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Two Stille Family Members who Visited Sweden in the 1800s

Erik Wikén*

Peter Stebbins Craig has emphasized the importance of Charles Janeway Stille's visit to Sweden in 1888, the homeland of the Stille family.¹ Stille, himself, became interested in the Swedish 18th century churches of the Delaware Valley and his visit to the Nordström family at Penningby manor in Uppland stimulated the young Fritz Nordström (1873-1958) to do research on Olof Stille, who in 1641 emigrated from the area around Penningby to New Sweden and there became the progenitor of the American Stille family.²

Some additional material concerning Charles Janeway Stille's contacts with Sweden may be of interest to the readers of *SAG*.

First of all it should be pointed out that Stille had visited Sweden already in 1860, since he must be identical to the Charles J. Stille, "gentleman from the United States," who on 27 July 1860 at the police headquarters in Stockholm had his passport validated for travel to Göteborg. He carried a passport issued in Washington, DC 4 May 1859, which had been stamped in Frankfurt am Main in Germany 19 July 1860.³ It seems correct to assume that during the years 1859-1860 he had made one of his study tours of Europe.

It was probably his wish to see the homeland of his family, which induced him to travel to Sweden. We don't know, however, to which extent he attempted to gather information concerning the New Sweden emigration during his first and very short visit to Sweden. That he did so during his second visit there in 1888 can be well documented. In Stockholm he met, among others, the chief librarian of the Royal Library, Harald Wieselgren (1835-1906), a renowned and important cultural figure in Stockholm at that time.⁴ He also met Nere Albert Elfving (1832-1891), American consul in Stockholm, and formerly an officer with the Union forces in the American Civil War.⁵ Through these persons he learned of the existence in the archives of the Uppsala Archdiocese (now deposited in the District Archives of Uppsala) of a large collection of documents dealing with the Swedish churches in the Delaware Valley during the 18th century and saw to it that the most

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important segments of this collection were copied and translated into English.⁶ This material he then deposited in the archives of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. He, himself, has written a report concerning this collection.⁷

Stille kept up his contacts with Wieselgren by correspondence. In the Royal Library in Stockholm there are four letters written by Stille to Wieselgren:

1. Letter, dated 16 Jan. 1891, in which Stille introduces the pastor of the Gloria Dei Church in Philadelphia, the Rev. W. Simes, who with his wife were planning a visit to Stockholm.
2. Letter, dated 23 Dec. 1891, in which Stille tells of his concern for Mrs. Elfving, after the demise of her husband.
3. Letter, dated 26 Dec. 1892, in which Stille reminisces about the friendliness he found in Stockholm and mentions especially Simon Nordström.⁸ He hopes that Wieselgren and other Swedes will visit the Columbian Exposition to be held in Chicago the following summer. He muses over how Mrs. Elfving is getting along with the copying of the documents.
4. Letter, dated 4 Dec. 1894, in which Stille mentions that he now has received the translation of Sandel's, the New Sweden clergyman's diary.⁹ He tells of using Josua Lindahl for the translation of Otto Norberg's work on the Swedish churches in Delaware.¹⁰ He was sorry not to have met the Swedes who during the summer of 1893 had visited the United States.

Stille was much interested in the Gloria Dei Church, founded by the Swedes in Philadelphia, and willed a third of his residuary estate to the parish.¹¹

But Charles Janeway Stille was not the only member of the Stille family to have visited Sweden, in fact he was not even the first. A person by the name of Moreton Stille, an American capitalist, 22 years of age, appeared at the police headquarters in Göteborg 24 July 1846 to have his passport properly validated for travel to Stockholm, and arrived in the capital city 30 July. His passport had been issued in Washington, DC 4 Sept. 1844 and had been stamped by the officials in Copenhagen 13 July 1846. He departed from Stockholm 26 Aug. 1846, his destination being Germany.¹² He must be identical to Moreton Stille (1822-1855), a younger brother of Charles Janeway, and later a physician in the U.S.¹³ His visit to Sweden was probably made in conjunction with a possible study tour of Europe.

It is unknown if the eldest of the Stille brothers, another physician, named Alfred Stille (1813-1900), also visited Sweden during the two and one half years which he spent in Europe studying.¹⁴ It is, however, a known fact, that he donated a letter from the last Swedish clergyman in the U.S., Dr. Nils Collin, to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.¹⁵

Notes

- ¹The Stille Family in America 1641-1772" in *Swedish American Genealogist*, Vol. VI, No.4, Dec. 1986, pp. 141-176.
- ²Fritz Nordström, "En lännabo, som 1648 (should be 1641) utvandrade till Nya Sverige" in *Hundare och skeppslag*, Vol. VIII, 1947-1948, pp. 106-116, translated as "Olof Stille in New Sweden" in *Swedish American Genealogist*, Vol. VI, No.3, Sept. 1986, pp.97-106.
- ³*Överståthållareämbetets journal över utländska resande (ÖÅU)* 27 juli 1860 (The Governor's of Stockholm Journal of Foreign Travellers for 27 July 1860) in the Stockholm Archives (*Stockholms stadsarkiv*). A reference to Stille in *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. XVIII, p.24, also refers to his visit to Sweden in 1888 as his *second*.
- ⁴*Svenska män och kvinnor*, I-VIII (Stockholm 1942-1955), Vol.VIII, pp. 354-355. It is probable that the acquaintanceship with Wieselgren began in Philadelphia during the Exposition there in 1876, when Wieselgren visited the city as a correspondent for the Stockholm newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*. (His newspaper articles from Philadelphia were later published in Stockholm in 1876 with the title *Öfver Atlanten*.) He had probably, as many of the Swedish commissioners at the exposition, been a frequent guest in Stille's home, this according to Josua Lindahl, one of the commissioners, who referred to this in his necrology of Stille in *Prärieblomman* 1906.
- ⁵*Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, Vol.XIII, pp. 306-308.
- ⁶The translation was done by the earlier mentioned Elfving's wife, Bernardine Elfving, née Lindstedt.
- ⁷"Archivum Americanum in the Consistory Court of the Archbishop of Upsal" in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. XV, (Philadelphia 1891), pp. 481-485. The Stille papers are to be found in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (see *Guide to the Manuscript Collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, Second edition (Philadelphia 1949), No. 634).
- ⁸Simon Nordström, Secretary in the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs in Sweden, was the uncle of Fritz Nordström.
- ⁹B(ernadine) E(lfving) (trans.), "Extracts from the Journal of Rev. Andreas Sandel, Pastor of 'Gloria Dei' Swedish Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, 1702-1719" in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. XXX (Philadelphia 1906), pp. 287-299; 445-452.
- ¹⁰Otto Norberg, *Svenska kyrkans mission vid Delaware i Nordamerika* (Stockholm 1893). A letter in the Royal Library in Stockholm from Lindahl to Wieselgren, dated Chicago 27 Nov. 1893, deals with the translation of Norberg's book for Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Josua Lindahl (1844-1912) was a natural scientist, who after the exposition in Philadelphia remained in the U.S. —*Svenska män och kvinnor*, IV, p. 606.
- ¹¹*Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. XVIII, p. 24.
- ¹²*Göteborgs och Bohus landskanslis passjournal* (Passport Journal of Göteborg and Bohus County, validated 24 July 1846) in Göteborg District Archives (*Göteborgs landsarkiv*); *ÖÅU* (Register of Foreign Travellers) dated 30 July 1846, Stockholm City Archives (*Stockholms stadsarkiv*).
- ¹³*The National Union Catalog Pre- 1956 Imprints*, Vol. 569, p.632.
- ¹⁴*Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. XVIII, p.23; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. IX, p. 359.
- ¹⁵Nicholas Collin, "To the members of the Swedish Lutheran Churches of Wicacoa, Kingsessing and Upper Merion, dat. Philadelphia Oct. 1, 1797" in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. XII (Philadelphia 1888), pp. 253-255.