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The last Swedish survivor of the Titanic has passed on

BY ELISABETH THORSELL

Lillian Gertrud Asplund passed away on Sunday 7 May 2006 in Shrewsbury, Mass. at age 99.

Her claim to fame was an involuntary one – as a child she was one of the survivors of the *Titanic* catastrophe on 15 April 1912. By 2006 she and two younger persons in Great Britain were the only living survivors, and she was the only one old enough to have memories of that fateful night.

Lillian was born 21 October 1906 in Worcester. She had a twin brother Carl Edgar, and two older brothers, Oscar Filip, born 12 December 1898, and Clarence Gustaf Hugo, born 17 September 1902, both also born in Worcester. A younger brother was Edwin Roy Felix, born 19 March 1909 in Alseda, Jönköpings län, in Sweden.

The parents of the children were the wire-worker Carl Oscar Vilhelm Gustafsson Asplund and his wife Selma Augusta Emilia Gustafsdotter Johansson, both born in Alseda.

Carl's family

Carl was born 7 May 1871 in the cottage Petersborg on the lands of Germunderyd Skattegård in Alseda, son of the smelter and sharecropper Gustaf Johansson and his wife Christina Adelina Jönsdotter. Gustaf was born 28 December 1842 in Alseda, son of the sharecropper (*torpare*) Johan Magnus Samuelsson and his wife Anna Samuelsdotter. Christina Adelina was born 13 September 1844 in nearby Skede parish.

Somewhere in the early 1870s Gustaf changed his surname to Samuelsson, the same as his father used.

On 4 August 1874 a daughter,

Hulda Christina Wilhelmina, was born, the second and last child of the family.

In 1880 Gustaf got a work permit for Stockholm, but what kind of work is not mentioned.

In 1886 the Samuelsson family moved to another cottage, now on the lands of Repperda Gustafsgård, also in Alseda.

In 1890 son Carl immigrated the first time, he left Göteborg on 18 April and had a ticket for Worcester in the name of Asplund. He stayed for a short time and then went back home again. On 18 October 1892 he immigrated again, now as the American Charles Asplund with a ticket for New York.

Next year his sister Hulda left her home on 30 May with a ticket for Worcester.

The parents, Gustaf and Christina stayed on at Repperda Gustafsgård. Gustaf died 18 July 1906 from pneumonia, and Carl decided to take his family home for a while to sort out his father's business, and they seem to have left Worcester in 1907. Son Felix was born in Alseda in 1909.

Eventually the Asplund family was on its way back to America, and had booked tickets on the very modern ship *Titanic* of the White Star Line, leaving from Southampton 10 April 1912.

Selma's family

Selma Augusta Emilia was born 10 October 1873 at Vagnhester Pilagård in Alseda, the first daughter to Gustaf Otto Johansson and his wife Johanna Larsdotter. Gustaf Otto was born 6 April 1849 in Alseda, and his wife Johanna 18 August 1850, also in Alseda.

Lillian G. Asplund, 99

SHREWSBURY — Lillian G. Asplund, 99, died at home, Saturday, May 6, 2006.

She leaves a dear friend, Philip K. Maloof, of Worcester; several cousins, including Alden Carlson and Ronald Carlson. She was predeceased by her twin brother, Felix R. Asplund.



Lillian was born in Worcester, daughter of Charles O. and Selma A. (Johnson) Asplund. She was the last survivor who witnessed the sinking of the *Titanic*. She was a clerk for the State Mutual Life Insurance Co. for many years, retiring in 1971.

Funeral services will be held Wednesday, May 10, at 2 p.m., in Nordgren Memorial Chapel, 300 Lincoln St., Worcester. Burial will be in All Faiths Cemetery (Old Swedish). For directions and on-line guestbook, please visit: NordgrenMemorialChapel.com

Telegram & Gazette (Worcester, MA) Sunday 7 May 2006.

They married 10 May 1872 and soon after their son Gustaf Adolf Rodrik was born, on 11 June 1872. Then came Selma in 1873. Elin Maria Sigrid was born 2 February 1875, Anna Serafina and Johan Vilhelm were twins, both born 18 August 1877. Next was Thekla Josefina, born 23 September 1880, followed by Karl Eugén, born 31 January 1884, and Hanna Elisabeth, born 4 November 1886.

Selma and her siblings

Most of Selma's sisters ended up in America. The oldest brother, Gustaf Adolf Rodrik Gustafsson, in 1900 is recorded as being a worker in a copper smithy in Vetlanda. He was married and had three children.

Selma herself left Göteborg on 17 April 1893, according to *Emibas*.

Sister Elin Maria Sigrig Johansson immigrated in 1898, leaving Göteborg on 29 April 1898 with a ticket for New York, but the Ellis Island records shows that her real destination is Worcester and that Ch. Asplund had paid her ticket.

Sister Anna Serafia Johansson left from Skede parish, where she had worked as a maid, and went through the port of Göteborg on 1 June 1900 with a ticket for Worcester.

Brother Johan Vilhelm moved to Vetlanda in 1896.

Sister Thekla Gustafsson left Göteborg 20 May 1904 with a ticket for Worcester.

Brother Karl Eugén and sister Hanna Elisabeth were still at home in 1900, and are not found in the emigration databases.

Catastrophe night

When the ship struck the iceberg, the two younger children and Mrs. Asplund were in one of the lifeboats that had been lowered too far down for the rest of the family to be able to get into it.

In a rare interview shortly after the accident Mrs. Asplund said "Then we went to the upper deck. I could see the icebergs for a great distance around ... It was cold and the little ones were cuddling close to one another and trying to keep from under the feet of the many excited people ... My little girl, Lillie, accompanied me, and my husband said, 'Go ahead, we will get into one of the other boats.' He smiled as he said it."

Then she recalled watching from the lifeboat as her husband waved to her with a handkerchief.

And that was the last she saw of him. Afterwards she and children Lillian and Felix lived for a while at 151 Vernon Street in Worcester, the

VÄRLDEN

Svenskättad från Titanic död

STOCKHOLM (TT)
Den troligen sista överlevande med personliga minnen från Titanics undergång 1912 har dött. Svenskättade Lillian Asplund som var fem år när ett isberg sänkte fartyget dog i lördags 99 år gammal.

Lillian Asplund, hennes mamma Selma och 2-åriga lillebror Felix räddades av en besättningsman som såg till att de kom med i en livbåt. I en intervju många år senare berättade hon att någon lyfte ut henne genom ett fönster på första klass promenaddäck och ner i båten.

När hon tittade tillbaka såg hon det sjunkande skeppet. Kvar ombord var pappa Carl, tvillingbrodern och två bröder till. Ingen av dem överlevde.

Lillian Asplund räddades från Titanic. ARKIVBILD. PRESSENS BILD

Mamman berättade i en intervju att hennes man Carl log mot henne och sa: "Fortsätt, vi går i en av de andra båtarna".

- Vi gick upp på övre däck. Jag kunde se isberg runt omkring på stort avstånd, berättade hon för Worcester Telegram & Gazette.

- Det var kallt och de små tryckte sig tätt till varandra. Lillian och hennes familj var på väg hem till USA efter att ha bott några år på pappa Carls släktgård i Småland, skriver nätsidan Encyclopedia Titanica. Hans far hade dött och de reste över till Sverige för att ta hand hans mor.

1912 skulle Carl och hans familj återvända till Worcester i Massachusetts där han arbetade på Spencer Wire Works.

I ett brev till en syster berättade han att familjen såg fram mot hemresan. I Worcester bodde fler släktingar, tre mostrar och en faster till Lillian.

Bara Lillian, Felix och mamma Selma återsåg Worcester. Och de anlande utblottade, alla deras signalar försvann i djupet med Titanic.

Invånarna i Worcester samlade in nästa 2 000 dollar, pengar som sattes i en fond och vars avkastning gick till familjen Asplunds försörjning.

Bortsett från någon enstaka intervju ville inte Lillian Asplund berätta om sitt livs stora katastrof.

Enligt nätcyklopedin Wikipedia finns två kända överlevande från Titanic kvar i livet. De är 94 och 95 år gamla och boer i England.

The news of Lillian Asplund's death made it into the Swedish newspapers too. Svenska Dagbladet 9 May 2006.

house of Selma's sister Anna and her husband Olof Ahlquist. Lillian's mother was devastated by the loss of her husband and three of her five children and reportedly wore black for the rest of her life. She refused to speak about the *Titanic* and urged her children to do the same. As a result, unlike many survivors, Mrs. Asplund turned down opportunities to become a celebrity of sorts. In 1951 she and the children, who never left their mother, moved to Shrewsbury.

Mrs. Selma Asplund died 15 April

1964, 52 years after the *Titanic* shipwreck. Felix Asplund, who was a draftsman before retiring, died 1 March 1983 in Shrewsbury. Lillian, the last survivor of the family, worked for many years as a clerk for the State Mutual Life Insurance before retiring in 1971.

Special thanks to Joan and Frank Foss of Worcester for providing newspaper clippings and a tour to the Old Swedish Cemetery.



The Asplund grave in the Old Swedish Cemetery (All Faith's) in Worcester.