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# Anders Fredrik Kindberg, the Helpful Swede in New York in the 19th Century

Erik Wikén\*

Kindberg was the name of a Swede, residing in New York City, who often during the 1840s and 1850s was recommended by Swedish emigrants as a person whom new-comers could contact upon arrival in New York.

It might be of interest to readers of *SAG* to cite a few examples referring to this well-known Swede, to determine his background and to study what we know of his many activities.

In 1843 Erik Hedström relates the following: "A young country man, mr. Kindberg, spared neither time nor pains on our behalf."<sup>1</sup>

Johannes Heljesson writes in 1852: "persons to whom one may safely turn to (for advice) in New York are a ship chandler named Kindberg and a pastor Hedström."<sup>2</sup>

Olof Andersson writing in 1853: "...find a man..., namely shipping agent Kindberg and ask him for a contract on the railroad to Chicago. He will help you."<sup>3</sup>

Carl E. Swalander gives the following judgment concerning Kindberg in 1854: "he can be recommended to every businessman as a man of integrity, whom one may depend upon as a reliable and reasonably priced agent, who enjoys the unlimited and well deserved confidence of his countrymen."<sup>4</sup>

His full name was Anders Fredrik Kindberg, born in Gärdserum Parish (Ög.) 1 Dec. 1813, son of Jonas Kindberg, forester (*skogvaktare*), and Anna Lisa Månsdotter.<sup>5</sup> After having been employed in Stockholm as a bookkeeper for a few years he emigrated to the U.S. in 1838, after having secured a passport 7 Aug.<sup>6</sup> He settled in New York as a ship chandler, residing first at 29 Old Slip and later at 85 West Street. He married, unknown when, a considerably younger woman named Sarah M. Thompson, daughter of John Thompson. She died in 1854 at the age of 23 years.<sup>7</sup> Kullgren refers to Kindberg in 1856 as a widower with children.<sup>8</sup>

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## Swedish American Genealogist

Witting refers to Kindberg as "an outstanding Swedish merchant" and relates that Hedström, the Swedish Methodist pastor aboard the Bethel Ship in New York harbor, deposited funds given to Hedström by Jenny Lind to be distributed to the poor. He suggested this method since he believed that Kindberg, better than himself, understood and could document the needs of those seeking financial help.<sup>9</sup>

He was an agent for Gustaf Obom's Swedish American newspaper, *Skandinaven*, which was published in New York 1851-1853.<sup>10</sup> In 1851 Erik Ulrik Norberg wanted Kindberg to promote the new Swedish settlement in Chisago Lake, MN<sup>11</sup> to the newly arrived Swedes in New York and on 17 March 1858 the Norwegian American newspaper, *Emigranten*, published in Madison, WI announced that Kindberg could offer information concerning emigration to the United States.

A special note should be made of Kindberg's relationship to *Skandinaviska föreningen* (The Scandinavian Society) in New York, an organization which has been largely neglected by emigration scholars.<sup>12</sup> The society was founded 9 July 1844, at the behest of Harro Paul Haring (1798-1870), at that time residing in New York. Though he was born in the German-speaking portion of Schleswig-Holstein, he was an activist in the cause of Scandinavian unity.<sup>13</sup>

At a meeting of the society 5 April 1847 Kindberg was elected president. He had probably been the driving force when the society at the beginning of the year published the first Scandinavian newspaper in America, *Skandinavia*, and was its editor during the brief existence of the newspaper.<sup>14</sup>

During Kindberg's time as president, the society collected funds during 1848 for the relief of widows and children in Denmark, whose husbands and fathers had lost their lives in the war with Prussia.<sup>15</sup>

The society also established a library, of which two catalogues have been preserved, one from 1867 (now in the University Library in Oslo) and one from 1902.<sup>16</sup>

I have not been able to determine the eventual tie that the Scandinavian Society might have had with later and similar organizations.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Undated letter, publ. in *Aftonbladet* (Stockholm) 20 Sept. 1843, transl. in *Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* 1981, pp. 241-247. Erik Hedström arr. in New York 6 June 1843, Nils William Olsson and Erik Wikén, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in the United States 1820-1850* (Stockholm 1995) (abbreviated SPAUS) (723), pp. 35, 190.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter, dated Anderstorp, P. O. Prairie la Cross, WI 30 Nov. 1852, publ. in *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* 2 March 1853. Johannes Heljesson emigr. with his wife and seven children from Lena Parish (Älvs.) and arr. in New York aboard the *Arethusa* 12 June 1852. Pastor Hedström is the well-known Methodist clergyman of the Bethel ship in New York's harbor, SPAUS (222), pp. 13, 158-159.
- <sup>3</sup> Letter, dated Bishop Hill 1 Feb 1853, publ. by Lilly Setterdahl in *Vår hembygd* (Östervåla) 5, 1981, p. 435 and transl. by her in *Western Illinois Regional Studies* I:2, Fall 1978, pp. 163-165. Olof Andersson arr. in New York 8 March 1847, SPAUS (2124) pp. 71, 297.
- <sup>4</sup> Letter, dated 1 July 1854 in Carl E. Swaländer, *Bref om America till Hemmavarande Landsmän, Andra Brefvet* (Halmstad 1855), p. 28. Concerning Swaländer see Gösta Lext, *Studier rörande svensk emigration till Nordamerika 1850-1880* (Göteborg 1977), pp. 325-327.
- <sup>5</sup> Gärdserum Church Archives (Vadstena District Archives). An erroneous statement by Thomas Hansen Erslev in *Almindeligt Forfatter-Lexicon for Kongeriget Danmark*. Supplement, Andet Bind (Kjøbenhavn 1864), p. 45 states that Kindberg was b. in Denmark and Jul Dieserud (see note 14) states that he was a Norwegian national.
- <sup>6</sup> Överståthållarämbetets passjournal 1838 (Stockholm City Archives).
- <sup>7</sup> *New York Evening Post* 4 April 1854 (Gertrude A. Barber, *New York Evening Post Death Notices*, in *New York Historical Society*).
- <sup>8</sup> Carl Allvar Kullgren, *Dagbok* (Göteborg District Archives).
- <sup>9</sup> Victor Witting, *Minnen ur mitt lif*. Second edition (Worcester, MA 1904).
- <sup>10</sup> *Skandinaven* 27 Oct. 1852 (Royal Library, Stockholm).
- <sup>11</sup> Ulf Beijbom, *Utvandrarna och Svensk-Amerika* (Stockholm 1986), p. 67.
- <sup>12</sup> Older references are to be found in Axel Felix (pseudonym for Hans Peter Christian Hansen), *Langt fra Danmark* (Kjøbenhavn 1852-1855) 1, pp. 54-65, furthermore in an article by Ferd. S. Winslow in the newspaper *Emigranten* (Inmansville, WI) 30 Jan. 1857 and Robert Watt, *Hinsides Atlanterhavet* (Kjøbenhavn 1872-1874) II, pp. 142-160.
- <sup>13</sup> Concerning Haring see *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 7 (Berlin 1966) pp. 702-703. For a bibliography of his many works see *Gesamtverzeichnis des Deutschsprachlichen Schrifttums (GV) 1700-1910*, vol. 56 (München ... 1982) pp. 117-119. In New York he published in 1844 *Episteln an die Fourieristen and Moses zu Tanis*.
- In a number of *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* dated 13 July 1847 there is a reference to an issue of the society's newspaper *Skandinavia*, now lost, which stated that in the quarters of the society in New York there hung a painting by Haring, which depicted Scandinavia as a beautiful young lady, who, leaning against an old rune stone, tramples the symbols of absolutism under her feet. Over her head one could view the North Star and in the background could be seen the sea, reflecting the clear and rosy glow of the early morning light.
- <sup>14</sup> Jul Dieserud, "Skandinavia, ikke 'Nordlyset', var det første norsk-danske blad i Amerika" in *Nordmannsforbundet* 22, 1929, pp. 14-17. In a letter by Johannes Wilhelm Christian Dietrichson, dated Koshkonong, WI 23 Aug. 1847 (trans. in *Land of Their Choice*, ed. by Theodore C. Blegen, Minneapolis, MN 1955, p. 150) he believes that there were 15 or 16 issues of *Skandinavia* published. Only four issues, Nos. 5-8 have been preserved in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. These are dated 15 March, 15 April, 1 May and 15 May 1847.
- <sup>15</sup> Letter, dated 30 Nov. 1848 from the Scandinavian Society in New York to Skandinavisk Selskab in Kjøbenhavn, mentions the collection and gives a list of the almost 200 Scandinavian donors (Skandinavisk Selskabs handlingar, Add. 290 fol. in the Royal Library, Kjøbenhavn).
- <sup>16</sup> National Union Catalogue Pre-1956 Imprints, Vol. 48, p. 65.