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The Flodmans of Polk County, Nebraska

Marcia Rost*

Carl Fredrik Leopold Flodman was born out of wedlock (*oäkta*) 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.¹ His parents were the saddler, Carl Ulrik Flodman, born in Motala Parish (Östg.) 19 January 1820,² 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 Bondebäck 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 Karlshamn. 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 Birth and Christening Record (*Födelselängd och Doplängd*), Rök Parish (Östg.), 1844.

² Birth and Christening Record (*Födelselängd och Doplängd*), Motala Parish (Östg.), 1820.

³ Marriage Record (*Vigsellängd*), Rök Parish (Östg.), 1845, p. 168.

⁴ According to Margareta Pursche, genealogical researcher, Sjöгатan 13, S-592 00 Vadstena.

⁵ Ralph Flodman, letter to author, 19 September 1989. List of Swede Home Band members taken from treasurer's book, 1896-1899, kept by Axel Flodman and now in possession of Ralph Flodman.

Carl Fredrik Leopold	20	Föräldr: Sadelmakaren Mr. Flodman o[ch] Sophia Fredrika Andersdot[ter] från Ödemark: Vittne: Hembr[ukare] Carl Arvid Petersson o[ch] dess H[ustru] Char[lot]ta Chr. Andersdot[ter] samt P[ig]an Stina Larsdot[ter] från Ödemark	24
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Fig. 1. Birth and christening record of Carl Fredrik Leopold Flodman. Transliteration and translation: *Carl Fredr[ik] Leopold* / [born] 28 [January 1844] / [baptized] 29 / *Föräldr[ar]* (parents): *Sadelmakare* (saddler/harness-maker) *Ulr[ik] Flodman o[ch]* (and) *Sophia Fredrika Andersd[otte]r från* (from) *Ödemark: Vittne[n]* (the witnesses) *Hem[ans]br[ukare]* (farmer) *Carl Arvid Petersson o[ch] dess H[ustru]* (and its wife) *Char[lot]ta Chr. Andersd[otte]r samt P[ig]an* (and the maid) *Stina Larsd[otte]r från* (from) *Ödemark* / [mother's age] 24.

Wigde Par i Rök's församling År 1845	
De Wigdes Namn No. 1. Carl Ulric Flodman Fredrika Sophia Andersdotter No. 2	2. 12. Brudgummen: Sadelmakare från Millingstorp Bruden: Rusthållaredotter från Ödemark Efter behöriga Lysningar, den 15 ^{de} , 22 ^{de} , 29 Dec. 1844 sammanvigde Mars

Fig. 2. Marriage record of Carl Ulrik Flodman and Sophia Fredrika Andersdotter. Transliteration and translation: [page] 168; *Wigde Par i Rök's 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); *Brudgummen: Sadelmakare från Millingstorp* (the bridegroom: saddler from Millingstorp); *Bruden: Rusthållaredotter från Ödemark* (the bride: the *rusthållare's* daughter from Ödemark); *Efter behöriga Lysningar, den 15^{de}, 22^{de}, 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.⁷ The love for music continues through Ernest, Rose and Axel's children and on to the next generation.⁸

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.⁹

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.).¹⁰

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. 15

⁷ 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."

⁸ 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.

⁹ James Peterson, letter to author, 19 September 1980.

¹⁰ *Linköpings Herdaminne*, 479-481. In connection with the last restoration of the Öreberga 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.



Fig. 4. Carl Ulrik and Sophia Flodman's children. Front row (L-R): Emili, Alida, Wilhelmina, and Hilda. Back row (L-R): Julius, Hugo, and Charles.

February 1847; Josephina Vilhelmina, b. 6 April 1848; Hilda Amalia, b. 18 March 1851; Emilia 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. Emilia Constantia emigrated in 1869.¹¹ 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."¹²

Parish records confirm that family members left the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Varna, IL, in 1872.¹³ 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 1877.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

From this union, the following eight children survived to adulthood: Carl Axel (b. 26 September 1875; d. 5 July 1963);¹⁶ Selma Ottalina (b. 23 July 1877; d. 17 June 1965);¹⁷ Ernest Arnold George (b. 24 November 1879; d. 7 September 1958);¹⁸ Herbert Odger (b. 20 February 1882; d. 23 November 1956);¹⁹ Hartwig Emanuel (b. 28 August 1884; d. 4 January 1966);²⁰ Olive Bernadina (b. 11 January 1887; d. 11 June 1971);²¹ Rose Mabel (b. 13 October

¹¹ Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Heda Parish (Östg.), 1861-1880.

¹² Myrtle Flodman Hull (daughter of Hugo Flodman), letter to author, January 1969; Iverne Dowie, *Prairie Grass Dividing* (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1959), 210.

¹³ *Minnes-Album, Svensk Ev. Luth. Församling i Varna, IL, den 24 och 25 Oktober 1868-1908*, 67.

¹⁴ Swede Home Ev. Lutheran Church, rural Stromsburg, Polk Co., NE, Parish Record, Book 2, 11.

¹⁵ Marriage license of C. F. L. Flodman and Hilma Josephine Widga, County Clerk, Polk County Courthouse, Osceola, Nebraska, Marriage Book 1, 4 August 1874.

¹⁶ Ralph Flodman, letter to author, 19 September 1989.

¹⁷ Evelyn Norton Lincoln (daughter of Selma Ottalina), letter to author.

¹⁸ Author's grandfather.

¹⁹ Osceola Centennial Committee, *Our Polk County Heritage* (Henderson, NE, 1975), 311.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 317.

²¹ Maxyne M. Williams (niece), interview with author, Columbus, NE.

1893; d. 15 September 1970);²² and Viola Lavina (b. 17 May 1898; d. 4 December 1987).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.²⁴ However, the family joined the Swede

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Venice Viola Burton (daughter), interview with author, Stromsburg, NE.

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).²⁵ The land for the church, the cemetery and District 65 School were all part of the Flodman holdings.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.²⁷ His father filed for an adjoining homestead on the same day.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.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).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 milch cows, 2 calves and 40 chickens.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.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,

²⁵ Robert Holbrook, *Swede Plain United Methodist Church Centennial Observance 1876-1976*, 6.

²⁶ Tractbook Index for sec. 3, T. 13 N, R. 4 W., sixth principal meridian, County Clerk, Polk County Courthouse, Osceola, NE.

²⁷ Tractbook Index for sec. 9, T. 13 N, R. 4 W., sixth principal meridian, County Clerk, Polk County Courthouse, Osceola, NE.

²⁸ Tractbook Index for sec. 3, T. 13 N, R. 4 W., sixth principal meridian, County Clerk, Polk County Courthouse, Osceola, NE.

²⁹ Probate Record 983, County Clerk, Polk County Courthouse, Osceola, NE.

³⁰ 1880 U.S. Census, Nebraska, Polk County, Pleasant Home Twp., E.D. 107, p. 2, nos. 22-26, National Archives Publication, T9, roll 754.

³¹ 1885 Nebraska State Census, Polk County, Pleasant Home Twp., E.D. 642; Inhabitants, p. 8, 38-45; Agriculture, p. 13, no. 3; National Archives Microfilm Publication (hereafter NAMP), M352-44.

³² 1900 U.S. Census (population), Nebraska, Polk County, Pleasant Home Twp., E.D. 151, sheet 5, p. 265, nos. 95-100 and sheet 6, p. 266, nos. 1-3, NAMP, T623, roll 937.

eight.³³ 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.³⁴

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.³⁵

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.³⁶

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.³⁷ 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.³⁸

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.³⁹ His wife, Hilma, rests beside him.

³³ 1910 U.S. Census (population), Nebraska, Polk County, Stromsburg, E.D. 114, sheet 9A, p. 5, nos. 45-50, NAMP, T624, roll 853.

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.

³⁵ Ralph Flodman, letter to author, 12 July 1989.

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.

³⁹ *Atlas of Butler and Polk Counties Nebraska* (Mason City, Iowa: Anderson Publishing Co., 1918), p. 57; Probate Record 983.