Swedish American Genealogist

A journal devoted to Swedish American biography, genealogy and personal history

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Adam, an Estonian immigrant, made the island of Gotland, Sweden, his home early in the nineteenth century and, for a number of years, moved freely from parish to parish. He finally settled down in Gammelgarn Parish (Gotl.), married and fathered a child—Olof Henrik Johansson, alias Charles Harris. The story of our search for him was published in a recent issue of SAG.1

According to family oral tradition, Charles Harris was the illegitimate son of a French count named D'Arryant, who had fled France to the island of Gotland. When we learned of the existence of a French fort on the north side of the island, the legend did not seem as farfetched as it first appeared. Our family searched endlessly for D'Arryants in books of French nobility but this name, which is so familiar to us, was nowhere to be found. My grandfather apparently so believed this story that he not only reported to the U.S. census in 19002 and 19203 that his father was French but also named his son Charles Arryant Harris.4

As described in the December 1999 issue of SAG, we ultimately found the birthplace of Olof Henrik Johansson, alias Charles Harris, by retracing his sister Mary’s footsteps as she emigrated from Sweden to America. We anxiously turned to the birth record (födelselängd) of Gammelgarn Parish to find that Olof Henrik, son of arbetskarlen (the work[ing]man) Adam Johansson and his wife, Anna Margretha Henricsdotter, was born in 1847.5 What happened to our count? Could Olof Henrik have been fathered by someone other than Adam Johansson? Not likely, since drängen (the farm hand) Adam Johansson and piga (maid) Anna Margretha Henricsdotter were married in Gammelgarn on 13 November 1845, two years before Olof Henrik’s birth.6

Ironically, Olof Henrik’s sister, Anna Maria Olivia, was born on 21 June 1842 to piga Anna Greta Henricsdotter.7 Could she be the child of the count? And would his name have been spelled D’Arryant? How mangled might the original name have become as it went from French to Swedish to English?

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2 1900 U.S. Census, California, Oakland, ED 324, line 89.
3 1920 U.S. Census, California, Oakland, ED 47, line 72.
4 Charles Arryant Harris is Lila’s father and Wendy’s grandfather.
5 Birth Record (Födelselängd), Gammelgarn (Gotl.), 1847, No. 5, 15 July.
6 Marriage Record (Vigellängd), Gammelgarn (Gotl.), 13 November 1845.
7 Birth Record (Födelselängd), Gammelgarn (Gotl.), 1842, No. 5, 21 June.
We may never know, for on 13 July 1848, just one year after Olof Henrik's birth, the body of his father, Adam Johansson, was recovered in the water near Herrvik. He was the victim of an accidental drowning on 22 June (see figure 1).\(^8\)

We believe that this is when the legend may have begun, as Olof Henrik's uncles filled his young mind with stories of French nobility. So, we must set aside our D'Arryant and get back to the task of researching the ancestry of the newly discovered Adam Johansson.

Fig. 1. Death record for Adam Johansson. Transliteration and translation (L-R): Juni 22 (death date); "egen funnen död vid Herrwik d 13 Juli (Found/recovered dead by Herrvik 13 July) / Juli 14de (funeral date) / Arbetskarlen à Fride (The working man from Fride) Adam Johansson.— / [Age] 32 / Wadeligen drunknad, då han i Enmans båt skulle begifva sig från Östergarns Holme till Herrwik.— (Accidentally drowned as he, in a one-man boat, was going from Östergarn's Holme [islet/very small island] to Herrvik.—)

We started with the residence at the time of his death and worked backwards through those unique Swedish records known as husförhörslängder (household examination rolls). In the 1845-1852 roll for Gammelgarn, Adam Johansson is living at Fride Grund with his wife, Anna Gretha Henricsdotter, her daughter, Anna Maria Olivia, and their son, Olof Henrik. Sadly, by 1848 he is listed as dead by drowning and his wife as a widow (enka). Additional information included in this particular husförhörslängd was his date of arrival in Fride Grund (1845), his previous place of residence (Klints, also a village in Gammelgarn), his birthplace (Dagö), and his birth date (March 1816).\(^9\)

Dagö? We searched Sweden far and wide for a town with this name. As a last resort, we used the LDS Family History Center's computerized library catalog to try to find a four-letter place-name anywhere in the world beginning

\(^8\) Death Record (Dödslängd), Gammelgarn (Gotl.), 22 June 1848.
\(^9\) Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Gammelgarn (Gotl.), Fride Grund, 1845-52, n.p.
with the letters “Da.” It was not long before we scrolled to Dagö, Estonia—an island in the Baltic Sea directly east of Gotland! Not being familiar with Estonian genealogy, the easier approach was to continue tracing Adam’s footsteps to find his first recorded entry in Sweden, with the hope of locating other family members who may have come with him.

In the husförhörslängd for Klints, Gammelgarn Parish, in 1844-1845, Adam Johansson is listed as a farm hand (dräng) born in Dagö on March 1816. The record further indicates that he came to Klints from Gothem Parish (Gotl.) in 1844. After a vain search in the Gothem records, we eventually were led to Norrlanda Parish (Gotl.), which was formerly part of Gothem. Here, Adam had lived in two villages—Butreps Edmark (from 1843 to 1844) and Munkebos (from 1841 to 1843). Once again his birthplace and birth date are listed as Dagö and March 1816, respectively. Furthermore, he had arrived at Norrlanda Parish from Anga Parish (Gotl.) in 1841.

While in Anga Parish, drängen Adam Johansson had also lived on two farms. While his birth information is consistent with previous records, he is listed as having arrived from Dalhem in 1839. After a futile search in Dalhem Parish, we were led to an annex parish called Ganthem. Here we once again picked up the trail. The Ganthem Parish husförhörslängd notes that Adam lived at a village called Hartviks and had arrived from Kräklingbo in 1838.

In the Kräklingbo roll, we found the entry—“Adam, [born] 1816 [in] Dagö.” He had moved to Kräklingbo in 1836 from O—?—. After this long journey, we found ourselves stymied by a microfilm flaw or mildew blotch. The place name appeared to begin with the letter O, but the rest was indecipherable.

What could the name be? We considered several possibilities: Österby, a village in Kräklingbo; Östergarn Parish, very familiar to us as the birthplace of Anna Margaretha; and Othem, now known as Slite, a parish on the east coast of Gotland. We first eliminated Österby, since Adam was simply nowhere to be found in the Kräklingbo records. We then searched and re-searched the familiar Östergarn records, with no success. Twice we ordered and scanned the records of Othem, again with no success. It had seemed a likely possibility, since it was the arrival point of many immigrants from the east. We even thought that perhaps Adam had known Anna Margaretha in those earlier years.

Finally, we decided to investigate the original source material at the regional archive in Visby, Gotland, which had been so helpful in our earlier trip to Gotland. We searched the Internet for “Landsarkiv” and “Visby” and found their Web site (http://www.ra.se/vila), which gave us the e-mail addresses of each of their staff. We e-mailed the individual who had helped us as we searched the Henrickson connection and asked if the original record held in the

10 Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Gammelgarn (Gotl.), Klints, 1845-52, n.p.
11 Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Norrlanda (Gotl.), 1838-46, p. 99.
12 Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Anga (Gotl.), 1839-41, p. 120.
13 Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Ganthem (Gotl.), Hartviks, 1839, p. 61.
14 Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Kräklingbo (Gotl.), 1836-38, p. 97.
archive was clearer than the microfilmed version. Could she read it? Yes! She reported back to us that the place name in question was indeed Östergarn.

But Adam is simply not in the Östergarn records. Had Adam moved in and out so rapidly that he wasn’t recorded? In each record we have examined, we have discovered neither parents nor siblings. What do we do now? There appeared to be a significant number of people in the parish from Osel, another of the Estonian islands. It is very possible that Adam’s first landing in Sweden was in Östergarn. If it wasn’t, in which of the many villages in the area should we be searching? Would we find him and his family? Or just a young drifter?

We believe there may be some significance to Adam reporting his birth date consistently through the years as “March 1816.” Did Adam not know the day of his birth? Did he have so strong an accent that he could not communicate effectively? The earliest Swedish record that we can find doesn’t even include his last name! Interestingly, his reading ability was described as follows: “Cannot read anything in our catechism, but can read Swedish from a Lutheran religious book in his [own] language.” Evidently he could translate from Estonian to spoken Swedish.

Obviously, we should also be researching the Estonian records, and we are. Dagö (now Hiiumaa) is a fairly large island off the coast of Estonia that has three churches—Puhleppa, Keinis and Reigi—whose records do exist.

In the final analysis, Adam and his son are more than individuals to us. They represent two flows of Swedish migration: the still-mysterious Adam coming from the East in the first half of the nineteenth century and the recently-documented Olof Henrik Johansson, “known in America as Charles Harris,” going to the West in the latter half of that century. The migration west from Sweden is well documented, but the Swedish-Estonian connection will be a challenging genealogical journey.

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15 - Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Ganthem (Gotl.), Hartviks, 1839, p. 61.


“What Did You Go Out to See?”

Anna Söderblom
Translated by John E. Norton*

Editor’s note: The following article provides a glimpse of the unique perspective on Swedish-America held by Anna Söderblom, wife of Sweden’s Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, and detailed in En Amerikabok (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonstyrelsens Bokforlag, 1925). Writing for a Swedish audience, Anna’s self-proclaimed goal was “to show Swedish-America to Sweden...through the eyes of a woman.” John E. Norton has translated selected Midwestern segments from her book. Editorial interpolations, corrections, additions and/or comments have either been placed in brackets or footnotes.

Many “go out to see.” They come back having seen many different things, depending on their disposition and interests. If two people together go into the same room, and afterwards compare what they’ve seen, they’ve perhaps seen quite different things. One has gained a strongly unified impression of the whole; the other preserves a sure memory of certain details. One has seen people; the other perhaps their dress, etc.

Many travel to America to see, and see quite different things. They return and write about it. They generalize their limited surface impressions. They even write books about them. In this way, many contradictory, mixed descriptions have arisen, just as motley and contradictory as that mighty continent itself.

When my husband [Archbishop Nathan Söderblom], after repeated invitations and long preparation, went to America in September of 1923, he had at least three different tasks. He was to consult with those working for Christian unity in life and work, participate in a conference to that purpose, and speak of ecumenism in meetings and parish visits. He was also invited to hold talks on religious history at about ten American universities. And, finally, he was to visit the Church of Sweden’s daughter organization, the Augustana Synod. If one asks him what he really went out to America to see, he’d probably answer: “Where the Swedes went.”

The Swedes in the United States of America, and their descendants, today number more than two million, fully as many as a third of those in Sweden. Those of us here at home who have had our eyes opened to that great “Swedish-America” have gained some perspective, and see it next to Sweden, as well as

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alongside the “melting pot” population in the New World. In “Swedish America” we find a manifestation, a revealing, of the soul of the Swedish people, which distance and proximity make it possible to study and consider.

Both of us saw that great America, but above all, the Swedes. It happens to one who has seen a sight, that their thoughts return to those sights, and they finally talk about them. Sometimes it has seemed to me that I’d been given a task, when I was offered the opportunity to see something of the New World in such a wonderfully well-prepared way. That task was to show “Swedish America” to Sweden. When I began to view the beginnings of Swedish-America, its early history and development, I felt a tug at my heart, and a sense of indebtedness. How could we have contented ourselves so long with our faulty knowledge? Most of us have simply smiled or shrugged our shoulders at that one-third of our people who left their homeland and, after trials and tribulations, built themselves a new life. Much has hidden those countrymen from us. First, the distance, which seventy-five years ago, when the Swedish emigration began, seemed endless and insurmountable. Across that distance came only a few, limited stories. They further hid us from each other. Those who came back, ostentatious and bragging, with their watch chains and gewgaws, hid from us what is important in ourselves.

A word about watch chains. One reads in letters, writings, and minutes from the 1850s and 1860s about the dangerous vanity that had begun to seize people of “lower estates.” The impossible sometimes happened, that hired men carried watches on watch chains. The watch chain became something of a symbol for a “law-abiding gentleman.” One may grant the returning Swedish-American, if he thought it fun, to show off his fine watch chain at home in Falköping or Kronoberg County. It had, after all, been honorably earned by hard work.

Those of us who have been comfortable and stayed at home in Sweden, have hidden Swedish-Americans from ourselves. We have been too complacent about ourselves in our quiet, dull comfort, or in our slightly somnolent “Swedishness.” We have disclaimed a little too much. Whatever our shortcomings, or more correctly, how large the shortcomings of others than ourselves, we were “naturally in any case much better than those who left their homeland and failed the call of Sweden. Especially, we were finer and more educated.”

Those who begin studying the migration from Sweden to North America, the history of the pioneers and their conditions today, will soon, after having been tempted to smile at their mixed language, their naive and boastful style, and their sometimes too stylish clothing, find enduring, hopeful, patient Swedes and be amazed at what they’ve accomplished. One discovers more, the fine and deeply cultivated soul, the soul of Sweden. That’s the task to which I felt called as I received all the greetings in words, looks, and handshakes; to show others what I saw—Sweden’s soul in the Swedes who live their lives and do their deeds within the huge population of the mighty North American continent.
That task is, however, too large and difficult. The following is only a simple description of what I, who got to follow along, saw. Much must thus remind you of what was written [by Nathan Söderblom] in Från Uppsala till Rock Island, seen through the eyes of a woman.

Rock Island and Augustana

Again, one of the usual night trips after a difficult day and yet another difficult day. As All Saints’ Sunday dawned on 5 November 1923, our train was traveling along the Mississippi River approaching Rock Island, in one way the goal of our trip. It was with especially solemn feelings that we stepped off the train. We were received by the faculty of Augustana College and Theological Seminary, with their president at their head, by the president of the Augustana Synod, and others. The students sang! They were assembled with their chairman, and greeted the Archbishop as he took his first step onto the soil of Rock Island. This might be called “holy ground,” for it is the center of the largest Swedish spiritual creation outside Sweden’s borders. It was not only the largest ceremony of our trip, but Rock Island was also the real answer to the question to which our trip sought an answer: Where did the Swedish immigrants go, what became of their ancient culture and Christian heritage they took with them?1

Rock Island on the Mississippi, which gave the city its name and character, is a beautiful place. We were impressed upon our first look at the monumental buildings on the heights, where the school is located. It is a “city on the hill.” On the slopes around it are large, attractive homes, where professors and others live. In many such we were received with great warmth. While in Rock Island, we stayed with our travel planner and guide Dr. Abrahamson. After his long trip with us, he was now really home.

The All Saints’ Sunday service was held in the church in Moline [First Lutheran]. Three cities have grown together around Rock Island, including Moline and Davenport. The transition from Moline to Rock Island is not noticeable. If you look closely, you see, right in the middle of a wide street, a hanging sign, saying “Welcome to Moline.” Coming from the other way, you see “Welcome to Rock Island....”

But, when lack of courage and fatigue surprise us, and we find our battle meaningless, bitterly turned and faithlessly complicated, then we lift our eyes up to “the great multitude, without number, of all peoples, tribes and languages, who stand before the throne....”

In Rock Island, much took place. That same Sunday they held a gathering in Augustana College’s large gymnasium. A few days before they’d celebrated “Homecoming,” a beautiful tradition of the Americans, celebrating a return to

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1 For a more recent look at Augustana’s role in education and religion in the Swedish immigrant community see “Aspects of Augustana and Swedish America: Essays in Honor of Dr. Conrad Bergendoff’s 100th Year,” a special issue of The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly (formerly The Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly) XLVI (July 1995).
their school. It also marked the return of the students to a new term. And more. A victorious football team had won an important game against another university, bringing the victory home to Augustana. One needs to have been at an American college to appreciate what such a victory means. The gymnasium had been colorfully decorated with flags and garlands. Those decorations remained during our mass meeting, program, and banquet.

During that Sunday gathering, there was beautiful music, performed by both a cappella choirs and instrumentalists. Much effort and interest is devoted to music at this school.

Monday was set aside for trips to see the memorials over the oldest Swedish settlements in the area, Andover and Bishop Hill. Unfortunately, the trips were canceled because of poor roads and our fatigue. Instead, we had opportunity to see the magnificent new library, a gift of the Denkmann and Davis families, in memory of their parents, the Denkmanns.

At several meals in the homes of leading men, we became acquainted in some small way with those who lead both church and school. The new president of the Augustana Synod, to be installed for four years, Dr. G. Brandelle, had recently visited Sweden. We knew him already as the wise and thoughtful man he was. A couple of times he showed clearly that he did not suffer from Swedish overconfidence, but quietly meets even excessive tactlessness. The President of Augustana College and Seminary, Dr. Andreen, had studied in Uppsala and later visited Sweden as representative of the Augustana Synod, trying to interest Swedes for a new professorship to be called the “King Oscar II Chair.” We found in him someone we recognized. At his side as college secretary and right-hand man is Dr. Mauritzon, with good Scanian-Swedish pastoral roots, preserving in his character, his domestic life and his views much of the Swedish parson’s valuable, trustworthy characteristics, along with Swedish academic background. The respected exegete, Professor Youngert, who visited Sweden a few years ago, continues his research into the Book of Common Prayer. He showed us his priceless library with its many unique books. I should also mention Professor Esbjörn, a son of the Augustana Synod’s founder [Lars Paul Esbjörn], Dr. Forsander, the nestor of the faculty, Pastor Fahlund, leader of the synod’s Sunday school program, pastors Benzon and Andersson, who direct the publishing house, other remarkable men who make important contributions to the life of the synod. Beside Dr. Abrahamson, who is in truth part of every line in this book, I got my deepest impression from the “grand old man” of the synod, dogma Professor Lindberg. His beautiful white-haired head spoke to a fine intellect. His dogma is that of the true Lutheran faith, and its concordance, which neither a changed view of the world nor historic research have been able to change. It is bone-hard, clear and pure as mathematics. But there is a deeper source of his piety, borne of a strong pathos. Their certainty of salvation is the deepest mystery of the soul, God’s unspeakable gift. This man, in his younger days, was a spiritual care-giver and preacher as only few can be.
On 6 November, Sweden's great memorial "Gustav Adolf's Day," the synod's and college's festivities took place. The day began at sunrise, as the students and others climbed to the top of "Zion's hill," to greet the day with song and prayer. It was called a "sunrise service." Later in the morning, the seminary's impressive new buildings and beautiful chapel were to be inaugurated. It was a ceremony with academic pomp at its best.

Invited ladies took their places in the corridors of the seminary building before arrival of the procession. From the windows, we saw the long procession come up along the hillside from the stately "Old Main," to the chapel, as bells rang. In the New World, they enjoy processions at ceremonial occasions, and have adopted the academic attire of England. The various universities have their own colors on gowns and hoods. The procession came in colorful academic attire and black pastoral dress. The students, with their flags, couldn't be forgotten. At the entrance to the seminary building, they sang, with brass accompaniment, "Now Thank We All Our God," in English. The entire ceremony was in English....

The architect of the new building presented its keys to the president of the synod....The president accepted the keys, turned them over to the board chairman, Dr. Ekblad, a pastor in Superior, Wisconsin, who then gave them to the president of the seminary. Their acceptance speeches were printed in the program. Then, the doors were opened, and the procession entered the chapel. The first greeting inside the chapel was "Peace be unto this house," and the answer, "And to all that enter therein." A prayer was read. The president and archbishop stepped to the altar, followed by assistants. The dean of the faculty gave the Bible and Augsburg Confession to the president, who placed these symbolic books on the altar. The president's speech was worthy of the occasion. The assistants read the Bible verses. The service followed a Swedish church dedication, translated into English.

Immediately after, the synod president was installed. A speech was given by the president of the Minnesota Conference, Dr. Mattson, who also carried out the installation, all in English. But behind it we recognized words and prayers from the Swedish Order of Service. The laying on of hands during the Lord's Prayer was a beautiful symbol for the ties throughout time, whether or not one considers apostolic succession. This installation of the synod president, with participation of Sweden's archbishop, was an expression of a still closer relationship between the old church in Sweden, and Swedish church in America. Finally, after a song by the choir, the first Swedish words heard in the new chapel were spoken: "Sanningen skall göra eder fria" (And the truth shall make you free).

Spiritual freedom is the noble symbol of research and the Christian life. But it is not won by conceit, but by yielding to the power of truth. We must not fall victim to temptation, usual within theology and philosophy and all worldly views, to deny what research has shown. Continued serious research will eventually reveal internal consistency and unity.
The 6th of November could not have been celebrated better than with such a ceremony. The great King Gustav Adolf eagerly supported knowledge and scientific research. With vision, he turned over his estate to his own university. And he gave his life that day at the Battle of Liitzen for the freedom of evangelical truth.

The archbishop concluded with a double greeting.

As vice-chancellor for Uppsala University I express its best wishes. In true appreciation for what this place of higher education has accomplished in such a short time from such small beginnings, Uppsala University looks forward eagerly to the growth of the Augustana faculty to one in the best spirit of the university, bound by the high demands of scientific research.

Your faculty trains servants of the congregation. Empowered by my position as archbishop of the Kingdom of Sweden, I, with the Christian church and congregations in our homeland, ask the Almighty's blessing upon this newly-expanded, noble seat of learning and over the Augustana Synod and its newly installed president. May truth alone rule in this holy place and in its classrooms; may human weakness and vanity give way to the clarity of truth. And may we go from here, filled with the love of our Savior and belief in Him.

The ceremonies continued. After a festive lunch, hosted by the board, accompanied as usual by speeches, the afternoon was devoted to a ceremonial gathering in the gymnasium. Greetings were read from other universities and colleges. From Sweden, there were telegrams from the minister of education, the Royal Archivist Clason, from the bishopric of Uppsala and its theological faculty, in Latin, from the bishop and bishopric of Lund, also in Latin, from the senior librarian on the occasion of the enlargement of the seminary library, and from the bishop of Skara, “…may Luther’s bold yet humble spirit rule in these new classrooms.” Augustana sent a telegram to the king. And the archbishop gave an academic speech on “Our Evangelical Faith and Science.”

At both the stately dinner at the Augustana president’s and the seminary president’s, the students marched by torchlight to honor them. First, for the newly-installed president, the second time for the archbishop. Both the singing and the speech by the president of the student body, Erik Wahlstrom, were of high quality. But here, as in St. Peter, Minnesota, and probably everywhere in America, there were those strange cheers, which seemed a bit grotesque. The talented young student body president’s speech was in praiseworthy Swedish, as follows:

Honored doctor and archbishop! The students of Augustana College and Theological Seminary bring you this evening their greetings and welcome. The world and its people have come closer to each other during these days. There are many ties that bind us, so we feel that, even if we
build and live in a distant part of the world and foreign country, we yet are part of the same human family. We have learned to appreciate both our spiritual and material solidarity. We who have joined you tonight, Mr. Archbishop, are representatives of a new generation, which has, in a foreign country, broken land and built roads, and made their Swedish name honored and loved among our new countrymen. Our fathers did not leave their homeland as penniless children of a poor mother. They brought with them something of the Swedish honor and sense of justice, and above all, a child’s faith in the God of their fathers, and warm love for the church of their fathers. They have tried to preserve these treasures for coming generations, and it is thus we who are here at Augustana to learn how to better appreciate that heritage and, if possible, make it still richer and more accessible. We thus welcome you Mr. Archbishop, as a representative of our heritage, and as a representative of the church loved by our fathers, and the faith for which they were willing to live and die....

The archbishop replied, speaking as an old Uppsala student body president who loved to give a talk on the 6th of November. The young Uppsala University representative who was with us also received a cheer, and presented his white student cap, getting a little green “freshman’s cap” in return. During the first year, young students must wear this funny little cap, and may not go without it, as the older students.

On the 7th of November, the first lecture was given in the new seminary chapel. It was held in Swedish by the archbishop, and was about the “Universal Meaning of Luther.” That’s how personalities are used in America. When my husband went to the lecture, led by the old dogma professor and dean, Professor Lindberg, he looked tired and depressed. When he came back, having talked himself warm on one of his favorite subjects, he seemed again young as an eagle.

After the celebrations in Rock Island, the archbishop continued to Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia, where the World’s Alliance held its convention. This part of the trip was remarkable, and should have its own story told, but I wasn’t along.

I remained in Rock Island, where I got a broader and deeper impression of Swedish-America. My thanks to all the dear Swedish homes, where I received so much hospitality and goodness, and where I got such deep impressions of important accomplishments!

I was asked several times to talk about Sweden. I tried to describe and tell, and I recognized how the simplest stories from “the old country” were accepted warmly. At Dr. Brandelle’s I got to meet two lovely old “misses” who were both around eighty. One was Dr. Brandelle’s mother, the other Mrs. Brandelle’s sister. To sit between those two and listen to them tell about the difficult pioneer life, and everything they had seen grow out of those new beginnings of which their lives had been a part, was quite wonderful. Each of them had borne and
raised twelve children. One of them had come from Chicago to Rock Island to attend her oldest son’s installation as synod president. She had unusually clear thoughts and willpower, and a remarkable memory. The other lived with her oldest daughter. She still retained, even at her age, something of an unusual beauty and charm. She was married at the age of fifteen. She’d worked hard since. When we met, she was still taking care of her aged husband, who had suffered paralysis from a stroke.

Once, when Mrs. Brandelle had invited a large group of women to tea, I read two Swedish poems: “My Mother” by Topelius and Siri Dahlquist’s children’s song “Gud som haver barnen kår” [Now I lay me down to sleep]. Afterwards, Dr. Brandelle’s mother exclaimed energetically to everyone: “I didn’t like the first. It was beautiful enough. But it wasn’t true. To be a mother is nothing. We mothers only need forgiveness. But the other, it was true, with the right words.”

One evening, I was invited out by the women students of Augustana. It was fun to be among these young working, interested, American women, and to get an impression of youth. Their president spoke well and from the heart, but in English. And when I was to “say a few words,” I had to speak English to be understood. Once I had to try to answer the question, which was always asked of me: “What do you think of America?” “What do you think of young American women?” In my answer, I happened to say that I didn’t think they were well combed, and that the forehead is an honorable part of the face, which doesn’t need to be hidden. It’s not even necessary to cover the ears. And why cut off long, soft hair, and bob it to stand out from the head. Afterwards, a little girl came up to me and said: “Oh, I am sorry you don’t like my bobbed hair, because Mother doesn’t either.” I couldn’t do anything but hug her and say “I don’t like your short hair, but I like you.” That’s the way it was. I liked the young ladies for themselves, without artifice, energetic, goal-oriented young people, that’s how they looked to me. And, it’s the same for these youths as for most others. “When they are bad, they are very, very bad, and when they are good, they are very, very good.”

There was a lot of music during the young ladies’ party. I remember Augustana College thankfully, as well as the valuable souvenir gift I received, a silver plate, on which “Old Main” was engraved. When we left the party, I saw something in an adjacent room that seemed strange to European eyes. The male students stood there washing up after the girls’ party. Some students whistled happily in their shirtsleeves and they washed about a hundred ice-cream dishes. Why not? But how would European students think this possible?...

I had, in advance of my trip, wanted to meet some people in America, among them the author Anna Olsson, who wrote the fine little book En Prärieunges Funderingar, the first which had given me a living feeling for the Swedish pioneers. Here in Rock Island, I got to meet her and her sisters, sensitive, fragile, poetic people, who live in, and for, their admired father’s memory, the former president of Augustana, Dr. O. Olsson, the synod’s perhaps
most spiritual man. Our time together with them gave a strong impulse to my interest for the strange beauty and greatness of pioneering times.

Yet another sensitive and delightful woman whom I met in Rock Island had a great capacity for opening eyes and heart. She was a woman in her fifties, wife of a respected doctor, and enjoying a good life. I have only seldom met a person with such an immediate, healthful spiritual life. She seemed completely filled with a great, simple joy in the fact that God lives. To speak with her was like a drink of fresh water. She told about her childhood and trip to America. Her parents and their many children lived in Småland, and eked out a precarious living by hard work. Like so many others, they decided to seek a better future in America. Their father went first. After a few years, he sent money so the others could come. Their mother and seven children, the youngest only a couple of years old, left their little home. You can understand what a task it was for a woman, alone with so many small children, to break up. The trip went via Göteborg, then to Liverpool, where they went aboard a huge emigrant steamer. Once aboard, their mother, worn out and anemic, became sick. She fell into a coma, and everyone thought she was dead. She was to be buried at sea. Everything was ready. Wrapped in a blanket, the mother lay on the deck, about to be committed to the sea. Around her stood the seven small, fearful, sorrowing, poor, speechless emigrant children, unable to make themselves understood! Finally, in the last second, a little four-year-old boy, driven by fear, summoned his courage. More than fifty years later, his sister told me that she’ll never forget how her little brother, angrily stamped his foot on the deck, clenched his fists and screamed: “For Jesus’ sake, don’t throw my mother into the sea!” The child’s despair brought attention. A doctor was called, and found that their mother was still alive. She was taken back to her bunk, and arrived in New York, very sick and weak. No one there could really help. They lost most of their baggage, but finally reached their destination. Other childhood memories had been lost by the one telling the story. But that one was etched into her memory, as was the sight of her father meeting them at their destination with a yellow telegram in his hand. Then, those anxious children’s eyes didn’t need to look further. They had their father.

In Rock Island, I decided to collect what I had heard about the great migration from Sweden to America in the 1800s, and try to describe how common Swedish people built their church in North America.

Emigration from Sweden in the 1840s

In the 1830s and 1840s, the building and planting of the Indians’ and buffalo hunters’ Wild West, with its immeasurable area, had begun. In their path came the plow. At the same time came the gold rush, awakened by the discoveries in California, and wild enterprises like the Mexican War, drawing to those endless roads adventurers from the margins of society on both sides of the Atlantic. On streets, roads, paths, and squares in both the New World and the Old, people
hummed the little seaman's song "Oh Susanna, oh don't you cry for me, for I'm going to California with my banjo on my knee."

America needed people. Agents were sent out, newspaper stories and books were written, trying to encourage Europeans to emigrate. Seamen and other returning travelers told tempting, fantastic stories.

Both truth and romantic rumors were heard and believed. Those stories and rumors came also to Sweden of the 1840s. "A slow people, filled with impetuosity" was the way Gustav Vasa characterized his Swedish people. That statement, often quoted, is no longer attributed to Gustav Vasa, but contains some truth. Deep beneath that impetuosity and slowness is another feeling, characteristic of all the Northern peoples, including Sweden's—longing. Longing has been one of the driving forces that drew Swedes out to unknown fates and deeds, from the time of Viking journeys eastward, to the Crusaders who followed them....

Sweden of the 1840s and 1850s is thought by us to have been underdeveloped. Agriculture was practiced without much energy, following worn, old methods. Ore existed in our mountains. Hammermills thundered, smelters glowed, and charcoal piles smoked. But still it was so dark, dark far out in the woods, before intensive forestry began. Good access to cheap labor made life easy for the wealthy ruling classes. Estate and mill town life bloomed, with a lovely, fine culture and rich entertainment. People sang and dreamed in the poetry of the late romantic period. People danced...and drank. Brandy flowed freely during the era of home distilling. Drunkenness was tolerated not just at farm markets and parties, but in homes, even in the parish priest's, even in the sacristy. [Selma Lagerlöf's novel] Gösta Berlings saga was typical of that time.

Today there is a very lively interest in the noble, self-effacing romantic cavaliers and the beautiful girls who danced, loved, and separated. More serious and remarkable things were happening in Sweden of the 1840s, as they waited for their Selma Lagerlöf. Small farmers lived sparingly and poorly. Among farm workers and cotters there was need; among smiths and mill workers, poverty. In many homes their daily food was potatoes dipped in fish brine and a bit of bread. "The milk was both sour and blue, cheese I saw little of, and butter I never tasted," according to the old farm folksong.

But down deep, the Swedish spirit lived.

Religious awakening had begun. Groups gathered seeking an inner pietism. The early "old-Lutheran" awakening, expressed in Moses' and Lambsen's songs and Sions sänger, the so-called readers' movement, lived in our people in several forms and places, long before it expanded into the great spiritual movement known mostly through the name of Rosenius. The strong spiritual longing and opposition to it from above only spread that spiritual movement more deeply in the spirit of the people. At the same time, temperance thoughts arose. Wieselgren's mighty preaching began to be heard, and results followed.

Among the weak or sickly, these religious awakenings caused passion and hysteria, as has always been the case in the history of religion, but also
encouraged deep, strong Christians, who acted to purify and sanctify their surroundings, and who raised the spiritual life of our people.

It was at that time when the siren song of America began to sound. In the great land on the other side of the ocean was a land, a good, rich land, available for little or nothing. People said that some had already gone west. Think, if I could too! The cotter in Småland looked at his seven boys. There was little space between the stones in Småland. Where could they get bread for all of them? Maybe mother and I will continue to be just as poor over there as here at home. But, it can be better for the boys. One, now a mature man in the Middle West, told it that way, when asked how they came to America. I think that in this case it was quite typical. Patient endurance for generations. But, then a door is opened. It's tempting and easily believed. Then, the impetuousness set in. If a Swede had come that far, it wasn't long before action. We have many historic examples of great, hasty and daring enterprises. In them one sees an optimism, which seems part of the Swedish people. One thinks of Fröding's poem about Lars from Kuja: "He picks and digs and works and drags, and his wife saves, who saves has, they survive on birch meal. And the sheriff comes, the sheriff takes, and Lars he works and Stina saves, and though he has barely his shirt left on his back, he, Lars from Kuja, believes in better times, as does Lars from Kuja's wife." The cotter in Småland also believed in "better days." It will be better, if not for us, then for the children. It's lighter ahead, if we dare for the sake of our children. His optimism brought action, and he became one of the early emigrants.

Other, still clearer siren songs were heard from America. Over there was a godfearing people, a free people. The United States was founded by people who had suffered religious persecution. There, religious minorities who have had problems in their homelands, have found shelter. There you can't be harassed or persecuted because you join a fellowship of faithful in a warm spiritual life.

Characteristic is the fact that the first larger emigration from Sweden to America during the 1800s was the result of religious movement. It was certainly a fanatical, misdirected, and damaging spiritual storm, which pulled people along. But many righteous, innocent souls saw it, even if dimly and misdirected, as a Pentecostal wind of the Holy Spirit.

A Visit to Bishop Hill

We had celebrated the never-to-be-forgotten Swedish Memorial Day of 6 November in Rock Island, the spiritual center of Swedish-America. It had been celebrated with unusual church and academic ceremonies worthy of their description. The leadership of the Swedish college had chosen the day for both inauguration of the new seminary building with its beautiful chapel and, after that, the installation of the new president of the Augustana Synod.

I few days later, I got the chance to visit the Swedish colony of Bishop Hill, about eight Swedish miles from Rock Island. For those who somehow haven't
heard of that strange religious movement that began in Uppland in the 1840s and soon spread like a wildfire across Hälsingland and Dalarna, I’d like to briefly tell something about it.²

Erik Jansson, farmer’s son and wheat flour salesman from Biskopskulla in Uppland, appeared first as a preacher in the beginning of the 1840s and was both heard and believed. He called, as have all reformers, real and imagined, for a return to the Bible. The biblical congregations with their communal nature and spiritual life should again be realized. He preached his movement primarily in Hälsingland and Dalarna. He was, in the beginning, surely an upright man. But ignorance and an overrating of himself drove him to dangerous excesses. The suggestive power he had over sensitive, easily-move souls, along with the resistance, punishment, and persecution shown by authorities, resulted in sickly excesses. “The Apostle,” as he called himself, saw himself as the Savior, and bound peoples’ consciences to himself. Erik Jansson had also heard about the rich, free America, and decided to bring his faithful there to create a “pure congregation.”

An advance scout [Olof Olsson], farmer from Söderala, Hälsingland, bought an area in western Illinois.³ Erik Jansson’s followers from Hälsingland and Dalarna would follow him. Together, they were about 1,500 persons, mostly young people, who emigrated in various groups during 1846-50.⁴ From Alfta Parish in Hälsingland about three hundred left. In the church records of Alfta one can read, page after page, the names of those who went. Sometimes, it was whole families, who sold their farms and put their funds into a communal treasury. Among them was a rich farmer from Älvdalen, L. G. Larson. At his grandson’s in Bishop Hill, I saw the beautifully painted Dala chest in which he carried 20,000 gold Swedish Riksdalers.

Many were young. From a rich farm in Alfta, two young siblings wanted to leave. “The father was strict and forbade them. But the mother wanted to mediate and just cried. They got to leave.” A survivor told that story in those short, telling words. Wives left their homes in secret. Even children were taken by the fanaticism and wanted to leave. A little eleven-year-old girl wanted absolutely to follow two older siblings. A now-aged cousin of the eleven-year-old, who had heard the story from her youth and still lived it, told it this way: “Little Lena could sing so beautifully. She had a little silver thimble and was so happy. ‘Here I can’t think about Jesus,’ she used to say, ‘here there are so many other things to think about. But, in America I’ll only think about Jesus.’ And then she sang.”


³ For additional information on Olof Olsson, see Olsson and Wikén, Swedish Passenger Arrivals in the United States 1820-1850 (hereafter SPAUS) (Stockholm, 1995), No. 1000, 228.

⁴ Many Swedish immigrants who came to Bishop Hill are identified in Olsson and Wikén, SPAUS.
Fifteen hundred Swedes finally left, shipping out of Gävle, Stockholm, and Bergen in small groups aboard many sailing ships during a few years. Erik Jansson himself, now under threat of arrest, hid in Dalarna. His last night in Sweden, before crossing the border to Norway and meeting his followers in Bergen where the ship waited, he stayed in a farm in Álvdalen. Since then, no one has been able to sleep in that room. A woven, painted ceiling cover from that room was sent, when the cottage was torn down more than fifty years later, to Erik Jansson’s relatives in America, where I saw it. As the Erik Janssonists were leaving, a young farmer from Forsa came with a load of timber from the forest to Hudiksvall. At a traders, he learned that his young wife had, during his absence, joined the Erik Janssonists on a boat to Stockholm. Without losing time, he went after her. He was a respected man, borrowed money for the trip, and hired horses. He rode night and day to reach Stockholm. Once there, he found that the Erik Janssonists had not yet boarded their ships to America, but were at a hotel in the Old City. There, he found his wife seated at a table. He went up to her and said: “Will you come home Brita?” “Yes,” she said, and got up. She followed him home. Nothing more was said. They never mentioned a word of it again. They lived a long, faithful life together. In her old age, she told the story herself. It can be called trust, sensitivity, and forgiveness. Noble Swedes!

What did they know about what awaited them? What did they know of the length of the trip, and its difficulties? They believed they would “...eat figs, wheat bread and pork.” They starved and suffered. They believed they would go to Paradise with song. It became a desert journey, long and heavy. They believed they would experience the wonders of Pentecost, and understand the language of the new people. But they lived through the isolation created by that unknown language. But they went forward with song and sighing. Crowding, miseries, and shortages during the long sailing voyage brought death to many and sickness to more. Off America’s coast, two ships were lost with all aboard. In New York, many sick and dying had to be left. Up across the American Great Lakes, the voyage continued. From Chicago, they walked about thirty Swedish miles. Only the sick and babies got to ride in the oxcarts with their baggage. About half of those who left came in various groups to the area purchased for the settlement. It was a wilderness, a wide-open prairie, without buildings. They had no tools. They had to begin completely from the beginning. It was far to forests, and difficult to get timber. The easiest way to get a roof over their heads was in a ravine along a small stream, where they dug into the soft, firm clay. They put their spades to work.

It was a quiet, beautiful November day. The sun, still warm, shone over falling leaves and harvested fields of corn or wheat across the Mississippi's wide, gray waters. We drove out comfortably by car, which had come in to Rock Island to bring us out to Bishop Hill, through the same areas, which the “pilgrim fathers,” in this case the Swedish pioneers, had walked with such difficulty. No one counted their tired steps, their anguished questions, and heavy sighs. The
Mississippi, the Indians' "Father of Waters," is lined by thousands of acres of rich farmland, which the Swedes cultivated with such difficulty. We traveled to the northwest [actually southeast], and came after a couple of hours across the rich, cultivated prairies, to the little village of Bishop Hill, where between three and four hundred now live, all Swedish descendants, with the exception of one family.

My husband had been forced to travel to Philadelphia for a meeting. I thus had to travel to Bishop Hill without him. My party included Mrs. Abrahamson and her sister. We were invited to a prominent family in the colony, Mr. Linne Swenson, his wife and daughter. His father, Sven Svenson, had followed Erik Jansson as a young man, and had become one of the colony's leading men after Erik Jansson's death. He was from the village of Valla in Söderala Parish and a cousin of my father-in-law, Rev. Jonas Söderblom. Both these young cousins, related even in spiritual ways, were gripped in their early youth by the northern "readers' movement" in its strict, lawful form. One, Jon Jonsson from Orsta village, studied and became a learned and zealous preacher. "After being freed from the law," as an old man said, he became a conciliator as only a few have become, for souls in need. The other, Sven Svenson from Valla, was torn away from home and parish by the spiritual storms. But he rode them all out, and became one of those who could organize and lead, after many tragedies had struck the Swedish colony. Now we were guests of his son, descended on his mother's side from the wealthy Alvdal farmer who had left with his entire family and all that Swedish gold, the price of their impressive farmstead. At our host's and his brother's, I found that quiet worthiness and the sharply carved, fine characteristics, which one sees in Hälsingland farm people of the prominent old families.

After a meal in their hospitable home we went out to see the village. After those first spadefuls of the virgin soil, many men and women had joined in communal work. Among the sights was a whole gallery, well worth preserving and seeing, of naive paintings [by Olof Krans, now housed in the Bishop Hill Museum], portraits and pictures from pioneer life. There, we saw men and women in long rows, working in the fields with the most primitive methods, until they were able to buy modern tools and machines.

Wherever the Swede goes, he builds. We saw that especially in Bishop Hill. We first visited the old church, the first house built, and completed in 1848. The upper story was occupied by a very large sanctuary, where services were held three times a day during the first years. It is equipped with a lectern and type of altar, where the Bible lies as both symbol and object. Around the altar is a white wooden railing, as in many rural Swedish churches. The railing, as the pews, are made of walnut. Only the best was good enough for their sanctuary. But the walnut was painted white, so it would look like a church at home in Sweden!

5 For additional information on Sven Svensson, see Olsson and Wikén, SPAUS, No. 1673, 271.
6 For additional information on Olof Krans, see Olsson and Wikén, SPAUS, No. 4878, 452.
Besides the church building, there are many other large buildings. One for the large communal kitchen and dining room, where 700 to 800 people were fed during the colony period. Many large “barracks” existed, where the colonists slept, some for men and some for women.

Finally there was the huge, beautiful house [the Steeple Building], a hotel or hostel, whose use wasn’t made clear to me. There, debates took place, and decisions made. Perhaps there were even apartments there earlier. Now, the building stood as a beautiful memorial to the early pioneers’ artistic views and skill. On a Swedish farm, there should always be a room or chamber, tidied and fine. There stood that beautiful old house in the oldest Swedish pioneer community in the west; “fine” it seemed to me. The nameless builders certainly had in their minds’ eye a Swedish city or estate from the time of King Karl Johan or earlier. That’s how it looked by its facade and pillars. They had looked long for sandstone blocks from which they could cut the massive pillars. The building was crowned by a campanile, including a clock with hammered copper numbers, like church towers in Sweden, which was shown with justifiable pride. There must have been skilled, patient craftsmen and artists of many kinds among the Erik Jansare.

Brides were married with a gold ring, as at home. But it was far, and difficult, to come to a place where one could buy a ring. Someone found a solution. They took a gold coin and made a ring. Thus a ten dollar gold piece became a bride’s ring.

Children should get a baptismal silver spoon. That’s how it was at home, if the father was prosperous. But it was just as far and difficult to buy a baptismal spoon as a gold ring. They took a silver dollar and hammered it into a spoon. I got one as a gift, made from several silver dollars.

All these simple memorials speak a moving language of quiet, patient, brave conquering of difficulties, which pioneers face at every turn. One was the difficulty of getting grain milled. It was many miles across deserted prairies to the Mississippi, civilization and mills. The pioneers ground what they could with a hand mill, turned by women with great difficulty. But the course cornmeal that resulted was hard to cook and digest. They built a water wheel in the stream. But the supply of water ran out. If you’re not without a solution, you’re not without bread, even in a pioneering prairie settlement. Twelve young men, who were seen as especially talented, had been set aside for training as teachers. They could also do good in other ways. To that purpose, they were put inside the waterwheel, where they stood and walked it around, while they studied Bible verse and Erik Jansson’s dogma. It is said that the young students in this peripatetic school were finally replaced by a horse!

The first economic success of the colony came from raising flax, and the skill of women from Hälsingland and Dalarna in preparing, spinning, and weaving linen. Swedish hälsinglärft was sold in Illinois in the 1840s! And with the resulting income, they could buy their first modern agricultural tools.
The little settlement was shaken several times by difficult tests. First was Erik Jansson’s death under such romantic and shaking circumstances that, if it had been told in fiction or film, it would have been described as too fantastic. But it’s a reality. I have both read and heard many versions of how it happened. No wonder!

When I made my trip across the American continent to the Middle West, I followed in the path of [author] Fredrika Bremer. It was unusually interesting to read and think about her wonderfully sharp, accurate impressions and predictions. During her trip along the Mississippi River, she passed that beautiful island, Rock Island. But she couldn’t know that one day there would be a castle built there, with spires and towers, for Swedish spiritual education.

However, in Rock Island, she met a couple of people who told her about the tragic happenings among the pioneers at Bishop Hill. The story is best told in her own words.

2 November 1850 on the Mississippi

We’re lying off Rock Island, and I was glad to collect much about the condition of the Swedes in the Erik Janssonist colony.

Since their “bishop” [as Erik Jansson was called by them] is now dead, things seem to be going better. But he, through unwise management, had put them heavily in debt [$10,000 or $11,000], and some of them have now gone to California to seek gold and earn funds to pay off their debt. Since the Swedes in Bishop Hill have always shown themselves to be an honest, godfearing, and industrious people, they have the confidence of citizens in Rock Island, and are given credit to buy those things for which they cannot immediately pay. They have built many beautiful brick structures, and manage their agriculture well. They have begun to cultivate flax and weave linen, generating income from the linen yarn which they sell. They remain faithful to their religious practices, their prayers and their faith, even in Erik Jansson, who appears to have had power over their minds, of an almost demonic sort. When they became sick and didn’t get better as a result of Erik Jansson’s methods or prayers, he said it was for lack of faith, and that they were outcast sinners. Many died, victims of climate-related illness and lack of care.

The honorable, decent gentleman who knew much about the Swedish colony, didn’t wish to say anything special against Erik Jansson, but distrusted him. Erik Jansson’s wife, on the other hand, praised him as quite good and worthy of respect. Even she died during one of the fevers that struck the colony. And four days after her death, Erik Jansson arose during a church service and announced that “the Spirit had told him to take a new wife”! A woman among those present then stood up, saying that “the Spirit

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7 For additional information on Fredrika Bremer, see Olsson and Wikén, SPAUS, No. 3560, 378-79.
had told her she was to be that wife." That was four days after the death of the first, good wife. Such speaks for the spirit that led Erik Jansson.

His assassin, a Swede named Rooth, was to be judged by a jury tomorrow. People thought he would be found innocent, since the reason for his act was such that it might reasonably bring on insanity. Rooth had married, against Jansson's will, a girl in the Swedish colony. [Actually Jansson's niece, who stood under his care]. Persecuted by Jansson's ill will, they decided to leave the place, and Rooth had secretly, during the night, let his wife and their child [a little boy] get away in a carriage. Erik Jansson had them recaptured and put them on a boat along the Mississippi, some said to St. Louis. [She was actually taken to Chicago by the colonists, where she was cared for by Janssonist friends. Jansson himself fled to St. Louis, returning in early May to attend an unrelated court session in Cambridge, IL]. Captain Schneidau had seen Rooth the morning of the day he had found out about her departure. He was deathly pale, and nearly beside himself. In that state, he sought out Erik Jansson, who he met as he was going to church, among his faithful. [Jansson was actually in the Cambridge Courthouse]. Rooth said to him: 'You have taken away my wife and my child, I don't know where. Maybe they're dead, and I'll never see them again. I don't want to live any longer, but you're going to die first!' [Court records show a different exchange of words, but with the same result for Jansson]. And he pulled out a pistol and shot Jansson in the chest. Erik Jansson died almost instantly. Rooth didn't attempt to flee, but let himself be jailed by the angry populace.

The little colony, consisting of 700 to 800 people, is now led by a couple of men [actually, a board] who they chose and apparently continue in their belief of sinlessness, as they did during the life of their first leader. In an abstract sense, their faith isn't deviant. The born-again don't sin. But they forget that the old is never completely removed from mankind's hearts here on earth, and that we will always remain sinful people until we are changed. The Erik Janssonists' greatest heresy lies in their blind belief in the sinner Erik Jansson, and the sinners which they themselves are."

So much for Fredrika Bremer. In Svenskarna i Illinois [The Swedes in Illinois] the story is told somewhat differently. Rooth, who had been an adventurer and come to Bishop Hill from the Mexican War, had married a girl in the colony, against Erik Jansson's will. After Rooth and his wife had secretly left Bishop Hill, possibly against the young wife's will, Erik Jansson sent people, dressed as Indians so as to not arouse suspicions, to find and recapture the young woman and her child. Rooth brought charges against Erik Jansson for theft of his wife but, when the opponents met in court, Rooth lost his senses, and

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shot down Erik Jansson in the courtroom itself. [He was actually shot from outside the courthouse window, after a heated exchange of words].

The act created tremendous anger in Bishop Hill. They expected that their apostle would arise again from the dead on the third day, or that at least some miracle would take place. But the silence of death was not broken, and the storms finally abated. I visited the small cemetery in Bishop Hill. With great emotion, I read the many Swedish names on the gravestones and crosses, Swedish family names, village names, and parish names: Söderala, Forsa, Alfta, Malung, Lima, Älvdalen, etc. In the middle, on a raised hill, is a large stone with the inscription: "Erik Jansson, born in Biskopskulla, Sweden, 1808. Murdered 1850." It creates an awful impression, and disturbs the peace of the cemetery, to see a gravestone branded with the word "murdered."

After Erik Jansson's death the colony's interests were cared for by trustees. Finally, communism and other separatist ideas died. The cholera epidemic of 1854 [and other years, e.g., 1849] struck hard, even in the Swedish settlements, and reduced their numbers greatly. Economic crises, the result of unconscionable middlemen who were supposed to help them with the American language and judicial system in their relations to the state, shook the colony. Many left Bishop Hill. Gold fever took a number to California. But some of the industrious and highly skilled populace stuck together and developed considerable prosperity. The land was wonderful, giving rich harvests when it was well tended. One understands what a hearty people they were, who could be gripped so strongly of a religious movement, even if it was in many ways fanatical and misdirected, and one understands what fiber was in those who suffered through all the pain and suffering.

Then came the American Civil War in 1861. Here, as everywhere, the Swedes gave their sympathies and votes to Lincoln. Many participated honorably in the war. A monument [in the Bishop Hill Colony Park] witnesses to those who fell.

Only two of the old pioneers still remained in Bishop Hill during my visit last year. I met one. She was a ninety-four-year-old woman from Alfta parish, Hälsingland. That old woman was the only one I saw in America who had completely retained fashion and folk costume of her homeland of that time. She had also preserved a great dignity. She wore a black scarf on her head; a little cardigan with narrow tuck; a long, pleated dress; and an apron that hung wide around her thin hips. I saw her walk over a farmyard to a woodshed. She might just as well have been going across the yard of her childhood in Alfta, this remaining playmate of the little girl with silver thimble. She was very deaf, and

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found it difficult to understand who I was and why I was there. Maybe I was too eager, and shouted too hard. In any case, she pulled me to herself with a comfortable gesture, stepping close to me, while she said in a pure Hälsingland dialect, “Stand there and talk a little louder, then maybe I’ll hear.”

What had those now-clouded and tired eyes seen, since she had last looked across the endlessly beautiful shores of the wild Voxnan River, the blue forests, the grand, rich farms, the white, shining church? How many tears had those eyes cried during those silent tribulations, at the death of friends, and the pain of homesickness? What will she see and experience with her inner senses, before her long pilgrim’s journey on earth is finished? Maybe the heavenly Jerusalem, which she and other emigrants once dreamed of as being so close. Maybe, at the close of her journey, a touch of her childhood home and the shining beauty of her homeland.

**When Swedish Farmers Started Churches in North America**

Even before the Erik Janssonists left for America, other groups of Swedes had left. Fredrika Bremer describes her visit to the Swedish colony at Pine Lake, Wisconsin. Among those who settled here was Gustaf Unonius, a many-sided man with strong religious interests. He left farming, which did not pay well, studied, and became a priest in the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church’s daughter in America. Its structure has much in common with the Church of Sweden, especially through the episcopate. Unonius founded a small congregation among the first Swedes in Chicago, and even built a church. Unonius was a good, zealous man, who left a blessed memory of himself. But the Episcopal Church was a foreign one for the Swedes, especially for the so-called “readers.” These had found salvation in a decidedly Lutheran teaching of sin and grace, and had suffered persecution in their homeland for their free meetings. It’s no wonder that according to their beliefs, they found an Episcopal Church so foreign, since it, according to those beliefs, did not put sufficient emphasis on God’s grace. Unonius’s creation simply did not grow into the future.

More and more groups assembled in various parts of our country, and left. The very first, which left as an organized group, came from Haurida Parish, Småland. Another group worth remembering was one from Kisa in Östergötland, which left in 1845 led by a man named Peter Cassel, pious and talented. From their area came Schneidau, mentioned earlier, to Pine Lake,

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11 For additional information on Gustaf Elias Marius Unonius, see Olsson and Wikén, *S(i)AUS*, No. 640, 190.
Wisconsin. He, like Unonius, left pioneering life and eventually became Swedish Consul in Chicago. Cassel and his party intended to find Schneidau, whose letters home were the immediate reason for their emigration from Kisa. They never made it to Pine Lake, but settled in Iowa, where they founded a very important Swedish colony, New Sweden.

Somewhat later another emigrant group, also from Östergötland, were on their way to Cassel’s settlement, but were instead directed to Illinois by a Swedish-born Methodist pastor, as had been the Erik Janssonists at the same time. Others from Östergötland and a few from north Scania who left at the same time, founded the Swedish settlement of Andover in Illinois, which came to be memorialized in Swedish history.

We thus see how, during the latter half of the 1840s, groups assembled in various parts of our country—Östergötland, Småland, Skåne and Norrland—and left. Fifty, sixty, a hundred or more people, relatives, fellow parishioners or at least from the same home area, joined together to form a travel group, and in most cases tried to stick together and build a community in the new land. This situation became very important for the later building of their congregations. Only somewhat later did the Västgötar and Värmlänningar [natives from the provinces of Västergötland and Värmland, respectively] come, whose numbers became greatest.

They sold their homes, or their part of their inheritance, quit their cottages, sold their goods, and gathered the necessary equipment and funds. Those who had no property, and couldn’t fund their trip any other way, bound/indentured themselves, one might say. They drew up contracts to work for a certain period of time, to repay travel funds advanced by agents. Those agents, often Swedes, hired out the inexperienced immigrants to employers of many kinds, farmers, builders, industrialists. Many came to build railroads. There are unnumbered hours of Swedish labor in the Union Pacific network, which ties the Atlantic with the Pacific coast.

Among other groups who readied themselves for emigration were farmers from Gästrikland and Halland. The uneasiness brought by the Erik Janssonists still remained. And many of those who planned to emigrate had been

14 For additional information on Carl Johan Fredrik Polycarpus von Schneidau, see Olsson and Wikén, SPAUS, No. 689, 196.
16 This is a reference to a group of emigrants led by Rev. Carl Petter Agrellius, who was sent by Olof Gustaf Hedström, head of the Methodist mission on the Bethel Ship John Wesley in New York, to assist his brother, the Methodist preacher Jonas Hedstrom, in Victoria, Ill. For additional information see Olsson and Wikén, SPAUS, No. 2562, 326; No. 232, 158; and No. 233, 159 and Henry C. Whyman, The Hedstroms and the Bethel Ship Saga: Methodist Influence on Swedish Religious Life.
17 Many Swedish immigrants who came to Andover, IL, are identified in Olsson and Wikén, SPAUS.
"What Did You Go Out to See?"

captured by the deeper and more serious awakening of the readers' movement in Norrland.

Then, something happened.

The greatest things come out of hidden places. Life is born in darkness. Here, it was a decision, taken in the depths of a human soul, then carried out. It was a man who saw God's calling and followed it. It was no more or less. Then, something great began.

Lars Paul Esbjörn was the mill pastor at Oslättfors Mill, Hille Parish, Gästrikland in 1849. He was born in Delsbo Parish, Hälsingland, where his father was a shoemaker. His mother was a farmer's daughter from Jämtland. Lars Esbjörn, left without parents at an early age, had followed the way of poor, yet talented, youth to education. He went to Hudiksvall's School and Gävle Gymnasium, became a student in Uppsala in 1828, was ordained in 1832 and took his pastoral exams in 1839. As a young pastor, he had been influenced by the English Wesleyan preacher George Scott, who at that time was working in Sweden, and by his preaching awakened many to a livelier spiritual life. He became an eager revival preacher, and took up the early temperance movement. Peter Wieselgren became a personal friend. But being a [low church] läsarpräst and temperance preacher was no way to promotion at that time but, rather, a hindrance. Esbjörn had majority support for the pastorates in both Los and Söderhamn. But others got the job. People joined him. Those whose brandy he had thrown out on the parish roads had certainly laid traps for him along the way, but others stuck with him faithfully. Now, he saw that a hundred or more persons from his own parish and neighboring communities were preparing themselves for the long, uncertain voyage to America. Could he see them leave? What would become of them? Would they be scattered out there and still preserve their faith, or would they be pulled into the many other religious movements that existed in America and, perhaps, fall away? Had not Erik Jansson torn folk blindly away to unspeakable suffering? How would it go for his own? People turned to the reserved teacher: "Follow us to America. We'll feel safer." But, could he leave the clean, quiet, if simple, home, and take his wife and four small children towards uncertainty and toil? His wife was Amalia Maria Lovisa Planting-Gyllenboga, a fine, frail, and deeply pious woman. But that sickly wife had a strong soul.

And she saw his calling clearly, more than Esbjörn himself. The pastor and his wife decided to leave home and security and follow those who were leaving. There is a remarkable difference between the fanatic leader, Erik Jansson, and the faithful parish servant, Lars Esbjörn. One pulled people blindly along with him and promised both earthly joy and heavenly blessings on the way. The other simply followed those parishioners entrusted to him, to care and hold them together. Naturally, he also had a strong feeling that his little congregation out there should be able to join in a pious life. They embarked from Gävle around midsummer 1849...one hundred forty Gästrikar and Hälsingar [natives of the provinces of Gästrikland and Hälsingland, respectively] in a sailing vessel,
including Esbjörm and his family. From the new Swedish Mission Society he had gotten 400 Riksdalers for the trip. That was all he had with which to begin. Hardships began while still in the Baltic. Two of Esbjörm's youngest children were infant twin boys. One died even before leaving the Swedish coast. The ship reached Helsingör. In Halsingborg, where Esbjörm's close friend Peter Wieselgren was pastor, the child was buried. One can imagine the conversation of those two men, and Wieselgren's warm heart must have comforted his sorrowing friend. But neither certainly thought that one would forever be marked as leader of the mighty struggle, temperance, in the fight against drinking, and that the other left to found Sweden's greatest spiritual creation outside the homeland.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18} For additional information on Lars Paul Esbjörm, see Olsson and Wikén, \textit{SPAUS}, No. 3377, 367.
The Flodmans of Polk County, Nebraska

Marcia Rost*

Carl Fredrik Leopold Flodman was born out of wedlock (óäktta) in Rök Parish (Östg.) on 28 January 1844 and baptized the following day. Witnesses for his baptism were Carl Arvid Petersson and Charlotta Christina Andersdotter, his mother's sister. His parents were the saddler, Carl Ulrik Flodman, born in Motala Parish (Östg.) 19 January 1820, and Sophia Fredricka Andersdotter, born in Rök Parish 9 June 1822, the daughter of Anders Persson, a rusthållare. Carl Ulrik and Sophia Fredricka subsequently married in the Rök church on 2 February 1845.3

Flodman Ancestry: Music and Theology

Carl F. L. had an interesting heritage. His grandfather, Lars Samuel Flodman, born at Västra Stenby (Östg.) on 3 September 1795, was the only forebear to move any distance. While living at Västra Stenby, he was variously employed as a temporary clerk at the Göta Canal; a farm owner at Bondebacka Sägerhem, Motala; and a caretaker. He then moved to Kalmar, where he is listed as a former custom house inspector. His last known residence was at Karshamn. Five of his children were born in Motala; one in Kalmar. Samuel Flodman, Carl F. L.'s great-grandfather (b. Mjölby Parish [Östg.] 11 July 1766; d. Västra Stenby 19 February 1830), was an organist and parish clerk at Västra Stenby. His great-uncle, Carl Philip (1797-1841), was an organist at Hagebyhöga Parish (Östg.) until his death.4

Interestingly, musical talent has continued in Flodman descendants. Carl F. L.'s sons and one daughter played musical instruments. The brothers were members of the Swede Home Band. Axel played E-flat cornet and trumpet; Ernest, the bass horn, violin, and piano; and Herbert, instrument unknown. The Swede Home Band was chosen to play at a political rally in Stromsburg, Nebraska, when William Jennings Bryan was there during his presidential campaign. They also played at celebrations and evening concerts.5

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1 Marcia Rost resides at 1130 Sheridan Street, Holdrege, NE 68949.
2 Birth and Christening Record (Födelsebäg och Dopläggd), Rök Parish (Östg.), 1844.
3 Birth and Christening Record (Födelsebäg och Dopläggd), Motala Parish (Östg.), 1820.
4 Marriage Record (Vigellägdeg), Rök Parish (Östg.), 1845, p. 168.
5 According to Margareta Pursche, genealogical researcher, Sjögatan 13, S-592 00 Västena.

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Fig. 2. Marriage record of Carl Ulrik Flodman and Sophia Fredrika Andersdotter. Transliteration and translation: [page] 168; Wigde Par i Rök Församling År 1845 (Wedding couples in Rök’s Parish, Year 1845) / De Wigdes Namn (the couple’s name); No. 1.; Carl Ulric Flodman; Fredrika Sophia Andersdotter / Vigseldag (marriage date); 2. [February] / Charta Sigillata; 12.6 / Februarii (February); Brudgumen (the bridegroom: saddler from Millingstorp); Bruden: Rusthallarden (the bride: the rusthallare’s daughter from Odemark); Efter behöriga Lysningar, den 15te, 22ste, 29 Dec. 1844 sammanvigde (After proper declaration of intention of marriage or bans on the 15th, 22nd, and 29th of December 1844, joined in marriage [on 2 February 1845]).

6 This column indicates the amount of money a couple had to pay for the stamped paper (charta sigillata) on which their bans were written. This was a kind of tax or duty; and, although the amount varied according to income, it was usually a small payment. In this case it was probably 12 skillings. - Elisabeth Thorsell, e-mail to editor, 10 November 2000.
Viola, a sister, played the piano for dances on Saturday night and was the church organist on Sunday morning. The love for music continues through Ernest, Rose and Axel's children and on to the next generation.

James Peterson, Ph.D., the grandson of Emilia Constantia Flodman Peterson, is both an educator and composer. He studied at the Eastman School of Music and has taught at a number of colleges and universities. His last assignment before retirement in 1973 was at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, where he was head of the music department.

Two of Carl F. L.'s forebears—his great-great-grandfather, Lars Flodman, and his great-great-great-grandfather on his maternal line, Samuel Palmaerus—were clergymen. Lars Flodman (1724-1772) graduated from Uppsala in 1747 and was curate of Mjölby and Sörby Parishes. He was married to Catharina Palmaer, whose father, Samuel Palmaerus (1664-1740), graduated from Uppsala in 1685 and was ordained at Vadstena in 1690. He became vicar of Örberga Parish (Östg.). After his death on 12 August 1740, he was buried in the aisle of the church and a tribute, "Commemoration of Honor," was written on his behalf by P.W. Lithzenius (later vicar of Vinnerstad, Östg.).

Rök and Heda Parishes

The Carl Ulrik Flodman family resided at Millingstorp, a village in Rök Parish, from 1845 until 1856, at which time they moved to Heda Parish (Östg.) and settled at Kolstad Södergård, where Carl Ulrik was a farm owner. Carl F. L., the oldest child, had six siblings who lived to adulthood: Alida Sophia, b. 1877.

Viola Flodman Arnold, Stromsburg, Nebraska, was the daughter of Carl F. L. Flodman. In a letter to the author, dated 16 December 1989, she wrote: "I have played piano since I was 12 years old; never took any lessons. My mother wouldn't give me any. She said I played well enough. (Selma, Rose and Olive all took lessons!) I played for church on Sunday—Methodist in the morning and Swedish in the afternoon. I played for the choir all through high school, for the orchestra, for dances, etc... I played for the Fireman's Ball every year; the grand march was the highlight. I also played the violin. Now when I am home, I play at least twice a day to keep limbered up. I like classical music, jazz or any kind."

Ralph Flodman, letter to author and newspaper clipping, "Songwriter Counts Praises, Prizes," Grand Island Independent, 13 September 1998, 4B.

Ralph played in various bands for over fifty years and his son, Elton, was featured in the listed article for being selected as the winner of the song writing competition of the annual National Country Music Festival in Ainsworth, Nebraska, in August 1998. Ralph's two grand-nieces are professionally trained opera singers.

All of Ernest Flodman's children either play the piano or sing. The author's children all sing. One daughter plays piano and French horn; the other daughter majored in music (piano and flute) at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln; her son played trumpet and horn in the UNL marching band.

Vera Flodman Swanson, daughter of Julius, plays organ and piano. Her children and grandchildren are also musical.

James Peterson, letter to author, 19 September 1980.

Linköpings Herdaminne, 479-481. In connection with the last restoration of the Örberga church, the tombstone was removed from the aisle and placed in the churchyard opposite the vicarage. It was still there in 1983, when the author visited the church.
Fig. 3. Carl Ulrik and Sophia Flodman.

February 1847; Josephina Vilhelmina, b. 6 April 1848; Hilda Amalia, b. 18 March 1851; Emilie Constantia, b. 6 April 1855; Hugo, b. 7 October 1857; and Hjalmar Julius, b. 23 September 1859. Carl F. L. lived in Heda with his parents until he left for Stockholm on 7 April 1866. Carl Ulrik, his wife Sophia Fredricka and three children (Hilda Amalia, Hugo, and Hjalmar Julius) left for America in 1868. Emilie Constantia emigrated in 1869. Carl F. L. probably joined the family on the trip to the United States.

Prior to their arrival in Nebraska, the Flodman family lived somewhere in Illinois. One family account states: “The parents and rest of the family came to America in the fall of 1868. They lived in an emigration home in Chicago for a month and then moved to Lewistown [Fulton County], Illinois, and stayed there for the winter. In the fall of 1869, they moved to Sandy, Illinois, close to Varna [Marshall County]. Here they stayed until March of 1872 when, together with some thirty persons, they moved west to Polk County, Nebraska.”

Parish records confirm that family members left the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Varna, IL, in 1872. Hugo and Julius joined the Swede Home Evangelical Lutheran Church in rural Stromsburg, Polk County, NE, through confirmation in 1876; their parents and Hilda joined in 1877.

The Carl (Charles) F. L. Flodman Family

The marriage of Carl (Charles) F. L. Flodman, age 30, and Hilma Josephine Widga, age 18, occurred on 4 August 1874. The license and certificate were both issued that same day at the Polk County courthouse. Probate Judge William E. Loning performed the ceremony in the presence of Albenson Nance and Lewis Beltzer.

From this union, the following eight children survived to adulthood: Carl Axel (b. 26 September 1875; d. 5 July 1963); Selma Ottalina (b. 23 July 1877; d. 17 June 1965); Ernest Arnold George (b. 24 November 1879; d. 7 September 1958); Herbert Odger (b. 20 February 1882; d. 23 November 1956); Hartwig Emanuel (b. 28 August 1884; d. 4 January 1966); Olive Bernadina (b. 11 January 1887; d. 11 June 1971); Rose Mabel (b. 13 October 1889; d. 27 March 1973); and Maxine M. Williams (niece), interview with author, Columbus, NE.
1893; d. 15 September 1970);\textsuperscript{22} and Viola Lavina (b. 17 May 1898; d. 4 December 1987).\textsuperscript{23}

Fig. 5. Carl (Charles) F. L. Flodman family. Front row (L-R): Hartwig, Carl F. L., Rose, Hilma, and Olive. Back row (L-R): Axel, Ernest, Herbert, and Selma.

After Charles F. L. left Illinois, it may be assumed that he did not have a church home. He did not join the Swede Home Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1877, with his parents and siblings, and he was married by a judge at the county courthouse. He and his wife chose to have their second child, Selma, baptized by the Lutheran pastor in Stromsburg.\textsuperscript{24} However, the family joined the Swede

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Venice Viola Burton (daughter), interview with author, Stromsburg, NE.
\textsuperscript{24} Certificate of Baptism for Selma Josephine found with Hilma Flodman’s belongings and currently in author’s possession.
Plain Methodist Church (Widga family members were staunch Methodists!) during the pastorate of Rev. Olin Swenson (1878-79).\textsuperscript{25} The land for the church, the cemetery and District 65 School were all part of the Flodman holdings.\textsuperscript{26}

After his marriage, Charles F. L. Flodman began to acquire land. On 1 October 1880, he filed for a homestead at the General Land Office at Lincoln, Nebraska, for the north half of the northwest quarter of sec. 10, T. 13 N, R. 4 W.\textsuperscript{27} His father filed for an adjoining homestead on the same day.\textsuperscript{28} Between 1882 and 1902, Charles F. L. continued to buy and sell land in T. 13 N, R. 4 W, sections 3 and 9. At his death, he owned 320 acres of land.\textsuperscript{29}

The census records provide some background for life on the Flodman family farm. In June 1880, Charles (age 36) and Hilma (age 24) had three children—Axel, age 4; Selma, 2; and Ernest, 6 months).\textsuperscript{30} By 1885, the Nebraska census records show that the family consisted of five children (Carl A., age 9; Selma, 7; Ernest, 5; Herbert, 3; and Hartwick, 1/4) and one male servant (age 26). They farmed 170 acres of land. The buildings and fences were valued at $6,000, the implements at $800 and the livestock at $1,340. The developed land consisted of 25 acres of hay, 17 acres of Indian corn, 6 acres of oats, 16 acres of wheat and half of an acre of apples. He owned 4 horses, 2 oxen, 2 milk cows, 2 calves and 40 chickens.\textsuperscript{31}

In the 1900 U.S. census, Charles F. Flodman, age 54, was listed as the head of his household. He had been married twenty-six years and had lived in the U.S. since 1868. His wife, Hilma, immigrated in 1873. She was forty-four and had borne eleven children, nine of whom were living. The oldest child at home, Ernest, was twenty. Axel, the first son, was already married.\textsuperscript{32}

By 1910 the family was living in Stromsburg. Charles Flodman was sixty-six years old and listed himself as "on his own income." He owned his own home, which was free from debt or mortgage. His wife, Hilma, was fifty-two. On this census, she said that she had borne ten children and eight were living. (Agnes had died.) Olive, at twenty-three, had her own millinery store. The children still at home were Rose, sixteen; Viola, eleven; and a granddaughter,
The 1920 U.S. census indicated that Charles was naturalized in 1879 and Josephine (Hilma was using her middle name) in 1874. It also included an incorrect year—1872—for her immigration. Ralph Flodman (b. 1910), the son of Axel Flodman, recollected the following about his grandfather:

What I do remember, quite vividly, is seeing him seated in the big leather chair with the ash tray and cigar stand, plus daily papers. I know that he did have a shop and did clock work and watch repair, but [I] have no remembrance of ever visiting there. He did like a good cigar, so my father always had me present Grandpa with one....I believe I would have thought of him as a wealthy-looking businessman with a mustache, wearing a dress suit and perhaps a reserved man....I believe there was a cow at one time, as there was a barn where they kept the well-polished car, a Veley....One more thing, which I recall, is the watch chain and vest.

According to the certificate of death, Carl Frederick Leopold Flodman died at the age of seventy-seven years, eleven months and twenty-four days. He was found dead in his yard of heart failure on 21 January 1922, and was buried in the Swede Plain Cemetery.

He died intestate. His estate was valued at $50,000. His wife Hilma and his eight children were listed as heirs. A son, Herbert O. Flodman, was named as administrator. His wife and children decided to purchase a monument for his grave “that was not to exceed $950.” In the final distribution, Hilma inherited one-third and the children two-thirds of the estate, which was to be divided equally. Hilma Josephine Widga Flodman died on 16 February 1944, after falling at her home in Stromsburg and fracturing her hip. At the time, her age was eighty-seven years, nine months and one day.

So Carl F. L. Flodman rests beneath the prairie sod on the parcel of land that he deeded to the Swede Plain Church for a cemetery. His imposing tombstone, which is at least five feet in height, faces west toward the forty acres of natural prairie he left uncultivated. His wife, Hilma, rests beside him.

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34 1920 U.S. Census (population), Nebraska, Polk County, Stromsburg, E.D. 122, sheet 13 A, p. 3451, nos. 34-35, NAMP, T525, roll 1000.
36 Death Certificate for Carl Fredrick Leopold Flodman, No. 915, Department of Public Welfare, Bureau of Health, Division of Vital Statistics, Lincoln, NE.
37 Inventory, Estate of Charles F. L. Flodman, File No. 983, Probate Court, Polk County Courthouse, Osceola, Nebraska.
38 Death Certificate for Hilma Josephine Flodman, No. 2267, Department of Public Welfare, Bureau of Health, Division of Vital Statistics, Lincoln, NE.
Johannes FREDRIKSSON / Johannes WIGELIUS / John WILSON: Fifty Years in America
Bernice Wilson Munsey*

As indicated in earlier articles, Johannes Fredriksson, my great-grandfather, was born 7 July 1827 in Fröderyd Parish, Jönköping län, Småland, Sweden. Taught to read the Bible by his paternal grandmother, he had no other schooling. His father abandoned the family, and Johannes was orphaned by the age of fourteen. At the age of nineteen, in 1846, Johannes got a job walking cattle to Stockholm. He lived in Stockholm four years, during which time he apprenticed to a piano-maker and slept on the floor beside the pianos. Later, he earned money to buy passage to New York.

In Stockholm, Johannes Fredriksson added the surname Wigelius, which had been used by his paternal ancestors who were ministers. Johannes Wigelius left Stockholm in August 1850 and arrived in New York City on the Zebra 19 November 1850.

Johannes Wigelius arrived with one dollar. He worked briefly in a piano factory in New York, but he wanted to get to the gold in California. He became a sailor on an American sailing ship, which sailed around Cape Horn to San Francisco. He told his children that the captain said he couldn’t pronounce his name and would call him John Wilson. After three years in California, John

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2 Birth and Christening Record (Födelse- och Dödsbok), Fröderyd Parish (Smål.), C:3-5, 7 July 1827.


4 Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Fröderyd Parish (Smål.), A:1-10-12, 79.

5 Moving In Record (Inflyttningstängd), Jakob och Johannes Parish, Stockholm, B:1-4-5, July 1846.

6 Moving Out Record (Urflyttningstängd), Jakob och Johannes Parish, Stockholm, B:1-6-8, 7 August 1850.

7 Passenger Arrival Records, Port of New York, 19 November 1850. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
Wilson returned to New York City via the Isthmus of Panama. His son Joseph’s notes indicate he worked in California until he had accumulated $1,000.8

John Wilson settled in New Sweden, Jefferson County, Iowa, bought 40 acres of timberland and, on 15 November 1854, married Inga Greta (Winnie) Samuelson. The first Lutheran minister in New Sweden, the former shoemaker from Stockholm, Magnus Fredrik Hokanson, performed the marriage.9 There is no record or story of how he learned about New Sweden or how he traveled there. They cleared the wild timber along Brush Creek and farmed the land. The 1856 Iowa State Census for Lockridge Township records John Wilson (age 28, cabinetmaker, born in Sweden, two years in Iowa, alien, subject to the militia), Ingratia [sic], age 21; infant Frank, age 0; and Inga’s sister, Caroline Samuelson, age 8.10 Their first child, Frank Alfred, was apparently handicapped, for son Joseph wrote there was barely enough money to pay the doctor when they lived in Iowa,11 and Alfred was referred to in John Wilson’s will as already having been provided for in an asylum in Hastings and as one “who is now and always will be in delicate health.”12

In his memoirs, John Wilson remembered the end of February 1856 when he heard “a dear brother...preach the true Bible doctrine.” This “brother” was Jonas Hedstrom, a blacksmith and Swedish Methodist preacher from Victoria, Knox County, Illinois. Hedstrom was instrumental in John Wilson’s conversion, as well as many others in New Sweden, on 2 March 1856.13

Church records indicate John Wilson joined the Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church, Salina, Iowa, on 16 March 1856. Church records and his memoirs record that he was given an exhortation as a right to work in the church. “For the first time two weeks after my conversion the Lord put his word in my mouth to blow the trumpet of his grace to a lost world.” His first camp meeting, in Andover, Illinois, was in August 1857.14 “His [Jonas Hedstrom’s] last public appearance was at a Swedish district camp meeting held at Andover in the summer of 1857. Surrounded by ten pastors on the platform and a large representative congregation from practically all the churches of the district, from Chicago to Iowa, Jonas Hedstrom gave an unforgettable farewell address to an emotionally charged audience. He lingered for almost two years, during which the pastor of the Victoria church, Victor Witting, was a constant friend and companion.”15

9 Register of Marriages, 1854, Jefferson County, Iowa.
10 1856 Iowa State Census, Jefferson County, Lockridge Township, July 1856.
12 Last Will and Testament of John Wilson, Polk County, Nebraska, 20 November 1899.
14 Ibid.
In 1858 John Wilson sold his farm in New Sweden, Iowa, for cash. While attending a camp meeting in Victoria, Knox County, Illinois, he bought a house and farm. In October 1858 he, his wife and two children (Joseph was born in 1857), moved to Swede Prairie near Victoria. The Lincoln-Douglas debate took place at Knox College, in nearby Galesburg, that same month, with thousands of people present. John Wilson was not yet a citizen, and it is not known if he heard the debate. Church records state that on 10 September 1858 John Wilson (exhorter) and his wife, Ingar [sic], were members who came from Fairfield Circuit, Iowa, with two children; and, that in 1859, John Wilson was a “class leader in the church.”

John Wilson wrote, “Victoria was the birthplace of the Swedish Methodist Church the Lord converted a blacksmith Brother Hedstrom with just two hammers one to support the natural body and good work to the needy and the other to break the stone heart. God blessed his work wonderfully and many dear souls were saved in the first church. The Lord blessed us wonderfully both spiritually and financially.” Jonas Hedstrom died on 11 May 1859, age 46.

According to church records, Victor Witting baptized Johanna Matilda Wilson in 1860 at the Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church in Victoria. Witting was famous in his lifetime as a Swedish Methodist leader in the U.S. and Sweden and would write the definitive history of Swedish Methodism—Minnen Från Mitt Liv.

The 1860 U.S. Census lists John Wilson, Winny [sic] and three children (Alfred and Joseph born in Iowa; infant Hannah born in Illinois). Their real estate value was $1,000; personal property, $300. John Wilson legally changed his name and became an American citizen on 2 June 1863 in Knox County, Illinois. Gustaf Bratt and C. J. Anderson, citizens, testified for him. Joseph Wilson wrote, “He always had a conviction that he could not shoot a gun in the army if he was enlisted to join the Civil War. But providence ruled in his favor so he could hire a substitute twice.” Joseph also wrote, “During the time he was associated with the Swedish M. E. Society in Victoria Ill. he would drive 7 miles on the Sabbath morning in a lumber wagon and he would hold prayer meetings in the neighborhood where he lived. The writer’s mother was a sweet singer and was a great help on these occasions.”

Four children then appear in the church records—Henry was born in 1862. John Wilson left the Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church and in 1868 became a Free Methodist. He wrote, “The persecution began from a preacher in the M. E. church from every direction in order to have me declare the full salvation from all sin and drop me out from the church, which I willingly obeyed...Soon in
February 1868 I withdrew from the M. E. church and in August joined the Swedish Free Methodist church. Then in October I joined the Annual Conference in Whitewater, Wisconsin, in 1868. Church records indicate that he was admitted on trial at Whitewater, Wisconsin, Illinois Conference and appointed to Center Prairie.

The memoirs end here—either intentionally or because of missing pages in his now-lost notebook. His son Joseph wrote, “They fought him to the very end for he was the fire brand in the old mother church. He was loath to part from the M. E. church but finally he left the M. E. church and joined the Free Methodist Conference at Whitewater Wis. and labored among the Swedish people of Swede Prairie Knox County Ill. He would ride horseback 10 miles on Sunday morning and preach and work during weekdays.

The 1870 U.S. Census, Illinois, Knox County, Copley Township, Victoria Post Office, lists John Wilson (citizen, eligible to vote), Winnie and six children (Alfred, Joseph, Matilda “Hannah,” Mary, Wesley, and Emma). Their real estate value was $8000; personal estate, $2000. Joseph wrote that his father cleared and farmed about 100 acres in Illinois. Free Methodist Church records summarize John Wilson’s activity in the 1870s as follows: 1) 1871, appointed to W. Victoria; remained on trial through 1875; 2) 1876, ordained deacon; appointed to Swede Mission; 3) 1878, ordained elder; at own request and at own expense, appointed missionary to Sweden; and 4) 1879, Swede Mission, Galva District.

The 1880 U.S. Census records the family in two states. In the Illinois, Knox County census, are recorded Joseph Wilson, 22; Johanna M., 20; Mary Josephine, 16; Emma, 11; Frank, 9; and Victor Emanuel, 7. In the Nebraska, Polk County, Pleasant Home census are recorded John Wilson, 52; Winnie, 45; Alford [sic], 24; John W., 14; and Nathaniel, 4. Joseph Wilson wrote about his father, “In the year 1880 he moved to Polk Co Nebr. where he improved 900 acres of prairie land...I also recall an instance in 1880 in the winter—myself and two brothers and three sisters were farming the old Homestead in Illinois and Father and Mother came back to stay with us over winter.”

Joseph remembered a neighbor’s house burning: “Father went to Mr. Bratt and offered him to move into his second story but that seemed to be too hard for him to decide as he had always been an enemy of my father—but finally he decided to move in. But he wanted to know how much the charge would be.

27 Free Methodist Church Records, Illinois Conference, 1878, 93.
28 1880 U.S. Census, Illinois, Knox County.
29 1880 U.S. Census, Nebraska, Polk County.
Father answered not one cent but if any one would get in the same condition that he would render the same assistance also. In the spring of 1881 when father left for Nebr., this neighbor met him on the road with tears in his eyes, bid father goodbye realizing he had stood the hardship in building up the community. The 1880 U.S. Census lists Augustus [sic] Bratt on a farm next door. John Wilson did not appear on Free Methodist Church records from 1880 to 1882 and was withdrawn from the conference.

The 1885 Nebraska State Census, Polk County, Pleasant Home Township, shows the family reunited: John Wilson, 57; Inga, 50; Alfred, 29; Joseph, 27; Johanna M., 25; Mary J., 21; Wesley J., 19; Emma, 16; Frank, 15; Victor E., 12; Nathaniel, 9; and two “servants”—S. Sunberg, 18, and Victor Anderson, 20 (Emma Wilson would marry the servant Victor Anderson). It also summarizes the following details regarding their farm: 1) land: tilled, 500 acres; permanent meadows, permanent pastures, orchards, and vineyards, 200 acres; woodland and forest, 0 acres; other unimproved, including old fields not growing wood, 500 acres; 2) farm values: of farm, including land, fences and buildings, $25,000; of farming implements and machinery, $1000; of live stock, $2500; 3) fences: cost of building and repairing in 1884, $50; 4) labor: amount paid for wages for farm labor during 1884, including value of board, $600; weeks hired labor in 1884 upon farm and airy, excluding house, $200; 5) estimated value of all farm productions sold, consumed, or on hand, $3000; 6) grass lands: mown, 50 acres; not mown, 0 acres; 7) products harvested in 1884: hay, 50 tons; clover, 0; grass seed, 0; 8) horses of all ages on hand June 1, 1885, 14; mules and asses all ages on hand June 1 1885, 1; 9) cereals: Indian corn, 120 acres, crop 4800 bushels; oats, 50 acres, crop 1800 bushels; wheat, 50 acres, 900 bushels; broom corn, 40 acres, 30,000 bushels; and 10) apples, 22 acres.

In 1890, John Wilson retired from farming in Polk County and moved into Stromsburg in the same county. He bought part and later full interest in the Farmers and Merchants Bank with a capital investment of $25,000. It would be a family business, with John and three sons—John Wesley, Victor Emanuel, and Nate—involved in the bank. John and Winnie apparently returned to Sweden on a missionary visit in 1894, for he wrote of it in Winnie’s obituary following her death on 13 December 1894. It is not yet known how many trips they made back to Sweden.

John Wilson married a Swede named Anna Backstrom on 5 December 1895. A premarital contract was drawn up two days before the wedding. Free Methodist Church records summarize John Wilson’s activity at this time as follows: 1895, Nebraska Conference, appointed to Stromsburg; and 1896, traveling elder.

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31 1880 U.S. Census, Illinois, Knox County.
32 1885 Nebraska State Census, Polk County, Pleasant Home Township.
34 Indenture and Marriage Settlement, Polk County, Nebraska, 3 December 1895.
The 1900 U.S. Census shows John and Anna on 9th Street in Stromsburg with two children: Anton (Wigelius), born 1897, and Elizabeth (Amanda) born 1899. The age span between John Wilson’s twelve children was forty-three years. In 1901, John Wilson began building the Wilson Block for his bank. On 28 October 1901, after an illness of some months, John Wilson died at age 74. The newspaper noted that all businesses in town were closed, printed several notices and advertisements about his passing, and reported that Victor and Helen Wilson and their two-year-old son, Allan (my father), returned from California for the funeral. John Wilson’s family tombstone in the Stromsburg Cemetery includes the following names: Rev. John Wilson, Winnie, Henry (d. 1863), Frank (d. 1890), Emma (d. 1903) and Alfred (d. 1910).

Fig. 1. Johannes Fredriksson / Johannes Wigelius / John Wilson (1827-1901). Photograph courtesy of the author.

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35 1900 U.S. Census, Nebraska, Polk County, Stromsburg.
Although John Wilson perpetuated his family name—Wigelius—in the middle name of his youngest son, he never used the name in America and did not mention it in his listing in a Nebraska history book or in a book about "most noted persons" bearing the name Wilson. In both of these books, he referred to himself as a philanthropist.

There are stories of John Wilson's frequent religious orations, his harshness as a father, his fairness and superb judgment of character as a banker, even his proposing marriage to one of the women while they were preparing his first wife for burial. But, there were other memories as well. Anton Wigelius Wilson, who was four years old when his father died, remembered, "It was Sunday and I was pounding nails in the ground (for entertainment) and my father found me and sternly stopped it, for wasn't this Sunday." Anton remembered also, "He said to our mother to give the children a warm glass of milk before we went to bed for it was a long night for children." His father had not forgotten his own childhood in Sweden.

John Wilson left an estate, valued at $96,000 in 1901, which was divided in equal shares among all his living children, except Alfred, for whom provision had already been made.

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37 -----. *Origin and History of the Name Wilson, with Biographies of All the Most Noted Persons of that Name*. Chicago: American Publishing Association, 1902, 43.
39 Probate Records, Polk County, Nebraska, 1901-02.
Genealogical Workshop:
Records of an Immigrant Family. Part 2

James E. Erickson

Four documents are featured in this article, which represents part two of a four-part series featuring my paternal great-grandparents, John E. and Ida C. Erickson. They are all from American sources and include a page from a passenger list for the port of Boston, Massachusetts; a birth record from Cannon Falls, Minnesota; a page from the register of a Covenant church in Stambaugh, Michigan; and two pages from the Erickson family Bible.

Part one of this series ended with the Johan Erik Jansson family leaving the port of Göteborg, Sweden, on 6 April 1888.1 On 24 April 1888, just eighteen days later, Johan E. Johnson and his family arrived in Boston, Massachusetts aboard the SS Catalonia, which had embarked from Liverpool, England (see document 5). His wife, Ida C., was five months pregnant.

The family proceeded directly to Cannon Falls, Minnesota, where they undoubtedly stayed with Ida’s maternal aunt (mäster), Mathilda Charlotta Rosendahl, and uncle, Per Gustav Jansson (Johnson), who had arrived in Cannon Falls six years earlier.2 During these first four months in the U.S., John and Ida obviously made a decision to change their surname, because a son named Fred Erickson (alias Fritz, my paternal grandfather or farfar) was born in Cannon Falls on 15 August 1888 to John E. and Carolina (see document 6).

Sometime during the next four months, the Erickson family moved to the iron-mining village of Stambaugh in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, where a number of John and Ida’s relatives already lived.3 John and Ida became charter members of Svenska Missionsförsamlingen (the Swedish Mission [now Grace Covenant] Church) on 26 January 1889 (see document 7). This document is surprisingly detailed; more Lutheran-like than a typical Covenant record. Note the use of the surname Erickson and the fact that all of the dates recorded are consistent with those that appear in the Swedish records already highlighted. The only mistake on this record is the date of arrival in America. Document 5 clearly shows that it was 24 April (not 20 April) 1888.

The Erickson family Bible (see document 8) is also surprisingly detailed. Although it represents a classic example of a record that must be used with

3 Ibid., 26.
extreme caution, it proved to be reliable and accurate, save that it failed to indicate that the family surname in Sweden was Jansson. In particular, the birth dates used are consistent with those appearing in other Swedish and American sources (but see document 6). Interestingly, for the Swedish birthplaces, individual farms and the county (län) are listed, but not the name of the parish. I have a special fondness for this document, because it was clearly the record that got me interested in my own family’s history and allowed me to easily bridge the Atlantic and enter the Swedish records (in spite of the unusual name change from Jansson to Erickson!).

Document 5. Portion of the passenger list for the SS Catalonia, which arrived in Boston, Massachusetts, on Thursday, 24 April 1888. Columns 8 through 12 are not shown.

Transliteration of document 5

Column 1. No.: [129]5 - 1300
Column 2. Names: Johan [sic] E. Johnson; Ida C.; Ellen ✓; Oscar ✓; Jeanne [sic] ✓; Victor ✓
Columns 3 and 4. Age in years and months: 35; 35; 15; 11; 4; 3
Column 5. Sex: M[ale]; F[female]; ✓; M; F; M
Column 6. Calling [i.e., occupation/profession]: Labourer; Wife; Servant; Child; d[itt]o; d[itt]o
Column 7. The country of which they are citizens: d[itt]o, i.e., Sweden

4 The Erickson family Bible, Sjelf-förklarande Svensk Bibel: Den Heliga Skrift, was published by Chandler Bros., Rockford, IL in 1889. The birth data recorded (except Solomon and Arthur) not only precede the publication date but also appear to have been recorded by one individual at one sitting. see Ralph Crandall, Shaking Your Family Tree: A Basic Guide to Tracing Your Family’s Genealogy (Dublin, NH 1986), 33.

Column 8. Intended destination or location: d[itt]o, i.e., U.S. America
Column 9. Date and cause of death:
Column 10. Location of compartment, or space occupied: [Steerage]
Column 11. Number of pieces of baggage: [4]
Column 12. Transient, or in transit, or intending protracted sojourn: [Protracted Sojourn]

Document 6. Certificate of Birth of Fred (alias Fritz) Erickson, 16 [sic] August 1888, Village of Cannon Falls, Goodhue County, Minnesota. The information shown was recorded in a large Register of Births. The top image is the left-hand part of the page; the bottom image is the right-hand part of the page. Neither the name (Fred) nor the birth date (16 August) in this certificate agree with the information in the Erickson family Bible, i.e., Fritz and 15 August (see document 8b).

Transliteration of document 6

Note: Words and/or numbers implied by ditto marks in the original document have been placed in brackets in the following transliteration.

Column 1. No.: 23
Column 2. Date of Birth / Month, Day, Year: [Aug.] 16 [1888]
Column 3. Name (if any): Fred Erickson
Column 4. Sex (And Condition, as Twins, Illegitimate, etc.): Male
Column 5. Color: [White]
Column 6. Place of Birth of Child (Town or City): Village of Cannon Falls
Column 7. Full Christian Name of Each Parent: John E. & Carolina
Column 8. Birthplace of Each Parent (Give the State or Nation): Sweden
Column 9. Occupation of Father: ---
Column 10. When Registered: [Aug.] 2? [1888]

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6 From Register of Births, Village of Cannon Falls, County of Goodhue, State of Minnesota. Goodhue County Courthouse, Red Wing, MN.
Document 7. Church Register, Record of Families, Svenska Missionsförsamlingen (the Swedish Mission [now Grace Covenant] Church), Stambaugh, Michigan, showing the John E. and Ida C. Erickson family. The top image is page 44; the bottom image is page 45.\(^7\)

### Transliteration and explanation of document 7

Column 1. Chro. No. (Chronological Number):  
The numbers listed (top to bottom)—7, 8, 11, 13, 16, 22, and 56—represent the chronological order in which family members joined the church (i.e., John and Ida were the seventh and eighth individuals, respectively, to join the church; Elin, the eleventh; Carl Oscar, the thirteenth; etc.).

Column 2. Date Rec'd (Received); Mo./Date/Yr. (Month/Day/Year):  
The dates family members joined the church were (top to bottom): 1-26-1889; 1-26-1889; 3-16-1893; 5-26-1900; 5-26-1900; 1-26-1906; and 7-25-1907.

Column 3. Comm.[?]; Male/Fem[ale]: Note the marks in respective columns.

Column 4. Name:

\(^7\) *Church Register Record and Ministerial Accounts*, compiled by Rev. E. G. Hjerpe, Published by The Swedish Evan. Mission Covenant Book Concern, 81 South Clark Street, Chicago.
The surname Erickson (not Jansson, Johansson, Johnson) is being used for all members of the family. First and middle names are consistent with those in the husförhörslängd, save for minor spelling differences. For example, Jän Erik has become John Erick; Ida Carolina, Ida Karolina; Elin Carolina, Elin Karolina; Carl Oskar, Carl Oscar; Jenny Kristina, Jennie Kristina; and Viktor Valdemar, Wicktor Waltemar. Interestingly, the name of another son, Wicktor Emmanuel, who was born 2-22-1880 in Hjulsjö Sock[en] (Parish) and died there as an infant, is also. His death date (7-23-1880) is listed on page 45 in Column 14 (Died) (but not shown in document 7).

Column 5. Birth; Mo./Date/Yr.; Place:
Note that the birth dates of the family members born in Hjulsjö Sock[en] (Parish) are consistent with those listed in the husförhörslängd. Birth dates and places for the sons born in the U.S. are as follows: Fritz, 8-15-1888, Cannon Falls, Minnesota; Solomon, 6-8-1892, Stambaugh, Michigan; and Arthur [sic], 11-8-1894, Stambaugh, Michigan.

Column 6. Baptismal; Mo./Date/Yr.; Place:
The baptismal years of the six family members born in Hjulsjö Sock[en] (Parish) are 1849, 1850, 1873, 1876, 1882 and 1885. Baptismal dates and places for the sons born in the U.S. are as follows: Fritz, 1888, Cannon Falls, Minnesota; Solomon, 1892, Stambaugh, Michigan; and Arthur, 1894, Stambaugh, Michigan.

Column 7. Married; Mo./Date/Yr.; Place:
John E. and Ida C. were married in 1872 in Hjulsjö Sock[en]; Elin Karolina, 1892, Stambaugh, Michigan; Carl Oscar, 1901, Stambaugh, Michigan; and Jennie Kristina, 1901, Stambaugh, Michigan.

Column 8. Arrived in America; Where From; Mo./Date/Yr.:
The six immigrants arrived from Örebro, Sverige (Sweden) on 4-20-1888. Note that document 5 establishes the correct date as 24 April 1888.

Column 9. Arrived At This Place; Where From; Mo./Date/Yr.:
The six immigrants and their newborn son, Fritz, arrived at this place (i.e., Stambaugh, Michigan) from Cannon Falls, Minnesota 10-20-1888.

Column 10. Removed; Place; Mo./Date/Yr.:
Column 11. Remov'd (Removed):
Column 12. Disciplined:
Column 13. Dropped:
Column 14. Died: The date listed for John Erick is Dec[ember] 14, 1920; the date listed (but not shown) for Wicktor Emmanuel is 7-23-1880.

Column 15. Dismi. No. (Dismissal Number):

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9 Ibid.
Fig. 2. The John E. and Ida C. Erickson family ca. 1891. From L-R: Jennie, Carl Oscar, Ida C., Fritz, John E., Victor, and Ellen.
Document 8a. Birth dates (Födelsedagar) recorded in the John E. and Ida C. Erickson family Bible.¹

¹ This Bible is currently in the possession of the author’s father, C. Eldred Erickson, Iron River, Michigan.
Document 8b. Birth dates (Födelsedagar) recorded in the John E. and Ida C. Erickson family Bible.
Transliteration and translation of documents 8a and 8b

Document 8a:

John Erickson, född i (born in) Småland [a farm in Hjulsjö Parish], Örebro län (county), Sverige (Sweden), den (on) 15 November 1849.

Ida Karolina Erickson, född i Jönshyttan [a farm in Hjulsjö Parish], Örebro län, Sverige, den 14 Juli 1850.

(1) Ellin Karolina Erickson, född i Jönshyttan, Örebro län, Sverige, den 20 Feb. 1873.

(2) Oscar Erickson, född i Jönshyttan, Örebro län, Sverige, den 8 Feb. 1876.


(3) Victor Emanuel Erickson, född i Småland, Örebro Län, Sverige, Den 22 Feb. 1880.

Document 8b:

(5) Victor Waldemar Erickson, född i Ösjöhöjden [a farm in Hjulsjö Parish], Örebro Län, Sverige, Den 15 Feb. 1884.


(7) Erik Solomon Erickson, född i Stambaugh, Michigan, U.S.A., Den 8 Juni 1892.

Genealogical Queries

Genealogical queries from subscribers to *Swedish American Genealogist* will be listed here free of charge on a "space available" basis. The editor reserves the right to edit these queries to conform to a general format. The inquirer is responsible for the contents of the query.

Nilsson, Nilsdotter, Svensson/Swanson, Alström

Seeking descendants of Sven Nilsson (b. 13 Apr. 1815; d. 24 Mar. 1875) and his first wife, Elsa Nilsdotter (b. 30 Oct. 1797; d. 25 July 1852). They were the parents of Sven Gustaf (b. 17 July 1838; d. ?) and Adolph Philip Svensson/Swanson (b. 19 June 1841; d. Buffalo, MN, 15 Nov. 1925).

Sven Nilsson later m. Anna Charlotta Alström, who was b. 13 May 1827 and d. in Chicago, IL. Sven and Anna Charlotta had these children: Frans Oscar (b. 6 Sept. 1855; d. in MN); Johan/John Alfred (b. 6 Dec. 1853; d. Kandiyohi Co., MN, 23 Nov. 1932); Christina Albertina (b. 15 Dec. 1856; d. in Östra Ryd Parish 16 Apr. 1858; Thecla Charlotta (b. 22 Sept. 1858), Hilda Carolina (b. 4 Sept. 1860), and Emma Sofia (b. 26 Nov. 1862).

The families lived in Lilla Fånges, Ringarum, Östra Ryd and Norrköping. Sven’s sons were journeymen cabinetmakers and wood workers. Frans Oscar and Johan/John Alfred worked on Pullman cars in Illinois and farmed in Kandiyohi County, MN. Adolph Philip was a builder in New Windsor, IL, and in Kandyohi and Meeker Counties in MN. Sven’s widow came to America in 1875 with two of her daughters. Adolph Philip came to America in 1869.

Thor W. Swanson
3014 Hardie’s Lane
Santa Rosa, CA 95403-2618
E-mail: <winthor@concentric.net>

Eriksson

I am trying to locate my American relatives by seeking information on three brothers, who were the sons of Erik Eriksson and Elsa Sjöström from Mörrum Parish (Blek.). All three were living in New York in 1910.

1) Johan Erikson was b. 10 Nov. 1860 and emigr. 8 Sept. 1897. He went to Philadelphia. He m. Edla Maria Blomqvist, who was b. in Ekerö, Finland, 20 Nov. 1864.

2. Berndt Erikson was b. 19 Feb. 1872 and emigr. 30 Jan. 1891. He went to New York.
3. Ernst Erikson was b. 20 Sept. 1867.

Gunilla Talhamn
Brännelyckevägen 208
29493 Sölvesborg
Sweden
E-mail: <gunilla.tallhamn@swipnet.se>

Luhr

I am doing a search for relatives of my husband Howard's father, Ivar Waldemar Luhr, who was b. 18 November 1888 in Bredojo(?), Westmanland, [most likely Bredsjö, Hjulsjö Parish, Väsm.]. He came to the U. S. on 28 Aug. 1908 aboard the *Lusitania*. He m. Anna Laura Lindstrum and homesteaded a farm in Metaline Falls, WA. I have a letter written by a relative named Olga (no last name given) dated 14 Aug. 1945, with Box 247, RFD2, Shelton, Conn. given as the return address. I also have an address of 16565 Main St., Stratford, Conn. She mentioned her husband Charles and children Paul, Olga, Alice and Virginia. There was also a woman with the surname Walborg who lived in New York in December of 1946. I believe that the woman was Ivar's cousin.

Lorraine Luhr
P.O. Box 357
Metaline Falls, WA 99153

Larsson, Gullbrandssen

I am searching for my grandmother's parents. Her father, Carl-Johan Larsson was b. in Öxabäck 24 June 1860 and emigr. from Sweden to New York 16 Apr. 1886. Carl Johan had been in America before and had returned to Sweden 23 Dec. 1885, possibly with his wife, Anna Severina Gullbrandssen, a Norwegian girl who he had met in America. Anna Severina was b. in Drammen, Norway, in 1867.

My grandmother, Anna Ottilia, was b. 16 Feb. 1886. My mother told me that my grandmother was born in America, but the Swedish church books indicate that she was born in Sweden. What is certain is that she was raised in Sweden by her father's parents. I know that my grandmother had younger sisters who were born in America.

I have enclosed copies of two documents that may provide clues. One is a photograph of the tombstone of Carl Johan Larsson and his wife, Anna Severina (see figure 1). Unfortunately, I don't know the location of their grave. The other is a copy of a Christmas card sent by Anna (see figure 2).
Fig. 1. Tombstone: LAWSON / Charles J. Lawson / 1860-1930 / Anna S. Gilbert / His Wife / 1867

Fig. 2. Christmas card: Hampton, SC / Jag önsker eder / alla en glad / Jul / ifra mormor / Anna (Hampton, South Carolina / I wish you / all a glad / Christmas / from grandmother / Anna)

Ann-Marie Karlsson
Fabriksgatan 2F
SE - 43010 Tvaåker
Sweden 1214
Swedish Emigrant Institute’s Research Scholarship 2001

Ulf Beijbom

The Swedish Emigrant Institute (SEI) is hereby inviting scholars and students in migration research to spend one to six months during 2001 at The House of Emigrants in Växjö, Sweden’s national archives, library and museum on emigration and keeper of Europe’s most comprehensive collections on emigration from one single country. For more information, see <www.svenskaemigrantinstitutet.g.se>. The SEI also maintains close cooperation with the University of Växjö.

The scholarship is intended to finance individuals whose migration research completely or partly deals with Sweden, Swedish conditions, or the influence of Swedish immigrants in other countries, overseas as well as in Europe. Applicants should be enrolled with a university or college or other institution of academic character. The scholarship can be awarded to non-academic researchers if their research, in the opinion of the Board of the Swedish Emigrant Institute, is considered especially important and innovative.

The scholarship does not include transportation to and from Växjö, Sweden, but it does cover full accommodations in Växjö and necessary travel expenses within Sweden during the stipend period. The scholarship is SEK 10,000 per month.

In addition to a detailed description of the research project, applications should contain the applicant’s name, age, address and curriculum vitae. Letters of support are welcome. Applications should be sent to:

Dr. Ulf Beijbom, Professor
Managing Director
The Swedish Emigrant Institute
Box 201
S-351 04 Växjö
SWEDEN

Telephone: 46-470-210 20
Fax: 46-470-394 16
E-mail: <info@svenskaemigrantinstitutet.g.se>

The closing date for applications is March 1, 2001.
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James E. Erickson

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- The entries are arranged in alphabetical order under the surname or patronymic followed by the baptismal name or names.
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- The Swedish letters Å, Ä, and Ö are indexed according to the Swedish practice, i.e., as distinct letters following the letter Z.

- For U.S. place names, the official U.S. postal abbreviations apply.

- For Swedish place names, the provinces (länskap) are abbreviated as follows:

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Table 1. Abbreviations for Swedish provinces (landskap) used by *Swedish American Genealogist* (as of March 2000) and Sveriges Släktforskarförbund (the Federation of Swedish Genealogical Societies, Stockholm).

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Table 2. Abbreviations and codes for Swedish counties (län) formerly used by *Swedish American Genealogist* (1981-1999) and currently used by Statistiska centralbyran (SCB) (the Central Bureau of Statistics, Stockholm).

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\(^a\) formerly Kopparberg (Kopp.; W) län

\(^b\) includes the former counties (län) of Malmöhus (Malm.; M) and Kristianstad (Krst.; L).

\(^c\) includes the former counties (län) of Göteborg and Bohus (Got.; O), Skaraborg (Skar.; R), and Alvsborg (Alvs.; P).
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