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The Story of Fredrik Herman Chasseur

Erik Wikén*

In the Swedish-American newspaper *Hemlandet*, dated 13 Dec. 1857, there appears a Swedish translation of a letter, dated 24 March 1857, written by a Swede by the name of Chasseur. The newspaper mentions in the opening paragraph that the original English version had been published in “a description of Wisconsin and the area around Lake Superior on the Wisconsin side”. Chasseur mentions in his letter that despite its northerly location, the area is quite suitable for farming and gardening.

Hemlandet claims that Chasseur supposedly came from the island of Gotland and had been residing in the United States eighteen years. This is correct. Fredrik Herman Chasseur was born in Visby 16 April 1813, the son of Carl Anton Albert Johan Chasseur, Consul for Prussia and the Netherlands in Visby, and at one time the owner of a sugar mill, and Catharina Margareta Herlitz.¹ He received a passport for travel to America in Visby 23 Aug. 1839.²

According to Norelius' citation of the original letter Chasseur had traveled widely in the United States and had finally been urged to proceed to Lake Superior. For a period of fourteen years he had there been engaged in gardening.³

We get a glimpse of his peregrinations in a letter written by Anders Wilhelm Retzius,⁴ dated Cincinnati, OH 3 June 1848, in which he states that just at that time in Cincinnati there resided:

“Mr: Chessure, a fool, who lived in Stockholm a few years back, and who had been sent from Visby to study the manufacture of sugar by cooking sugarbeets”.⁵

He is doubtlessly identical to a gardener by the name of F.W. Chasseur, 40 years old, who arrived in New York 26 July 1855 aboard the *Panama* from Hamburg. He was probably returning to the United States after a visit to his native land.

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Neither the library at the University of Wisconsin in Superior nor the Superior, WI Public Library has been able to document the existence of the Wisconsin description in which Chasseur's original letter appeared. It must obviously have been published between 24 March 1857, the date of the letter, and the translation in *Hemlandet* 13 Dec. 1857. Can any reader of *SAG* help? It would also be interesting to know something about Chasseur's family life and when he died.

Notes

¹ Oskar Rosman, *Genealogiska anteckningar om några gotländska släkter* (Visby 1887), p. 107.

² *Swedish American Genealogist*, 1982, pp. 103, 107. The name is here spelled erroneously Chausseur.

³ Eric Norelius, *De svenska luterska församlingarnas och svenskarnes historia i Amerika*, I-II (Rock Island, IL 1890-1916), I, p. 759.

⁴ *Swedish American Genealogist*, 1983, pp. 150, 156.

⁵ The letter is one of a number of such letters from the United States by Anders Wilhelm Retzius to his father, Anders Adolph Retzius, in the collections of the Royal Swedish Scientific Academy, now at the Stockholm University Library.

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