

Swedish American Genealogist

Volume 37 | Number 1

Article 2

3-1-2017

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Robert Willey

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Recommended Citation

Willey, Robert (2017) "Genealogy Treasure," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 37 : No. 1 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol37/iss1/2>

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Genealogy Treasure

– Or what you may find in newspapers

BY ROBERT WILLEY

In early October of last year one of my brothers informed me of the Swedish American Newspaper Project recently made available by the Minnesota Historical Society. When I entered their web site I found amazing information regarding my family's ancestors who emigrated from Höganäs, Sweden, to Worcester, Massachusetts, during the 1890's and early 1900's. There were 21 of my family's ancestors identified in over 200 articles published in the *Svea* and *Scandinavia* newspapers from 1889 to 1922.

What made it more meaningful was that I personally knew many of the individuals and have their oral family histories.

Now came the challenge of understanding the news articles content, since I do not read Swedish. What followed was an extensive search by me for translation resources. Since translating this volume of potential articles would be a costly adventure, I sought a combination of free resources from relatives and several individuals with whom I share mutual ancestors found on <ancestry.com>. Then I com-

municated through the internet to search for paid translation services found at the Swenson Center and the University of Wisconsin.

Eight individuals (three in the United States, one in Denmark & four in Sweden) were successfully recruited to translate newspaper articles in a relatively short period of time. Within two months, 80 family-related articles have been completed. The contents found have revealed a personal detailed record of their daily lives (church activities, employment, and involvement in civic, political, and social organizations); even my grandfather's photograph in 1920. They were indeed active participants in the early life of the Swedish community.

The findings are especially important to me since I have been on a genealogy journey since 1971, made two trips to Sweden communicating with relatives, and written a family genealogy book and several published genealogy articles over the years. Needless to say, I have been able learn much more than I ever anticipated and look forward to sharing the findings with my son, brothers, and grandchildren.

Here is an example from *Svea* 11 June 1911:

På villospår.
En ung herre vid namn Paul, 3 år gammal och son till mr och mrs Martin Swanson, 6 Watson 'st., Greendale, beslöt sig förra torsdagen för att bese Worcester på egen hand. Han tog spårvagnen till att börja med, men gick senare till fots. I närheten af Odd Fellows byggnad kom emellertid den stygge farbror polis och lade vantarna på mr Swanson j:r, och förde honom till polisstationen, där senare mr Swanson s:r afhämtade sitt vilsekomna kött och blod.

“On a wrong track”

A young man by the name of Paul, three years old and son to Mr. & Mrs. Martin Swanson, 6 Watson Street, Greendale, decided last Thursday to look at Worcester all alone. He took the streetcar at the beginning, but later walked on foot. Close to the Odd Fellows Home came the unkind policeman who brought Mr. Swanson Jr. to the police station, there later Mr. Martin Swanson Sr. collected his straying “flesh and blood”.

(This young adventurer later became the uncle of the author).

Postcard, to the left, from 1909 shows the Old Union Station in Worcester, and the proposed new one.

Author Robert Willey's
e-mail is <hogworc@comcast.net>

