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Declarations of Intention of Four Swedish Pioneers in Minnesota

James E. Erickson

A recently published transcription and compilation of the declarations of intention of 262 Minnesota pioneers included five Swedes. More specifically, during the two-year period from 2 September 1850 to 30 August 1852, the following individuals appeared before Harvey Wilson, Clerk of the District Court, in Stillwater, Washington Co., Minnesota Territory: Jacob Foslstrom (Fahlstrom), Charles Daniel Freeman, Charles Fernstrom (Fernstrom), Eric Petterson (Petersson), and Edward P. Rosall.

Fahlstrom's declaration of intention has already been discussed, and will not be included in this paper. The declarations of intention of the remaining four individuals are presented below in chronological order. Admittedly, the information contained in the declarations of Fernstrom and Petersson is noteworthy only in the sense that it corroborates what has already been published about these two well-known Minnesota pioneers. The declarations of Freeman and Rosall, on the other hand, are of potentially greater significance, because the information they contain is sufficient to tentatively identify these less well-known immigrants.

Charles Daniel Freeman

The following information was included in Freeman's declaration of intention:

Name: Charles Daniel Freeman
Age: [—]
Birthplace and Birth Date: Sweden, October 1829
Place and Date of Arrival in U. S.: Boston, 1848
Declaration Date: 14 April 1851
Before Whom: H. Wilson, Clerk
Jurisdiction: Minnesota Territory, Washington County
Date Filed: 14 April 1851

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Declarations of Intention of Four Swedish Pioneers

One of the emigrants, who sailed from Göteborg aboard the brig Augusta and arrived in Boston, MA on 9 October 1848, was a nineteen-year-old servant listed as Carl D. Åkersson. Olsson and Wikén describe him thus:

Probably Carl Daniel Åkerström who received pp. in Jönköping 15 July 1848 for travel to Texas. He was the foster s. of Jonas Nilsson, farmer in Barkeryd Parish (Jön.), and Lena Jonasdotter and had come to them as a ward from the General Orphanage (Allmänna Barnhuset) in Stockholm. He was b. in Mariestad 10 Oct. 1829, s. Peter D. Åkerström and Johanna Mathilda Wallblom.

The Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd) for Barkeryd Parish notes that the foster son Carl Daniel Åkerström left the village of Ryssby Nedregård for Texas on 15 July 1848, whereas the Moving Out Record (Uttlyttningsslängd) lists him as a farm hand (dräng) leaving for Texas on 17 July 1848. There is no indication that Åkerström ever reached Texas or, if he did, that he ever remained there. Is it possible that he ended up in Minnesota?

There is correspondence in the following information contained in both the Olsson/Wikén quote and the accompanying declaration of intention: 1) birthplace and birth date (i.e., Sweden, October 1829); 2) place and date of arrival in the U.S. (i.e., Boston, 1848); and 3) first and middle names (i.e., Carl/Charles Daniel). While the evidence is admittedly circumstantial, it is sufficient to lead me to the tentative conclusion that Carl Daniel Åkerström and Charles Daniel Freeman are the same individual. Further research will be needed to verify this supposition.

Charles Fernstrom (Fernström)

The following information was included in Fernström's declaration of intention:
Name: Charles Fernstrom
Age: [—]
Birthplace and Birth Date: Sweden, 1829
Place and Date of Arrival in U. S.: New York, April 1850
Declaration Date: 12 June 1851
Before Whom: H. Wilson, Clerk
Jurisdiction: Minnesota Territory, Washington County
Date Filed: 12 June 1851
Swedish American Genealogist

Carl August Fernström was born in Skara City Parish (Skar.) on 22 August 1831, the first child of city councilman (Skararkåkemannen) Johan Gustaf Fernström, born in Tysslinge Parish (Öre.) on 8 May 1793, and Margareta Wennberg. On 26 March 1850, Carl August, then an eighteen-year-old clerk (handelsbetjänt), left dwelling No. 34 in Skara for North America. He and two traveling companions, August Wilhelm Sandahl and Johan Oscar Roos, sailed from Göteborg aboard the brig John and arrived in New York on 20 May 1850. These three Västgötes (i.e., natives of the historical province of Västergötland) then traveled to Minnesota, where they are credited with building the first Swedish log cabin and founding the first Swedish settlement at Hay Lake (near Marine on the St. Croix), Washington Co., on 18 October 1850.

After spending three years (ca. 1851/52-1855) in California digging for gold, Fernström returned to the Midwest and settled in Iowa, where he married Mabel Evans on 4 January 1870 and raised a family of four children (Charles, Alice, Helen and ?). Fernström was employed in farming and in the mercantile business. After retiring in 1890, he worked as a cashier at the Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank in Lone Tree, IA. He died in Lone Tree on 3 July 1905.

**Eric Petterson (Petersson)**

The following information was included in Petterson’s declaration of intention:

*Name:* Eric Petterson  
*Age:* [—]  
*Birthplace and Birth Date:* Sweden, 1822  
*Place and Date of Arrival in U. S.:* Boston, May 1849  
*Declaration Date:* 25 March 1851  
*Before Whom:* H. Wilson, Clerk  
*Jurisdiction:* Minnesota Territory, Washington County  
*Date Filed:* 25 March 1851

Erik Petersson was born in Immen, Karlskoga Parish (Öre.) on 26 March 1822, the son of Peter Larsson and Anna Eriksson. At the age of twenty-seven, he sailed from Göteborg aboard the brig John and arrived in Boston, MA on 30 April 1849. Prior to his declaration in Washington Co., Minnesota Territory, on 12 June 1851, Petersson lived in Illinois; and, subsequent to his declaration, he helped found the Swedish settlement in Stockholm, Pepin Co., WI. Erik returned
to Sweden in 1854, married Lovisa Josephsson of Karlskoga, and then returned to
Stockholm, WI. Emil Lund completes their story:

In Sabylund church’s oldest book of minutes pastor Norelius has written, among other things, the following: “In 1856 Isak Newman came to me in Vasa and asked me to come with him to Stockholm to conduct a funeral. The deceased was Erik Peterson’s first wife. They lived in a log house near the lake.” It was this Peterson, from Karlskoga in Värmland, who first led the Swedes (mostly individuals from Värmland) to this region in 1854. Peterson “the king of Stockholm,” was “selfish and capricious, without principles in a religious sense;” killed by accident in 1887.

After Lovisa’s death, Erik married Maren Olsdatter at the Sabylund Lutheran Church, Stockholm, WI on 17 December 1858. Maren was born in Lumdal Parish, Norway, on 29 January 1838.

Edward P. Rosall

The following information was included in Rosall’s declaration of intention:

Name: Edward P. Rosall
Age: 25
Birthplace and Birth Date: Kronoberg, Sweden, 27 May 1827
Place and Date of Arrival in U. S.: New York, 22 September 1850
Declaration Date: 30 August 1852
Before Whom: H. Wilson, Clerk
Jurisdiction: Minnesota Territory, Washington County
Date Filed: 30 August 1852

One of the passengers who boarded the brig Themis in Göteborg and arrived in
New York, NY on 21 September 1850, was a twenty-three-year-old listed as Eskel Pehrson. Olsson and Wikén describe him thus:

Eskil Pehrsson emigr. together with his stepfather, Israel Andersson, ...from
Groeryd, Hinneryd Parish (Kron.). He was b. in Höga Hyltan, Hinneryd 27 May
1827, s. Pehr Johansson and Stina Eskilsdotter. After her husband’s death Stina
Eskilsdotter m. Israel Andersson...
Swedish American Genealogist

Pehrsson's birth date is identical with the birth date listed by Rosall in his declaration of intention (i.e., 27 May 1827). Pehrsson's parish of birth (i.e., Hinneryd) is located in Kronoberg County, which is listed as Rosall's place of birth.14 Furthermore, there is striking correspondence in the dates and places of arrival listed for Pehrsson and Rosall (i.e., 21 September 1850, New York, and 22 September 1850, New York, respectively). Although the lines of evidence noted above are circumstantial, they point to the tentative conclusion that Eskil Pehrsson and Edward P. Rosall are the same individual. Further research will be needed to verify this supposition.

1 James E. Erickson, Declarations of Intention (1847-1852) of 262 Minnesota Pioneers (Roseville, MN: Park Genealogical Books, 1997)
3 Minnesota Historical Society (hereafter MHS), State Archives Microfilm (hereafter SAM) 49, Reel 8, pp. 801-802
5 Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Barkeryd Parish (Jön.), AI:17, 1845-1849, pp. 59, 79 (SVAR microfiche 135437); Moving Out Record (Utflyttningstängd), Barkeryd Parish (Jön.), B:1, 1848, p. 61, No. 19 (Svensk Arkivinformation, hereafter SVAR, microfiche 135438)
6 Ernst Severin, (Ed.), Svenskarna i Texas i ord och bild 1838-1918. Vol. I and II (Austin, TX, 1918)
7 MHS, SAM 49, Reel 8, pp. 630-631
8 SPAUS, p. 389, No. 3717
9 Household Examination Roll (Husförhörslängd), Skara City Parish (Skar.), AI:19, 1848-1853, p. 80 (SVAR microfiche 512308, 3/9); Moving Out Record (Uutflyttningslängd), Skara City and Country Parishes, B:5, 1850, No. 3 (SVAR microfiche 514106, 1/7)
10 SPAUS, p. 111, No. 3717
12 SPAUS, p. 389, No. 3717
13 MHS, SAM 49, Reel 11, pp. 306-307
14 SPAUS, pp. 84 and 329, No. 2612
15 Church Register, Sabylund Lutheran Church, Stockholm, Pepin Co., WI, pp. 8-9 (Emigrantinstitutet Svenskamerikanska kyrkoarkiv microfilm reel 57, American Swedish Institute, Minneapolis, MN)
16 MHS, SAM 49, Reel 11, pp. 647-648
17 SPAUS, pp. 131 and 431, No. 4561
18 Household Examination Rolls (Husförhörslängder), Hinneryd Parish (Kron.), AI:10, 1838-1844, pp. 14 and 274; AI:11, 1851-1856, p. 281 (microfilm reels II 97 and II 98, respectively, Svenska Emigrantinstitutet, Växjö, Sweden)