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# An Evasive Brood: The Sandgren Files. Part 2

Ted Rosvall\*

Johan Fredrik Sandgren was born in 1824 at Kroken, a farm located within Karleby Parish (Vägö.), east of Falköping. He was the youngest of eight children born to the farmer Sven Olofsson (1770-1850) and his wife Eva Sandgren (1783-1844). Eventually, all five sons born to this couple adopted their mother's surname—Sandgren. Johan Fredrik disappears from the Karleby records around 1850, but his marriage to Cajsa Lisa Johansdotter was found in the marriage book for Slöta (Vägö.) 1854. After that date there is no trace of either husband or wife; no clues in the migration books or in the household examination rolls; no address for Cajsa Lisa in the probate records following the deaths of her parents in the 1870s. This was the first obstacle that I encountered when I tried to trace this particular branch of the Sandgren family.

A well-known trick when trying to locate people that have wandered off is to check all the birth entries for their nephews and nieces. Chances are that they may have been witnesses (*faddrar*) at the christenings. I thus checked all the nephews and nieces of both Johan Fredrik and Cajsa Lisa Johansdotter; and, lo and behold, in 1865 they were noted as *faddrar* at the christening of Johan Fredrik's niece, Regina Fredrika Sandgren, in Karleby. Their address was shown as Hiared and a quick look in Rosenberg's geographical index<sup>1</sup> revealed that this is a farm and a mill located within the parish of Kölingared (Vägö.) some 30 km south and east of Karleby. The records of that parish, combined with the records of the nearby parish of Solberga (Vägö.), where the family had resided from 1854 to 1863, made it possible to put together the following family group sheet:

## **JOHAN FREDRIK SANDGREN**

\*1824 Oct. 20      Kroken, Karleby  
†1890 Jan. 30      Valshalla, Kölingared  
married 1854 Jan. 8 in Slöta to

## **CAJSA LISA JOHANDOTTER**

\*1829 Oct. 6      Mellomgården, Falekvarna, Slöta  
†1897 Mar. 28      Valshalla, Kölingared  
Children: (1-10)

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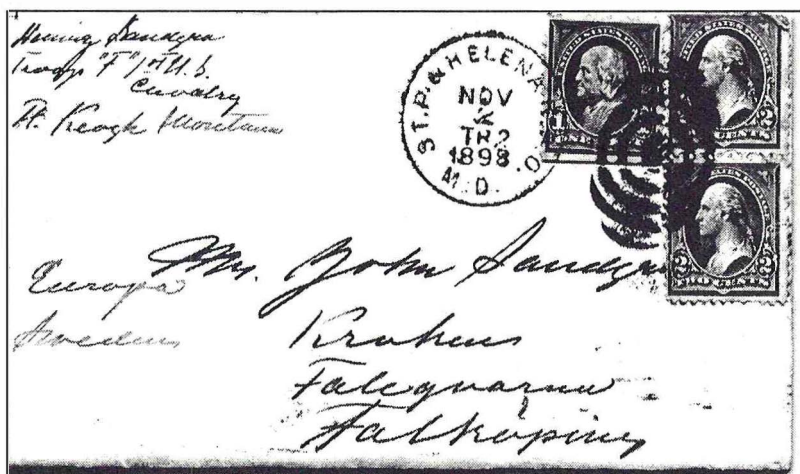
<sup>1</sup> C. M. Rosenberg, *Geografiskt—statistiskt handlexikon öfver Sverige*, (Stockholm, 1883; reprint, Göteborg, 1993), 2:702.

- 1/ **EVA CHARLOTTA SANDGREN**  
 \*1855 Jul. 10 Träbena kvarn, Solberga  
 †1884 Jun. 20 Valshalla, Kölingared
- 2/ **CARL FREDRIK SANDGREN**  
 \*1857 Jan. ? Träbena kvarn, Solberga  
 †1857 Dec. 27 Träbena kvarn, Solberga
- 3/ **JOHAN ALFRED SANDGREN**  
 \*1858 Nov. 23 Träbena kvarn, Solberga  
 (“Insane—at the asylum in Lund;” later returned to Kölingared and moved to Gothenburg/Kristine parish 1906)
- 4/ **MATHILDA JOSEPHINA SANDGREN**  
 \*1860 Sep. 25 Träbena kvarn, Solberga  
 (immigrated to the U.S. 1899 Feb. 13)
- 5/ **AUGUST SANDGREN**  
 \*1862 May. 19 Träbena kvarn, Solberga  
 (moved to Stockholm 1884)
- 6/ **MARIA WILHELMINA SANDGREN**  
 \*1864 May 23 Hiared, Kölingared  
 †1879 Dec. 3 Valshalla, Kölingared
- 7/ **ANNA SOFIA SANDGREN**  
 \*1866 Aug. 6 Hiared, Kölingared  
 †1953 Feb. 20 Ålderdomshemmet, Kölingared  
 (“Insane—at the asylum in Lund;” removed to an asylum in Vänersborg 1907 and in 1937 to an institution in Öster Korsberga. Eventually returned to the Old People’s Home in Kölingared and died there. The estate inventory lists no heirs.)
- 8/ **FRANS OSKAR SANDGREN**  
 \*1868 July 30 Valshalla, Kölingared  
 (immigrated to the U.S. 1889 March 11)
- 9/ **HENNING SANDGREN**  
 \*1870 Sept. 30 Valshalla, Kölingared  
 (immigrated to the U.S. 1893 March 22)
- 10/ **CARL SANDGREN**  
 \*1874 April 20 Valshalla, Kölingared  
 (immigrated to the U.S. 1893 March 22)

Time to follow up on all the clues and lose ends. I found a probate record (*bouppteckning*) for Johan Fredrik Sandgren, and it did list all the surviving children. Frans Oskar’s address was shown as “America” and August’s as “Stockholm.” A probate record for the widow, Cajsa Lisa Johansdotter, would have been a blessing for the continuation of this search but, alas, no such record was ever made.

I found **Johan Alfred Sandgren** in the records of Göteborg/Kristine parish, his occupation that of a *månadskarl* (= *gårdskarl* = odd-job man). He died there on 22 February 1914. I did find his probate record, but it listed no heirs.

I found **August Sandgren** in Stockholm working as a bookkeeper. A few years later he moved to Sundsvall in the northern part of Sweden. Here, too, he is listed as a bookkeeper, but in the household examination roll that starts 1892 that has been changed to “e.o. Police Constable.” According to the same book, and also to the corresponding migration roll, he moved to Stockholm/Jakob parish on 27 May 1893. In Stockholm there is, however, no trace of him; not in the St. Jakob records nor in any other church records, census records, address books or probate records. I even checked police records and jail records. I must have spent hundreds of hours trying to find August Sandgren in Stockholm, but he simply is not there. It is to be noted that his disappearance coincides with the emigration of his two youngest brothers, Henning Sandgren and Carl Sandgren, but he is not listed in the passenger lists or emigration rolls anywhere.



**Fig. 1.** The envelope that contained Henning Sandgren’s letter to his cousin John Sandgren. Henning’s return address provided an essential clue.

With no more clues to follow it was time to look around for other possibilities. Johan Fredrik Sandgren’s brother, Svante Svensson Sandgren (1817-1891) remained at the home farm, Kroken. At the time that I started this search, two of his grandsons, Einar and Arthur Svensson, were still living there. While visiting them in 1972 I asked if, per chance, they had any old family letters or documents. A quick excursion to an old secretary upstairs in the attic

produced a small bundle of torn papers and envelopes. In this treasure of old letters, wills and cards, I found a letter with U.S. stamps on it. My eyes grew larger as I saw the name of the sender—"Henning Sandgren, Troop "F", 1st U.S. Cavalry, Ft. Keogh, Montana". So, **Henning Sandgren** had joined the cavalry. There was not much information in the letter itself, and no mention of his siblings, but at least I had a clue with which to continue my search.

From the General Services Administration in Washington, D.C., I eventually received a thick envelope with copies of Henning Sandgren's enlistment records. It was fascinating reading. The first record showed that he had enlisted in Chicago, Illinois, on 20 August 1894. His place of birth was shown as "Gonkoping [i.e., Jönköping], Sweden," that being the closest larger city to Kölingared. His profession was that of a carpenter. He had brown hair, ruddy complexion and stood 5'9" tall. He was discharged on 19 August 1897 at Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming. The next record showed that he re-enlisted 15 October 1897 at Chicago and was again honorably discharged 14 October 1900 at Fort Keogh, Montana, as a sergeant. This was the place from which he sent the letter to his cousin in Sweden. He re-enlisted a day later at Fort Keogh and was honorably discharged 14 October 1903 at the Presidio of San Francisco, California, as a quartermaster sergeant. He finally re-enlisted 14 November 1904 at Camp Stotsenburg, Philippine Islands, and died 30 December 1905 at Fort Bayard, New Mexico. At the time of his death, his residence was given as "San Francisco" and his next of kin as "**Carl Sandgren, brother, Moline, Illinois.**"

What a wealth of information! Not only could I follow Henning's entire life and career, but I also got a new clue, this time to his younger brother, **Carl Sandgren**. I immediately started a search in Moline, Illinois. The 1905-06 city directory for Moline revealed that Carl Sandgren, a carpenter, and his wife Anna were residing at 813 18th Ave., Moline. In the same directory was listed one Miss Mathilda Sandgren, a seamstress, living a few blocks away. Neither the Carl Sandgren family nor Miss Mathilda Sandgren were listed in any Moline directories prior to or after the 1905-06 one. Thanks to the efforts of Glen E. Brolander, at that time residing in Rock Island, Illinois, I also found out that Carl and Anna Sandgren had two children born to them in Moline—a son, Russel F. Sandgren, born 29 September 1902 and a daughter, Marjorie Irene Sandgren, born 25 February 1905. The birth certificate of the latter revealed that the mother's maiden name was **Anna Carlson**, that she was born in Iowa and that she was twenty-two years old at the time (thus born ca. 1882/83). The Sandgren/Carlson marriage did not take place in Moline though. Carl and Anna Sandgren did own the house on 18th Ave. in Moline, and so the deed records were checked. It was possible to conclude that Carl and Anna H. Sandgren bought the house in 1904 and sold it in 1906. The only extra clue received here was the middle initial for Anna Carlson, an "H."

With this, the search for the evasive Sandgren siblings had again come to a standstill. I made several attempts to find more clues in Moline, rounding up all

the Carlsons, checking cemetery records, vital records, obituary records and census records; but to no avail. I knew that Carl Sandgren had relatives on his mother's side in Moline, which may be why he came to this town. But where did he meet and marry Anna Carlson? Could the Iowa clue be of use? Suddenly, it struck me; Carl Sandgren had an aunt, Anna Maria Johansdotter, his mother's sister, who immigrated to the U.S. with her husband and five of her seven sons. Anna Maria was married to Carl Wilhelm Thorsson (1818-1888) and from previous research I knew that they had settled in Brooklyn, Poweshiek County, Iowa. I also knew that the five sons had emigrated before their parents and, thus, chances were that they were Carlsons rather than Thorsons. (Before the year 1900 the patronymic system was the predominant surname pattern in Sweden. The sons of Carl would call themselves Carlson.) Maybe Carl Sandgren went to his Carlson cousins in Brooklyn, Iowa, when he first came over to the U.S. What if he went so far as to marry one of them. Well, you tend to fantasize when you run into dead ends, but any action is better than no action at all. So, with the help of a hired gun in Des Moines, Mrs. Margaret Foster, I started to look for the Carlsons in Brooklyn, Iowa.

The only one of Carl Sandgren's first cousin Carlson relatives to remain in Brooklyn was Claus Theodor Carlson (1847-1916). He was married to his own first cousin, Josephine Fredrika Mattson (1854-1935), who was also a first cousin to Carl Sandgren. The C. T. Carlson family was found in the special 1895 Iowa Census. Claus and Josephine are listed with their children Hilda, John, Anna and Effie. Yes, there was indeed a daughter by the name Anna, and with a suitable age—12 years old in 1895. But could it be the Anna that Carl Sandgren later married? I urged the genealogist in Des Moines to please find the obituaries for Claus and Josephine. These were found and it was with trembling fingers that I read the 1916 obituary for Claus T. Carlson, with the heading "Esteemed Citizen Called by Death," in which the following family details were given: "He was united in marriage to Josephine Mattson, April 28, 1875. To this union were born five children, Hilda, who died in 1912, Carl who died in infancy, John of Brooklyn, **Anna of East Bakersfield, Calif.**, and Effa of Brooklyn."

" 20.20	G. T. Carlson	47	/	/	Sweden
" "	Josephine F.	40	/	/	" "
" "	Hilda H.	18	X	/	" Danish Cal "
" "	John H.	15	/	/	" " " "
" "	Anna H.	12	/	/	" " " "
" "	Effie H.	8	/	/	" " " "

Fig. 2. Portion of the 1895 Iowa State Census showing the C. T. Carlson family in Brooklyn, Poweshiek Co., Iowa. Note the initial "H" after the name Anna.

California, wow! Could this be where Carl and Anna ended up? I flipped to the next page, the obituary of Josephine. It listed the daughter Anna as “**Anna Hobson** of Bakersfield.” Oops! Hobson? What a disappointment! What had looked like ingenious thinking appeared to be yet another dead end.

A few weeks later, while enduring a sleepless night, I was going through the whole Sandgren puzzle—the letter from Henning, the next-of-kin bit, the Moline research, the Iowa attempt, the 1895 Iowa Census—in my mind. Wait a minute! Didn’t that census show the middle initials for the Carlson children in Brooklyn, Iowa? I jumped out of bed and into the den. I found the Iowa report and the census copy, looked at it, and my eyes filled up with tears. It said “**Anna H.**” That is just what it said. Too much of a coincidence! I immediately sat down and wrote another letter to the genealogist in Des Moines, begging her to continue the Brooklyn search at once. A few weeks later I had her reply. It so happened that she had a lawyer friend who lived in Bakersfield, California (of all places), and upon hearing the name Hobson, he immediately knew who the family was. He even knew that the eldest daughter, Marjorie Irene McCoy, was still living and residing in Bakersfield. I got the address and decided to call her at once.

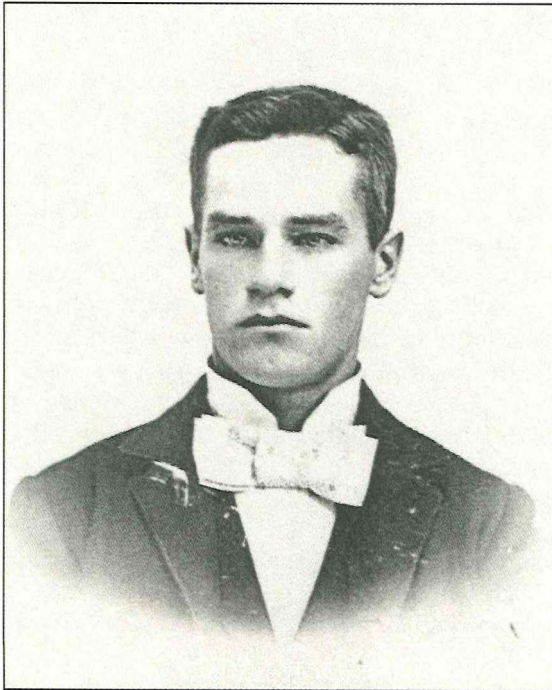


Fig. 3. Carl Sandgren (1874-1907).

Mrs. McCoy, who was around eighty years old at the time, was very kind and helpful and we had a long conversation over the phone but, alas, she did not know too much about the Sandgren family. Her father and brother had died when she was only two years old and, a few years later, her mother had remarried. The only two things that she had heard in regards to her father's siblings were that "an aunt died in Boston" and "an uncle went to Florida."

Let us save this for later and, instead, focus on the tragic Carl Sandgren family. Based on the recollections of Mrs. McCoy and her daughter, Mrs. Lynn Taylor, which were supported by various documents and newspaper clippings, the following family history emerged.

Carl Sandgren had come to live with his first cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Carlson, in Brooklyn, Iowa, in 1893. They had a little daughter, Anna, Carl's first cousin once-removed. Eventually Carl and Anna fell in love and wanted to get married, but Anna's parents would not hear of it. Their reasons for this are not known. It could possibly have something to do with the fact that Carl and Anna were too closely related. Carl and several of his siblings also seem to have been suffering from tuberculosis, a dreaded disease that the Carlsons did not want in the family.

Anyway, Carl and Anna eloped in January of 1902 (see the appendix for a complete newspaper account) and were married in Omaha, Nebraska, on 7 January. According to the article, they were believed to be heading for Corvallis, Oregon, but evidently they decided to go to Moline instead.

In 1905 Carl's brother, Henning Sandgren, died in New Mexico. His place of residence was shown as "San Francisco." Judging from the enlistment records shown above, he was not in the Army between 14 October 1903 and 14 November 1904, and was probably residing in northern California. It is believed that during that time he bought some land south and east of San Francisco; land that his brother Carl probably inherited upon his death. Carl and Anna decided to sell their house in Moline and move out to California. One reason for this was that the California climate was believed to be better for Carl's lungs. They arrived in Los Angeles in the spring of 1907 and initially stayed in a hotel. In early April, little Russel got ill and the worried parents got a prescription from the doctor. Somehow they misinterpreted the prescription and Russel was mistakenly given an overdose, from which he tragically died. The grief-stricken father brought his little son's coffin to a cemetery close to the land where the family intended to settle, possibly around Greenfield in Monterey County, and buried him there. The tragedy and feelings of guilt (and the tuberculosis?) were too much for Carl, who died in Los Angeles on 29 May 1907. He was buried in the same grave with his son. Anna H., who a few years later married Ralph Emerson Hobson (1882-1945) and had two more daughters, passed away in Bakersfield in 1963.

Now back to the recollections of Marjorie Irene Sandgren McCoy, that "an aunt died in Boston" and "an uncle went to Florida." I got in touch with a researcher in Boston who was able to find the death certificate for one Mathilda



Sandgren, who died 16 February 1945 in Boston at the age of almost eighty-five. She never married and there does not seem to have been anyone around to take care of the funeral arrangements. No probate record was ever made and the funeral and cemetery records did not give any clues as to living relatives. I even went for the hospital records, hoping that next of kin would have been shown, but such records had long since been destroyed. If they had indeed been found, chances are that they would only have listed the sister-in-law in Bakersfield, because how else would the niece Marjorie have known about the death of her aunt in Boston.

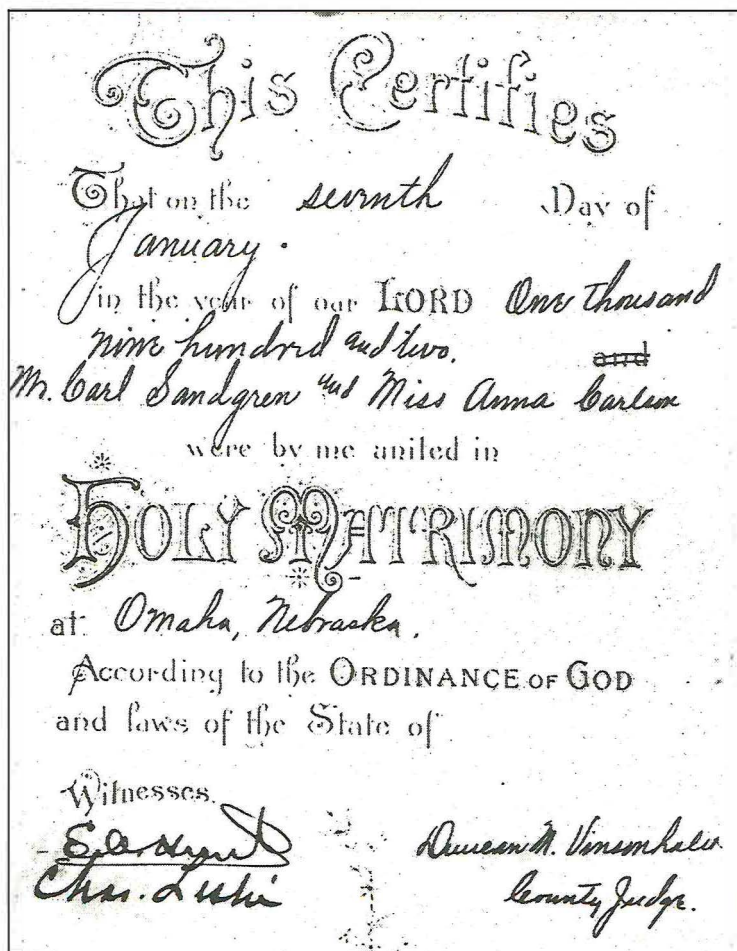


Fig. 4. Marriage certificate of the elopers, Carl Sandgren and Anna Carlson.

Why did Mathilda Sandgren move all the way from Moline to Boston, Massachusetts? Since her brother Carl and his family had gone to California on the other side of the continent, we must assume that she had some sort of a connection in Massachusetts. Could it be the brother, Frans Oskar Sandgren, who we know immigrated to the U.S.; or, perhaps, the elder brother, August Sandgren, who might have? I previously noted that, when Frans Oskar emigrated in 1889, he was not alone. A neighbor, Claes Emil Fredriksson (\*1868 in Kölingared) emigrated at the same time. And when Henning Sandgren and Carl Sandgren emigrated in 1893, they did so together with Claes Emil's younger brother, Axel Fredrik Fredriksson (\*1870 in Kölingared).

The Sandgren and the Fredriksson boys had not only known each other from birth, but had actually lived on the same farm. It was relatively easy to follow the traces of Claes Emil and Axel Fredrik, who both settled in Massachusetts. Axel Fredrik returned to Sweden in 1900 and I was able to find and contact his daughter, Mrs. Elin Gustavsson, in Vadstena. Mrs. Gustavsson did remember her father talking about the Sandgren brothers, and that they died young. We know this to be true for Henning and Carl, who were the ones that traveled with her father to the U.S. Whether it also described the fates of Frans Oskar and August we do not know.

Mrs. Gustavsson was also able to provide me with the address of her first cousin, Claes Emil's son, Mr. George Fredrickson, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In his letter, Mr. Fredrickson told me that he and his father had once, probably in the early 1920s, met a childhood friend and neighbor of his father in Boston. The man was neatly dressed and had a big black car with a private chauffeur. Afterwards, Claes Emil told his son that this friend had been so poor when they were children that he could not even afford to wear shoes. And now here he was, a wealthy shoe manufacturer from Lynn, Massachusetts. Mr. Fredrickson thought that this must have been one of the Sandgren brothers, probably Frans Oskar.

I immediately started to research census records, city directories, and lists of shoe manufacturers in regard to Lynn, Massachusetts; but, unless Frans Oskar had somehow changed his last name, he simply was not there. Likewise, there were no suitable Sandgrens in the Florida records. So, if Mrs. McCoy's recollections were correct, we can assume that the mysterious uncle, who went to Florida (perhaps to retire), might be the same man that was a shoe manufacturer in Lynn and the reason why Mathilda Sandgren moved to Boston around 1907. And why was it assumed in 1902 that the eloping couple was heading for Corvallis, Oregon? Perhaps the other brother had settled there!

Three of the five siblings in this evasive brood—Henning, Carl and Mathilda—have so far been found. But whatever happened to August and Frans Oskar? The search must go on!



**Fig. 5.** Russel Frederick Sandgren (1902-1907) and Marjorie Irene Sandgren McCoy (1905-1992), the only (?) Sandgren grandchildren.

#### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Mr. Glen E. Brolander, Mrs. Maurine M. Krohne, Mrs. Margaret Foster, Mrs. Donna Muntz, Mrs. Lynn Taylor and the late Mrs. Marjorie Irene (Sandgren) McCoy for their help and interest in this research project.

**Appendix**

This article appeared in the Brooklyn, Iowa, newspaper on 10 January 1902:

**LEAVE HOME AND FRIENDS****TWO WELL KNOWN YOUNG PEOPLE ELOPE  
MONDAY NIGHT- GO TO OMAHA TO BE MARRIED  
AND THENCE TO THE PACIFIC COAST.**

During the still hours of last Monday night an elopement was successfully carried out, so far as the getting away was concerned, by two young people both of whom are well known in Brooklyn and vicinity. The parties were Mr. Carl Sandgren and Miss Anna Carlson. Subsequent events show that in accordance with plans previously perfected Mr. Sandgren procured a rig and accompanied by a driver went to the Carlson home six miles north of Brooklyn, arriving there about nine o'clock in the evening. He was met by his sweetheart, who stepped into the carriage and was whirled away to Brooklyn. Upon arrival here they went to the home of some friends, Mr. and Mrs. Noble Wheeler, in south town, where they awaited the arrival of the two o'clock westbound flyer, which they boarded. From the information we have at hand it seems that the couple expected to go to Omaha where they were to be married, and after a few days sight-seeing in that city will go on to Corvallis, Oregon, where they expect to make their future home.

The plans of the eloping couple worked nicely and some little time elapsed before their disappearance was discovered. Mr. and Mrs. Carlson were not at home being on a visit to the western part of the state, but the other members of the family were, including the housekeeper, Mrs. Rasmussen. Nothing suspicious was noted in the young lady's actions during the day or evening, and all the household duties assigned to her had been performed in the usual manner. Some little time after supper she complained of being tired and went to her room ostensibly to retire. Instead she arranged her clothing in a convenient bundle and threw it out of the window, and then reappeared and assumed her place in the family circle. After a few minutes conversation, during which time some shrill whistles were heard, the signal no doubt that all was ready for departure, she arose and remarked that she would go out and get some pop corn and enjoy a pop corn feast during the remainder of the evening. This was the last seen of Miss Anna at home. As she did not return within a reasonable length of time, the other members of the family commenced to investigate; and, after calling at the home of O. B. Robeson across the road, where it was supposed she had gone, and finding she had not been there, the search

commenced in earnest. With the aid of a lantern it was discovered that a carriage had driven up to the gate and returned going south. Her room was then visited and its appearance was evidence that....(text missing)...was put into operation and when they arrived in town they were seen. A little later her brother, John Carlson, discovered their whereabouts and after some little parleying was granted an interview, but no persuasion that he could bring to bear would induce the young lady to return home. Failing in this he made an effort to have them wait here until Tuesday morning and have the marriage solemnized before leaving but his arguments in this direction were also ineffectual, and they departed on schedule as per previous arrangements.

The elopement is the sequel to a courtship that has not been without its hopes and fears and verifies the old adage that the course of true love never runs smooth. The attentions of Mr. Sandgren have been opposed by Mr. and Mrs. Carlson, who had what they considered the best of reasons for assuming this attitude. They reasoned and remonstrated with their daughter, but to no avail. Miss Carlson was a member of the graduating class of our high school last year, and on the night of the graduating exercises the young people had arrangements made to leave, but were prevented from carrying out their design by Mrs. Carlson, who discovered their purpose and at the close of the exercises took her daughter home. The parents again appealed to her reason, pleaded with her to accept their advice and counsel, and it was thought that the matter had been satisfactorily adjusted, as she seemed to accept their views as right and carried out the role that she had concluded to bring the courtship to a close. Their flight, however, shows that her submission to parental control was only temporary and for the purpose of maturing plans that would prove more successful the next time.

As above stated Mr. and Mrs. Carlson were not at home being guests of friends at Farnanville, when a telegram reached them announcing their daughter's departure. They left for home immediately, arriving Tuesday evening. That they are humiliated and heartbroken over the elopement is but natural. They have bestowed every affection upon their daughter, granted her every privilege and acceded to her every wish, unless wisdom dictated otherwise, and are rewarded only by ingratitude. Miss Carlson, who is nineteen years of age, leaves a splendid home, where she was surrounded by every comfort and most of the luxuries of life; leaves the scenes and associates of her childhood and goes to a strange land and among strange faces; leaves loved ones and friends and goes to the far West to make her home with the man of her choice. May love's young dream never be shattered. May the reality be as pleasant as the anticipation. May their married life be less tempestuous than their courtship. May the memory of her home life, the love and counsel of parents, the companionship of those near and dear, be a guiding light to nobler deeds as the years come and go.