as 94 Grove Street. Finally there is the group who gave the street name and number where they lived.

If there is a street name and number I can check the Worcester City Directory for the person. I really check each name, but if a Mr. Karl Andersson or Mr. Johan Jansson has not given his address in the *Kalender*, I may not be able to tell which Carl Anderson or Charles Anderson and which John Johnson or Janson is the one from the *Kalender*.

I will do a census search on Ancestry.com or Heritage Quest for the family. This allows me to look at the possible places of emigration for the family after 1883. All Massachusetts vital records are checked either at the Worcester Public Library or the

Namn.	Födelsår.	Ankomst till Amerika.	Hvarifrån i Sverige.	Adress.
Fager, Gustaf	1858	1882	Nerike	4 Seymore st.
" A. J.	1861	1882	"	"
" Lars (bröder)		1882	"	"
Fagerqvist, K. H.	1861	1882	Jönköping	43 Hanover st.
Fagerström, Anders	1855	1879	Högfors	11 Whitney st.
Fru " Rosa	1856	1880	Vestergötland	
Barn " Maria	1881			
" " Marta	1882			
Fagerström, Fred.	1862	1882	Hälgfors	76 Grove st.
Fagerström, Petter	1859	1880	Högfors	11 Whitney st.
Fru " Emma	1861	1881	Sälboda	
Falström, Anders	1858	1880	Vernland	88 Ward st.
Falström, A. F.	1861	1880	Gefle	Quinsigamond.
Fru " Hanna	1857	1878	Örebro	

Massachusetts Archives in Boston. Then it's time to find their birthplace in Sweden.

Finding their origins

If they have been naturalized in Worcester County, I always pray their petition for naturalization or declaration of intent was done here. Even in the 1880's, Worcester County was asking for date and place of birth, date and place of arrival in America, even the ship's name. I have found that other places are not as helpful in their papers.

Again the spelling can be interesting to say the least. A New Englander listening to a Swede, some would say, are two people, neither of whom speaks English. But it's all just a hint. Again, the Swede is saying he was born in someplace that may be the nearest city or a small village. He doesn't let you know, nor does the American know there is a difference.

The date they arrived in America is usually correct, although they have answered that they arrived in an inland city on a certain date. At least I know they lived somewhere else before coming to Worcester if they don't mention it in the petition.

Armed with all these hints, I will check *Emigranten* and *Emibas*, or the Örebro databases. *Emigranten*

will tell where they emigrated from, while *Emibas* and the Örebro Emigrants will give birthdates and date and place of emigration. Sometimes I will check all four. The last two databases give the page in the *husförhörslängd* and the village/farm they left from. Armed with this information I can now go to the church records.

If I have not found the people on any of the Swedish databases, the emigration records for the county or parish will be available at the Family History Library. One of the first families I found was by looking at the emigration records for Älvsborg for 1880 page by page. I found them and that's all that matters.

These Swedes came to Worcester by 1883. Some had been elsewhere before that, others did come directly to Worcester; some stayed, others moved on to other parts of the United States; and still others returned to Sweden. Finding out which of these options each chose is a project I enjoy and would like to share with others.

Contact information

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