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# *I Read It in the Paper!*

**The old newspapers are an untapped source of information**

BY ELISABETH THORSELL

The earliest Swedish language newspaper in the United States was *Det Gamla och det Nya Hemlandet*, founded by Tufve Nilsson Hasselquist in 1855. It was the first, but by no means the last. It was followed by more than a thousand newspapers in Swedish. Some lasted only for a few weeks and others were published for many years. *Swea* of Worcester, for instance, started publishing in 1896 and did not fold until 1966. The newspapers often started as monthlies, and if all went well, became weekly or bi-weekly.

O. Fritiof Ander in 1956 listed 833 Swedish-American newspapers, periodicals, and annuals in his *The Cultural Heritage of the Swedish Immigrants*, limiting his list to those that were preserved and possible to find. Augustana College has micro-filmed 140 of those and other institutions, including *Kungliga Biblioteket* in Stockholm, almost one hundred others. The 1,539 rolls of micro-film are mostly from the U.S., but 57 are of Canadian publications.

The Swenson Center has a huge catalog which shows what newspapers they have, either in original paper format, or on microfilm. You can search this both by the name of the newspaper or by state. It might be of interest that 11 newspapers were published in California, in-

cluding the still active *Vestkusten*. Indiana had for a brief time *Indiana Posten*, published in South Bend, of which a few issues are saved from around January 1900.

These newspapers printed news from both Sweden and America. The Swedish news was often arranged by province, so the *smälänning* could easily find his local news from the home area. The news from America varies a lot, and the smaller the place where the editor lived, the more personal the news. Still, newspapers published in a big town like New York can have little notes about individuals with an unusual fate, even if it had happened in Colorado in the Far West.

By chance, I happened some years ago to buy a copy of a Swedish American newspaper, called *Svenska Amerikanska Pressen*, published in Brooklyn, NY, from 1896 to July 1899. It was interesting reading, and I regretted that I had not bought more copies when I had the opportunity. They were priced at \$10 each, so I felt that one was enough right then. I forgot the name of the seller, but she remembered me, and mentioned this when I wrote a message on a mailing list that she read. She told me that she still had some copies left of this, to her, unreadable newspaper, and gave me a better

price now. So I bought them and had them sent to the Swenson Center to wait there for me until I came as planned last fall. By then I had also found out that Swenson did not have exactly these copies of this newspaper, so I later sold them to Swenson for the same price as I had paid, so they can be used by more researchers.

The issues I bought of *Svenska Amerikanska Pressen* were 15 consecutive issues from the spring of 1899, and following are some news clippings of general interest, translated by me, to show you what a treasure trove an old newspaper can be.

**4th volume, #8, 1899  
February 23**

## **Brooklyn**

*John Johnson* and his wife, living at 84 Warick Street, last Monday morning at four o'clock took their little baby, swaddled in old clothes, and about 3 months old, to a local police station in the city. Mrs. Johnson explained that the baby was very ill and had been so ever since birth. The sergeant looked at the little creature, who was fighting for its breath, and called an ambulance, but before it arrived the child had died.

SVENSKA  AMERIKANSKA PRESSEN.

## Chicago

*Charles Lundin*, a Swedish machinist, who was badly burnt at the explosion in the Chicago Tribune Building on January 29th, passed away the other day. Lundin had his home at 866 N. California Avenue.

*Charles Jacobsson*, 1106 Florence Ave, Evanston, Ill., died in the middle of February, at age 59. He and his wife had been robbed last year and they had since lived under poor conditions. The wife was now ill with pneumonia.

*Alfred Jackson*, living at 274 Division Street, Chicago, was declared mentally ill last week and committed to the asylum in Elgin. He had been an expert on locks, and while he was repairing the lock on a safe he had taken a bundle of \$1,500, in spite of being watched by three detectives. He had later returned the money, but became remorseful and brooding, and finally insane.

The artist *August Swenson*, 1504 Aldine Avenue, Lake View, Chicago, shot himself the other day. The cause was believed to be that he had been diagnosed with tuberculosis. He was born in Röke parish in 1874 Jan. 5 and came to the U.S. in 1891, and first worked in a grocery store, and then got work as a draftsman by Chicago Photo Engraving, at the same time being a student at the Art Institute, where he showed good progress.

## Brooklyn

*Carl Gyllenflycht*, a Swede from 80 Grove Street, Flushing, was building a model of the warship *Maine*, when he filed on a cartridge, which held some traces of gunpowder. The cartridge exploded and wounded his thumb and index finger on his left hand, which later had to be amputated.

The Swede *John Vagner*, age 52, who for a long time had been without work and shelter, froze his legs during the latest snowstorm. His legs had to be amputated later.



## New York

*Thomas Person*, age 23, living at 67 East 122 St., was last Saturday committed to an asylum at his mother's request. The doctor explained that his crazy conduct derived from excessive use of cigarettes.

From the house at 327 East 75<sup>th</sup> Street, people last Monday heard screams for help. Shortly afterwards, Mrs. *Katarina Björk* left the house running, immediately followed by her husband, armed with a huge truncheon. He was soon taken care of by the hands of Justice and put in jail.

The laundress *Emma Jansen*, formerly employed by the ex-governor of New Jersey, John W. Griggs, had sued him for the remainder of her salary, \$8. In his kitchen, she had endured a young man, who delivered beer, and who had first kissed the colored cook and then tried to kiss Emma. "Just think - after he had kissed the colored girl!" The righteous Emma had then left her place but only received wages for 17 days and now wanted the remaining \$8 of a monthly salary of \$25.

## 4th volume, # 9, 1899 March 2

### U.S. News

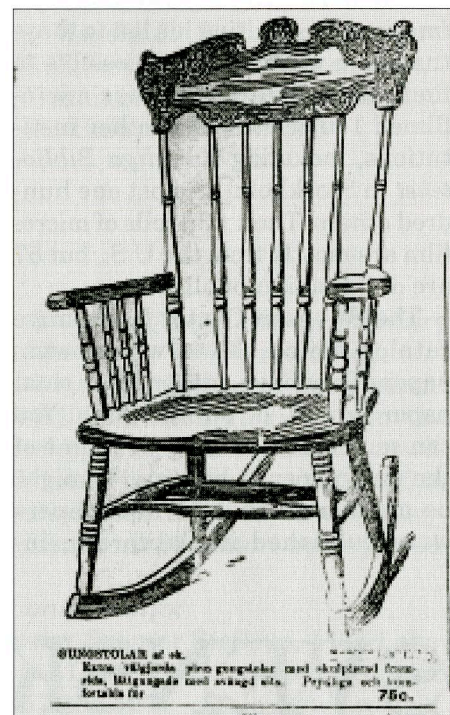
The shoemaker *John Sundström* of Chicago was shot and killed the other night by his wife's cousin *Andrew*

*Nelson. Sundström*, his wife, and the cousin are all from Rogsta in Hälsingland. Sundström was age 34, the cousin age 22. There were no disputes between the victim and the killer. Nelson had voluntarily served in the army and recently returned from Florida, where he had been in garrison, and had since lived with the Sundströms. A sister of Mrs. Sundström died last year from asphyxiation by gas.

[Ed.'s note: John Sundström is probably identical with Johan Sundström, born 1864 March 10 in Rogsta, who emigrated from there in 1892 Nov. 19. according to the database *Emibas*.]

On the 18th of February *Charles Johnson*, who inspected railroad cars, had his left leg run over by the same, and died shortly afterwards at St. Luke's Hospital in Denver, Colorado, where he had been taken.

*Gustaf Gabriel* of Winslow, Arizona, was run over by a train 21 miles east of Winslow. He had earlier been weight master at Sheridan Junction, Colorado. He was born in Småland, where he leaves his mother and sister. His closest relatives in the U.S. are his brothers, *Charles Gabriel*, former roadmaster, Colorado



Springs, and *Oscar Gabriel*, section foreman, Gallup, New Mexico.

### Brooklyn

During a raid at the billiard saloon at 1010 Flushing Avenue, the owner *Wilhelm Norling*, age 26, was arrested, as well as his helper *Josef Wessler*, age 30, living at 602 Johnson Avenue, and 8 players.

*Thomas Simonsson*, age 45, was found dead last Monday morning in a room at 1026 Westchester Avenue. He lodged with the *Anders Medén* family there. The cause of death was poisoning by lamp gas, and probably *S.*, who had come home drunk, had forgotten to light the gas lamp.

A wedding was celebrated the other day between *N. P. Johnson* and *Miss Emma Euphrosyne Nelson*. The festivities took place at the home of the bride's brother, Master Builder *Aug. Nelson* of 376 Dean Street. Congratulations came from the bride's parents and brothers in Sweden.

*Harry Carlson*, son of *Charles* and *Mathilda Carlson*, died 5 February at home on Owington Avenue, aged 13 years. His father is a foreman at *Loomi's Carpentry Works*.

### New York

*Anna Lundin*, age 24, employed by a family on 13th St., committed suicide by inhaling lamp gas. She visited her mother at 201 East 31 St., and told her that she wanted to lie down and rest. Shortly afterwards she was found with a tube in her mouth. Besides her was found a piece of paper, on which she had pencilled "Live well, all of you!"

With a terrible bang a factory building at Nordlinger of Cherry Lane, Staten Island, exploded. The factory manufactured fireworks. Two young workers, of which one was a Swede, *Carl Fröhlén*, were torn to pieces.

*Charles Nordling* (age 50) died last Monday night; he was a girdler

and lived at Atlantic Avenue.

## 4th volume, # 10, 1899 March 9

### Chicago

The waiter *Charles Johnson* had fallen out with his wife, who had moved back to her mother at 1185 Western Ave (Chicago?). He came there and tried to persuade her to move back to him again. When she refused to do this he shot himself in the chest with a revolver. The doctors says that the wound is not fatal.

*Albert Larsson*, age 30, and employed at the sheriff's office, lived alone at 386 Palmer Street, since his wife several years ago had moved back to her parents at 1005 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago. The other day he came drunk to his wife and mother-in-law, and the latter walked towards him, when he, without a word, took up a little bottle of carbolic acid and drank it. He fell unconscious at the feet of his mother-in-law and died within a few minutes.

*Jonas Öberg*, who six years ago had a bar in Marinette, and last was heard of from Exterior, Michigan, is requested to contact his brother *Charles Öberg*, 1102 Pierce Ave. Marinette, Wisc.

### Brooklyn

*Daniel Williamson*, (age 36) of 173 Prospect Str., who had been in ill health for a long time, took a walk last Monday, but fell down dead on his threshold on returning home.

*Carl Bernhard Fransen* (age 43) of 253 Prospect St. committed suicide last Thursday by hanging himself. The cause is said to be adversities and being out of work. Three years ago his father took his life in the same way.

*Ludvig Lomberg*, who is sick with TB at City Hospital, Blackwells Island, wishes to see his brother *Ernst Lomberg*, last living at 236 or 276 Franklin Ave., Brooklyn. *Ludvig*

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*Lomberg* is very ill.

This was some examples of the personal news items to be found in the old newspapers.