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The Emigrant's Departure

Stieg-Erland Dagman*

(Editor's note: The following article is a reconstructed diary of Gustaf Mellberg, who departed from Sweden for America in 1843. It is based upon manuscript sources, such as census lists, etc., in the Stockholm City Archives; The University of Uppsala Library; the records of Göta Canal and Trollhätte Canal, the Stockholm newspaper *Aftonbladet* and the Göteborg newspaper *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* and an article by Sten Almqvist, "Guldgrävaren Johan Olof Liedberg" in *Småländska kulturbilder* 1972, pp. 48-117. An earlier article, entitled "Gustaf Mellberg—From Swedish Academician to American Farmer," also written by Mr. Dagman, appeared in *Swedish American Genealogist*, Vol. III, No. 4, 1983, pp. 161-169. Mr. Dagman's reconstruction is printed here since he has created for us the atmosphere of the early emigration period in Sweden, before the advent of the railroads, when emigrants bound for Göteborg had to travel either by horse and cart, or as the Mellberg party, via the Göta Canal.)

This is the story of the journey from Stockholm to Göteborg, the first segment of the emigration trek to America by Gustaf Mellberg¹, a Swedish schoolteacher, in 1843. He originally came from Bränninge in Habo Parish (Skar.) and was accompanied by his good friend Thure Kumlien², the latter's fiancée, Christina Wallberg³, and her older sister Sophia⁴. This is the way Gustaf would have written his diary:

30 May. Tuesday. Today Thure, Christina and Sophia arrived in Stockholm from Uppsala. Tomorrow they will go to the civil authorities to procure their passports. I received mine yesterday. They have gotten lodgings at an inn called Riga, which also maintains a few rooms for travelers. Riga is located on Österlånggatan, just a stone's throw from my quarters in Bollhusgränd. The canal boat *Daniel Thunberg* will depart at 5 o'clock a.m. on Thursday morning, so we must have our baggage ready and on the Riddarhus quay already tomorrow night.

31 May. Wednesday. The day was spent in the aura of farewells. Went through

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the house and said goodbye to all of those who were at home. Received some good advice from Mr. Feit⁵, the merchant, and Mr. Mosell⁶, the inkeeper, as well as from Miss af Wasell and Charlotta Boström⁷.

Many persons cannot understand why we are embarking on this type of adventure, others, among them Miss Lundquist and Mr. Lindqvist, the waiter, acted as if they could have done the same thing.

In the evening the four of us travellers met at Riga for a little farewell dinner. My colleague, Mr. Sandberg⁸, the schoolteacher, came around, as well as several of my acquaintances here in the city.

1 June. Thursday. We had to arise early in order to be at the quay on time. Said a final farewell to my host, the Rev. Pehr Isacus⁹. Sandberg appeared at dockside. Walked the familiar route for the last time—Köpmanngatan, across the Grand Square (*Stortorget*), through Trångsund and then the hill next to the St. Nikolai Church, down to Riddarholmen. Thure, Christina and Sophia were already at the boat when I arrived.

Precisely at 5 o'clock a.m. *Daniel Thunberg* departed with its master, Capt. Ameen.¹⁰ We steamed out on Mälaren, passed Karl's Hat (*Karls Hatt*) and then down toward Södertälje. Ate breakfast, which consisted of bread, butter, salt meat and acquavit. We continued down the coast through the beautiful Södermanland archipelago, passed Trosa and Nyköping, which we viewed in the distance.

We met the canal boat *Eric Nordevall* on its way to the nation's capital. We ate a two-course dinner, washed down with several glasses of weak beer. During the continuing journey through the archipelago, down toward Slätbaken, I had the opportunity of conversing with the captain. I told him that we had embarked on our life's adventure and we were ready to continue from Göteborg with Capt. Nissen¹¹ and the brig *Svea*. Capt. Ameen then related that Capt. Nissen was known as a resolute man of sound judgment, so that we could count on a pleasant continuation of our journey. He also told me some facts concerning *Daniel Thunberg*. She had a length of some 90 feet and a beam of 22 feet. She had an engine which developed 38 horsepower which drove the two paddle wheels and that she was built in 1835.

Toward the evening, when we arrived in the interior of the bay known as Slätbaken, we ate our evening meal, which consisted of tea, milk, beer and some cold cuts as well as the obligatory acquavit.

We arrived at Mem and the first lock of Göta Canal at 9 o'clock in the evening. In Söderköping, where we arrived an hour later, we tied up for a few hours. We then retired to our cabins for the night.

2 June. Friday. Was awake at 7 o'clock in the morning. We were already at Norsholm. I had slept like a log the entire night. The sea air and the excitement in anticipation of the journey had acted like a sleeping potion. I had not noticed our departure from Söderköping, nor our going through the locks at Carlsborg.

After breakfast our travel quartet met at the railing to enjoy the peaceful and beautiful trip across Lake Roxen. We passed through the seven Carl Johan locks at Berg during the forenoon. We ate our mid-day meal at Husbyfjöl and

arrived in Motala at 7 o'clock in the evening. We remained in Motala for about an hour, before proceeding across the waters of Lake Vättern, which at times can produce some angry waves. This time, however, the water was calm, so calm in fact that we could eat our evening meal without difficulty. After several hours' travel across the lake, we reached the western shores of the Vättern, where the silhouette of the construction work at Ft. Carlsborg was outlined against the light summer sky. In Rödésund, where we are to remain for a few hours, we went to our cabins to sleep.

3 June. Saturday. We were awakened as we were passing through the locks at Forsvik, steaming into Lake Viken, where we met the canal boat *Amiral von Platen*. I lay in my bunk thinking of the fact that I was passing through my native province of Västergötland and that I was about 65 miles as the crow flies from my beloved Bränninge. Oh, so near, and yet so far. Will I ever again see my mother or my dear brothers? The future and He who gives us all good things is He who will provide the answer to this question.

Thure and I as well as the sisters Wallberg stood on deck the entire forenoon enjoying the marvelously beautiful province. Thure is also from Västergötland, coming from a place called Härlunda. We arrived at Sjötorp around noon. After having passed through the locks, we came into Lake Vänern, which happened to be in a good mood, so that we could eat our dinner without any problems. The evening and the night were spent on the calm waters of Vänern.

4 June. Sunday. We arrived in Vänersborg during the afternoon, after a rather comfortable crossing of the vast body of water, Lake Vänern. Arrived at the first lock at Brinkebergskulle in the evening and we came to Åkersberg and the many locks there at about nine p.m. A new channel and locks are being constructed here and it is estimated that these will be ready for use next year. At Oliden we met our third canal boat, *Thomas Telford*. We tied up for a few hours this evening also.

5 June. Monday. At 6 o'clock in the morning we passed through the locks at Ström and continued down Göta River. We ate our breakfast near Old Lödöse. We were also able to eat our dinner before our journey ended and we arrived in Göteborg.

We gathered our baggage and received help from some of the porters to take it over to Hotel Blom on Södra Hamngatan, where we checked in.

We walked about the city for a while during the early evening, before returning to the hotel to eat our evening meal.

6 June. Tuesday. We received information that the *Svea* had been sighted and later she arrived at the quay. We spent the day sightseeing.

7 June. Wednesday. We have just been informed that gentlemen named Wessberg,¹² who are agents for Capt. Nissen here in Göteborg, have said that it would take about a week to get our *Svea* ready for departure to New York.

8-13 June. Thursday to Tuesday. Waiting, waiting and more waiting. We are still at the hotel. Have met several persons, who like we, are waiting to go on board the *Svea*. Among these is a large family from Hössna in Västergötland named Reuterskiöld.¹³ A couple of brothers named Wählin¹⁴ are from the region

around Mariestad and a person by the name of Johan Olof Liedberg¹⁵ from Jönköping, where I spent many years going to school.

14 June. Wednesday. Today we were finally able to go on board with all our belongings. We will be about 60 passengers on board, most of them Swedes. We also have on board a consignment of bar iron as well as a thousand leeches. The latter are supposed to be a good export article. We now await favorable winds in order to depart.

15 June. Thursday. We are still tied up to the Masthugg quay, waiting for a favorable wind.

16 June. Friday. Finally! This morning Capt. Nissen felt that the wind was favorable and at 9 o'clock a.m. the sails were unfurled and the *Svea* left the quay. We sailed toward Vinga in a soft summer breeze, and on westward toward unknown fates, which the future harbors in its bosom. Farewell my Homeland, Hail to the Future!

¹For Gustaf Mellberg's genealogy see my article cited above in the editor's introduction.

²Thure Ludvig Theodor Kumlien was b. in Bjärklunda, Härlunda Parish (Skar.) 9 Nov. 1819, s. Ludvig Kumlien, a regimental enrollment clerk, and Johanna Petronella Rhodin. He m. 5 Sept. 1843 Margareta Christina Wallberg and d. in Milwaukee, WI 5 Aug. 1888. —Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820-1850* (Stockholm and Chicago 1967) (*SPANY*), p. 50; Wendell Clarke Kumlien, *The Kumlien Family Directory 1983* (Huntington, WV 1983), p. 5.

³Margareta Christina Wallberg was b. in Håbo-Tibble Parish (Upps.) 20 April 1820, the dau. of Johan Wallberg, dragoon, and Brita Catharina Andersdotter. She d. in Busseyville, WI 23 Sept. 1874. —*SPANY*, p. 50; *Kumlien Family Directory*, p. 5.

⁴Sophia Wallberg, older sister of Margareta Christina, was b. in Håbo-Tibble 9 Oct. 1809. She d. in Koshkonong, WI 25 Sept. 1899. —*SPANY*, p. 50.

⁵Probably E. Feit, merchant, who had his shop at Stora Skomakaregatan 28 in Stockholm. —P.A. Huldberg, *Ny adress-kalender och vägvisare inom hufvudstaden Stockholm för år 1859* (Stockholm 1859), p. 67.

⁶Probably C. J. Mosell, an innkeeper, whose tavern was located at Lilla Grev Magnigatan 5 in Stockholm. —*Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁷Possibly C. M. Boström, a midwife superintendent, whose residence was located at Stora Bollhusgränd 1, the same street on which Mellberg had resided in Stockholm. —*Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸Possibly J. A. Sandberg, who had the degree of *fil. mag.* (Master of Arts) and who resided at Västra Kyrkogränd 2 in Stockholm. —*Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁹There was no clergyman with the name of Isacus in Sweden at this time. This must be Per Ulrik Isaeus (1809-1879), who in 1843 was just finishing a term as schoolmaster in Veckholm Parish (Upps.) and was in the process of transferring to Husby-Sjutolft Parish (Upps.) as assistant pastor (*komminister*). —Ludvig Nyström, *Uppsala ärkestifts herdaminne*. Ny följd. Vol. IV (Uppsala 1893), p. 42.

¹⁰This could be any of three brothers Ameen, all lieutenants in the Royal Swedish Navy. These were the twins—Per Gustaf Ameen (1804-1849) and Paul Wilhelm Ameen (1804-1857). The third brother was Victor Ameen (1808-1863). —Lars Magnus Victor Örnberg, *Svensk slägtkalender & Svenska ättartal*, I-XIV (Stockholm 1884-1908), II, p. 69; Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Svenska släktkalendern*, I-XIV (Stockholm 1911-1949), I, p. 36.

¹¹Probably Johan Eric Nissen, later port captain in Göteborg.—Örnberg, *Svenska ättartal*, VIII, p. 241.

¹²One of these Wessbergs must have been Fredrik Wessberg (1789-1851), for many years merchant and ship's agent in Göteborg. —Carl Sjöström, *Göteborgs nation i Lund 1669-1906* (Lund 1907), p. 288.

¹³Carl Edvard Abraham Reuterskiöld, was b. in Västra Skedvi Parish (Väst.) 18 Dec. 1796, the s. of Axel Fredrik Reuterskiöld, a plant manager, and Anna Dorothea, b. Baroness Cedercreutz. He d. in Busseyville, WI 15 Feb. 1847. He was m. to Maria Elisabeth Landström. He emigr. to Wisconsin with seven children. —*SPANY*, pp. 42-49.

¹⁴The Wählen brothers were b. in Våle, Grava Parish (Värm.). Lars was b. 26 July 1807 and Anders 14 Dec. 1816, the sons of Lars Börjesson, a plant manager, and Anna Olofsdotter. They were emigrating from Leksberg Parish (Skar.), where both had been employed as blacksmiths. —*SPANY*, p. 51.

¹⁵Johan Olof Liedberg was b. in Kristina Parish in Jönköping 12 Jan. 1822, the s. of Anders Magnus Liedberg, a merchant, and Magdalena Jurnebeck. He emigr. to Wisconsin but soon left for the gold fields of California, where he was the first Swede to begin prospecting for gold. He d. in Chicago, IL 7 July 1886. — *SPANY*, pp. 52, 269.