

Swedish Roots In Oregon

An Immigration Research Project

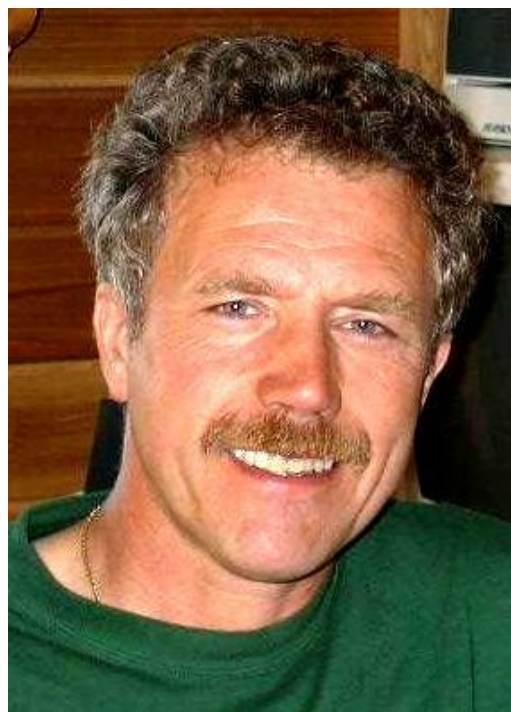
December 2010 Newsletter

Editor: Ingeborg Dean

Volume 22

Message from the President, Lars Nordström

Dear friends and readers, it has been another very busy and exciting year for Swedish Roots in Oregon. Shortly after I wrote the previous President's Message in the spring, the board of directors decided to take a serious look at the possibility of publishing another book. Encouraged by the great reviews and good sales of *Swedish Oregon*, we wanted to see if we could find the resources to have a recent Swedish book translated into English. This was *De nya utvandrarerna*, oral histories compiled and edited by yours truly, and originally published in Sweden in 2005. The English title of the book will be *Ten New Lives: Swedes in the Pacific Northwest*. Here, five Swedish men and five Swedish women describe how they ended up in the Pacific Northwest.



A modest translation grant from the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation made the whole project possible, and we hope that you will enjoy learning about the modern immigrant experience. Keep an eye out for this book in March.

Swedish Roots in Oregon has also continued in its library outreach effort. After the success of the first library exhibit and talk at the Tigard Public Library in the spring, a second exhibit recently opened at the Beaverton City Library. Ross Fogelquist was in charge of organizing a large display of historical photographs depicting Swedish-American life in Oregon. Our educational goal of reaching as many Oregonians as possible continues, and Ross has contacted the Lake Oswego public library for an exhibit and a lecture some time in the spring.

Our website also continues to expand. Recently SRIO webmaster Herje Wikegård posted new material in both Swedish and English about Samuel Magnus Hill's correspondence with Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf. In 1909, the widely read and much admired Selma Lagerlöf became the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize for literature, and over the years Samuel Magnus Hill wrote a series of letters to Lagerlöf trying to persuade her to come to the United States so that she could write about the Swedish-Americans.

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She never did, but it is a very interesting story. Incidentally, for those of you who have not read Selma Lagerlöf, a new, excellent translation of the novel *The Saga of Gösta Berling* was published by Penguin Books last year in the United States.

Looking ahead, we also hope to make 2011 a year when we renew our genealogical efforts. Ten years ago, Bertil Sundvall, a SRIO founding member and genealogist, started collecting and entering names of early Swedish immigrants to Oregon into a database. Unfortunately, this project was never completed and—for complicated technical reasons—the database was never made available on our website. We are now hopeful that we might finally be able to implement our long-standing goal of making a database of Swedish immigrants to Oregon available to our website visitors.

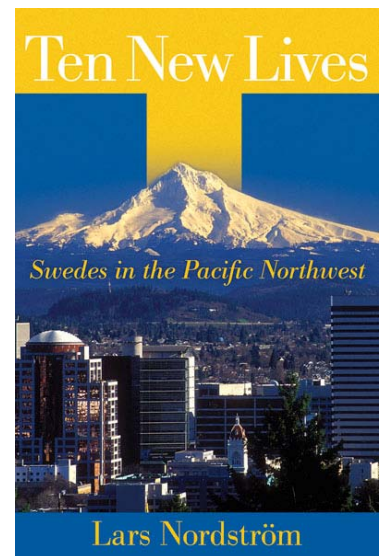
Keep in touch and have a great winter season!

A New Book by Swedish Roots in Oregon

After the success of *Swedish Oregon* (2008), which was praised by reviewers near and far, SRIO was encouraged to start working on yet another volume. This new book is a translation of ten oral histories compiled and edited by Lars Nordström at the turn of the new millennium. It was originally published in Sweden in 2005 as *De nya utvandrarerna* [the new emigrants], and the English title is *Ten New Lives: Swedes in the Pacific Northwest*. So far it remains the only non-academic book about contemporary Swedish immigrants to the United States.

In *Ten New Lives* you will meet contemporary Swedish immigrants to the Pacific Northwest who tell their stories of how they came to leave Sweden for the United States. The five men and women all arrived in the post-Vietnam War period, and offer some interesting perspectives on Sweden and the United States. They explore many aspects of the bi-cultural experience; probe cultural and linguistic allegiances; illuminate unique and divergent Swedish and Swedish-American needs; and re-define the immigrant experience in the internet era.

Keep an eye out for this book in March 2011.



SRIO Visits Another Public Library

The SRIO Library Committee, under the enthusiastic leadership of Ross Fogelquist, made arrangements for a late October exhibit at the Beaverton City Library. Several members of the committee met with library personnel to hang a Swedish Roots in Oregon banner and display a number of archival photographs depicting Swedish Oregon. These historical photographs, provided with short captions, showed glimpses from around the state. Among other things, viewers could see what the Swedish newspaper *Oregon Posten* (1908 – 1936) looked like, view early pictures of the Swedish Emanuel Hospital, Linnea Hall in NW Portland, tailors and loggers, Midsummer celebrations and Portland's Swedish choir. The exhibit was displayed on the side of the stairs leading to the second floor and was easily visible as visitors entered the library.



On the afternoon of October 31st Lars Nordström gave a lecture at the library on the history of the Swedes of Oregon. In spite of it being Halloween, the room filled to the last seat with about 50 people. As always, new and interesting contacts were made with members of the Swedish-American community in the Portland area. Afterwards, coffee was served with cardamom bread and ginger-snaps while Doreen Dwigans entertained everyone with traditional Swedish accordion music. Books and booklets were sold and the afternoon was a great success.

Next spring there will be yet another Swedish Roots in Oregon exhibit at the Lake Oswego public library.

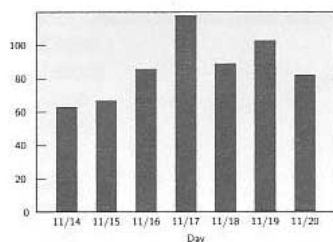
SRIO Event Calendar 2010 and 2011

- Oct 12, Tuesday, 6 pm, "The Swedes of Oregon," Yamhill County Historical Society, Seventh Day Adventist Church, 1500 Old Sheridan Rd, McMinnville.
 - Oct. 31, Sunday, 3 pm, "The History of the Swedes of Oregon," Beaverton Public Library, Beaverton
 - Dec 4-5, 26th Annual ScanFair at Portland State University Smith Memorial Center Ballroom, 3rd Floor, 1825 SW Broadway, Portland, Oregon.
 - March 2011, Swedish Roots in Oregon will exhibit at the Lake Oswego public library.
 - June 2011, Swedish Roots in Oregon will exhibit at the SHF Midsummer Event.
- . Please check our website under EVENTS for the details on this upcoming event.



What you should know about our web-site and the weekly statistics report for swedishrootsinoregon.org covering 11/14/2010 - 11/20/2010.

Unique Visits

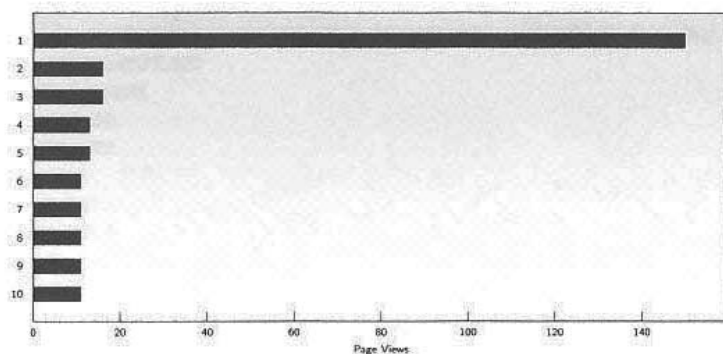


Date	Amount	
Sunday	11/14/2010	63
Monday	11/15/2010	67
Tuesday	11/16/2010	86
Wednesday	11/17/2010	118
Thursday	11/18/2010	89
Friday	11/19/2010	103
Saturday	11/20/2010	82
Total		608

During this week we had 608 visitors which seems to be the weekly normal, with focus on Wednesday and Fridays

This analysis summarizes multiple page impressions of an individual visitor into unique visits. A visitor is counted as an unique visit when requesting at least one page. If more than 30 minutes have elapsed since the first page impression, further requests will be counted as a new unique visit.

Top 10 Popular Pages



Rank	Page	Amount	%
1	swedishrootsinoregon.org/index.htm	150	18
2	swedishrootsinoregon.org/Stories.htm	16	1
3	swedishrootsinoregon.org/Stories/PillarsOfSwedishHeritage_TheSingingSocieties.pdf	16	1
4	swedishrootsinoregon.org/Publications/Hill/LifeInAmerica.htm	13	1
5	swedishrootsinoregon.org/Publications/Hill/PoemsEnglish.htm	13	1
6	swedishrootsinoregon.org/Publications/Biographies.htm	11	1
7	swedishrootsinoregon.org/Publications/Booklets.htm	11	1
8	swedishrootsinoregon.org/Publications/Hill/HillsBirthplace.htm	11	1
9	swedishrootsinoregon.org/newsletters.htm	11	1
10	swedishrootsinoregon.org/publications.htm	11	1
Total		817	

The most popular pages, not including the index page, was Stories, especially the Pillars of Swedish Heritage and the Singing Society. Also S.M. Hill's Life in America and Poems gathered great interest.

These statistics show you the most frequently called pages.

By visiting the web-site you will be familiar with the wealth of information that is available about Swedish Oregon. You are also able to read the newsletters in full color.

New items on the web-site!

New! Selma Lagerlöf - Artikel och brev (Swedish)

New! Selma Lagerlöf - Introduction and Letters (English)

Selma Otilia Lovisa Lagerlöf (20 November 1858–16 March 1940) was a Swedish author. She was the first female writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature (1909), and most widely known for her children's book *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (*The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*).

Her home, Mårbacka in Värmland, is preserved as a museum. Since 1992, her portrait has been featured on the Swedish 20 krona banknote.



Alma Nygren Janisch, Traces of a Swedish Immigrant's Life in Portland, OR.

by Ingeborg Dean

Between 1851 and 1925, 44,533 people left the province of Dalarna, Sweden for North America. Among those emigrants were two of my great-uncles, Karl-Erik and Klas Nygren as well as their older sister, Alma, whose story this is. A maternal aunt of theirs had left earlier, also from the parish of Stora Tuna, which lost 18% of its population during the great waves of emigration from Sweden.



Alma Elisabet, born on October 25, 1875 was the daughter of Aurora and Erik Nygren and the eldest of twelve children. Six of these children died young, three emigrated to America, never to return and of the three who remained in Sweden, one was my paternal grandfather. Erik Nygren was most likely a subsistence farmer. When I was a child, the simple two-room cottage, that had housed his large family, was still standing, and spoke of the deep poverty and struggles with illness and death that drove so many Swedes to leave for America.

In the 1870s the large iron mills, that employed most people, dominated my hometown ever since they were built. My two great uncles who emigrated in 1906 and 1910 must have worked there, judging from their occupations in Worcester, MA where they settled. For their sister Alma there can only have been two choices, a life much like her mother's, or emigration. She chose the latter and, in 1896, at age 21, she began the journey that would take her to America, first to Denver, CO, and some ten years later to Portland, OR, where she lived until her death on October 6, 1948.

Alma left Sweden on August 7, 1896, and followed the usual route from Sweden to America: Gothenburg to Hull in England and then on to Liverpool, where she boarded the Majestic, a ship holding close to 1,500 passengers. The ship's manifest tells us that she travelled with another young woman from Stora Tuna, Elin (later Ellen)



Bagge, that they were both planning a "protracted sojourn", and that Denver, CO, was their "intended destination". They were both listed as "servants", the occupation of so many young immigrant women born to poverty in Sweden. Apparently the cost of crossing the Atlantic had dropped considerably by the time Alma and Elin left, which enabled many more young and poor women like them to emigrate.

As domestic servants in America, they were often treated as members of the family who employed them and generally enjoyed a level of consideration they had not known in Sweden.

Young Swedish women found employment easily, and Alma went to work in the home of John and Mary Scheuerkorn. The 1900 Federal Census shows her still there. Elin Bagge became a waitress and rented a room in a boarding house.

By coincidence, in a book dealing with the emigration from Dalarna to America, I found a letter written by Elin Bagge's elder sister, Selma, to her family in Stora Tuna. In it she describes her arrival in New York: "We were taken to an "immigrant hotel" and there we were fed fried meat, potatoes, sandwiches and coffee. You had to pay 35 cents for this whether or not you ate. Then they called us up one by one and gave us our railroad tickets. Our train was to leave at 8 p.m. A railroad agent took us to the station, where our trunks were retagged. When we were on the train, the agent showed us to our seats. Our car was beautiful. Here the railroad cars are very long with a corridor running through them and red velvet sofas to sit on, with room for two on each one. We were able to leave New York at 8 p.m."

This letter no doubt closely describes a step on that same journey that Selma's sister Elin took four years later with my great-aunt Alma Nygren and that of Alma's maternal aunt Stina who had gone to Denver in 1882. (Stina later moved on to Los Angeles where she had a "Hemstitching and Embroidery" business on 3469 Sabina Street).

Alma and Elin arrived in Denver with one piece of luggage each on August 19, 1896. At this time Swedes made up the fourth largest foreign born group of the city's inhabitants, and by 1900 there were eight Swedish societies, led by the Skandia Benevolent Association, founded in 1875, and several Swedish churches. This and the presence of close relatives may have helped Alma and Elin adjust quickly to their new lives in America. Elin Americanized her name to Ellen and some time shortly after 1900 married Axel W. Lundh from the southern Swedish province of Skåne. He was a school custodian and the couple later had two children.

Alma also met her future husband in Denver. He was an 1891 immigrant from Landkron in Bohemia, Austria, by the name of Franz (Frank) G. Janisch. He and his brother Wilhelm (William) had come together on the ship the Eider, sailing out of Bremen, Germany. The ship's manifest lists New York as their destination but once there, Frank headed for Denver, CO and William for Portland, OR. Frank worked as a cook, evidently at a well known restaurant or hotel, according to his descendants here in Portland. In 1904 he applied for a U.S. passport, probably wanting to visit Bohemia. He is described in this document as being 29 years of age, 5'5" tall with a high forehead, large nose, small mouth and round chin. His complexion is dark, as is his hair, and he has blue eyes. AND he is a Catholic, something that does not seem to have been welcomed by Alma's family.

In fact, Alma's aunt Stina writes in a letter to Sweden years later that her children had been in Portland to visit Alma and her family, and that Frank seemed to be a good and kind man, in spite of being a Catholic. Stina also expresses regret over the likelihood that Alma's "very beautiful" daughter will marry into her father's faith! She later did, marrying an immigrant from Ukraine in 1927

If Frank did indeed go to Bohemia for a visit in 1904, on his return to the U.S. he headed for Portland, OR where he and his brother William ran the Janisch Brothers Dyeing and Cleaning business in N.E. Portland for many years. In the early 1920's, Frank and Alma are listed in the city directory as proprietors of Gilt Edge Dyeing and Cleaning and in 1944, a year after Frank's death, Alma is shown as the sole owner. She was at this point 70 years old and, it appears, sold or closed the business. At the end of her life she lived in the home of her daughter, also in N.E. Portland, where the whole extended family had settled.

I have yet to find out where Alma Nygren and Frank Janisch were married. Perhaps the wedding took place in Denver on Frank's return from Bohemia. The two had, after all, lived there for a number of years and would have had many friends to celebrate with.

The couple and their two children (born in 1908 and 1918) lived about five blocks from their business which they had established in an old store. Alma is remembered as being extremely frugal, no doubt as a result of her early life of privation in Sweden. She and Frank owned a home but used only part of it. They never owned a car and Alma shopped where she could use coupons. In the 1930's Frank would spend his Sunday afternoons fishing on the Willamette River with his son-in-law's brother. Christmas was always celebrated in their daughter's home, and Frank is remembered as being very generous at this time, especially to his granddaughter.



When, in 1919, Alma wrote the letter to Sweden dealing with her brother's death in the horrific battle of Meuse-Argonne in France, she had lived in America for 23 years. Since she was married to a non-Swede, English had become her everyday language and had markedly influenced her Swedish. She suggests in her letter that good English was the reason her brother had designated her as the family spokesperson, should he perish in the war. Their brother Karl-Erik, in Worcester, MA, since 1906, had a Swedish wife and the city was home to a great number of Swedes, so good English was often not a necessity. Many streets in Worcester were named after places in Sweden and by the early 1900's there were numerous Swedish churches, businesses, and lodges.

The largest employer was Norton Ceramics Industries, founded by two men from the Swedish province of Skåne. Alma's brother was, in fact, part of the Swedish work force that dominated Norton.

I don't know if Alma and Karl-Erik ever saw each other again after Alma left Sweden. Crossing the country would have been a costly undertaking for the frugal Alma and perhaps the memory of her initial rail journey from New York to Denver in 1896 was enough to dissuade her from making that long trip again. The two siblings kept in touch via letters, however, and Alma tells her mother that Karl-Erik would complain about her being slow to write. Karl-Erik outlived Alma by three years, passing away in 1951.

In 1917 Alma's younger brother, Klas Nygren, paid a surprise visit to her family in Portland. By that time the siblings hadn't seen each other since 1896, when Alma emigrated to America and Klas was a boy of nine, so when he first saw his sister again, Klas didn't immediately identify himself but jokingly asked her if she might have a room for rent. Alma told him she didn't, but seeing his smile she realized who he was and their reunion was one of joy and much reminiscing. A year later that joy turned into grief when Alma learned that Klas had been killed in WWI and that she was the one in the family who would have to deal with the practical aftermath of his death, such as communicating with the government of France, where he died, and with the war department in Washington, D.C. In a long letter to her mother and brother in Sweden written a few months after Klas' death, Alma discusses the decisions she has had to make, such as having Klas buried in France. She also wishes she knew how he died, whether he was gassed or shot. She tells them that she has hung a gold star in her front window, as was the custom, to notify passers-by of her family's terrible loss. In this letter Alma makes only a passing mention of her husband and children, but a year or so later the family posed for a photographer and Alma sent the picture to Sweden, where it is still in an old album that belonged to my grandfather, Alma's younger brother Johan. This picture and a later one of Alma and Frank with their by then grown daughter have sharpened the traces of this hardworking immigrant family. I feel fortunate to have come to know them through genealogical records as well as the recollections of the Portland descendants.

Alma probably arrived in Portland in 1905 or 1906. She no doubt took the train, both Denver and Portland being at that time rail transportation hubs. Portland's population had grown quickly to over 200,000 residents, and old pictures of the city show busy downtown streets with horse-drawn carriages and cars competing for space. Four bridges spanned the Willamette River and the city port was full of activity. One 1910, photograph shows a grocery store in the Janischs' neighborhood, and it is easy to imagine my great aunt shopping for her family there. In driving around that area, I have found many old buildings that were part of Alma's Portland. I hope she was happy here, so far from the place where she grew up. .

She mentions in her letter to her mother that mail from Sweden took two months to reach her here, so over the 31 years between Alma's emigration and her mother's death communication was not frequent and her memories of Stora Tuna must have faded

Her great-nephew doesn't remember her talking about Sweden, but she would bake a Swedish gingerbread cake and passed the recipe on to her daughter, who in turn would serve it to her family.

And Alma's great-granddaughters remember having a lullaby sung to them in Swedish when they were children.

Frank Janisch died in 1943, at the age of 69 and Alma passed away five years later at 73. They are buried in a Portland Catholic Cemetery.



Visiting their graves was a moving experience for me. Here were relatives of mine whom I had gotten to know and become very fond of such a long time past the end of their hardworking and successful immigrant lives. I am immensely indebted to their descendants who have so generously shared memories of Alma and Frank Janisch with me.

SRIO needs your help!

The mission of Swedish Roots in Oregon is to research, preserve and document the history of the Swedes in the state of Oregon. Basically we are interested in material from any period since statehood.

We are especially interested in ethnographical materials, that is to say, such things as historical photographs, diaries and letters. We are also interested in any kind of printed material—books, magazines, newspapers, old events programs, and so on. If your family has preserved material of this kind, and you would like to share it, we want to hear from you. We can't do it without you!

Report from the 82nd Annual Midsummer Festival

by Ingeborg Dean

The Scandinavian Heritage Foundation's midsummer festival was celebrated on June 26, 2010, at the German American Cultural Center. SRIO again participated. The large Swedish map was constantly examined by descendants of Swedish immigrants and as usual every story was interesting.

Jim Jandacek and Ingeborg Dean manned the SRIO table and sold a number of the organization's publications. Ingeborg shared the information she has been able to obtain on her Swedish great aunt's life in America, particularly her years in Portland, OR, where she lived from about 1905 until her death in 1948. There is always a great deal of interest.



A woman from Tillamook related the story of her Swedish ancestors arriving from the old country with an enormous copper kettle and cheese making start, and how they became the founders of the well known cheese making factory.

Unfortunately all the original papers relating to this were lost when the town's courthouse burned some years ago.

2nd Annual MW Book Festival

by Ingeborg Dean

SRIO participated with its publications in the 2nd Annual NW Book Festival on August 7, 2010. The festival was held at Pioneer Square in Portland, OR. James Jandacek and Ingeborg Dean represented

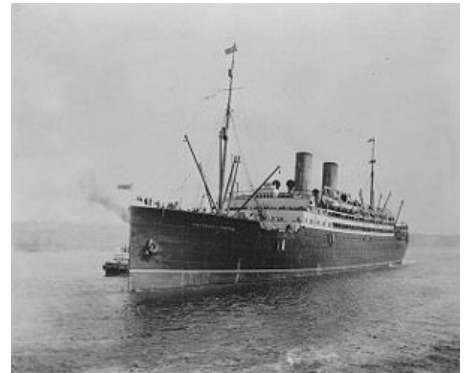


SRIO and welcomed a steady stream of visitors to the SRIO table. As always, everybody was eager to share information on their ancestral Swedish immigrants. SRIO's large map of Sweden really draws people in. However, many visitors had no knowledge of the place their relatives had left. They were encouraged to search sites on the internet. Ingeborg brought a display of information on her immigrant great aunt obtained on Ancestry.com as an example of what can be found easily.

SRIO's display table featured, other than its publications, textiles and items that might have been found in an early immigrant's home. There were also samples of "Old fashioned Swedish Gingerbread Cake", for the occasion renamed "Aunt Alma's Gingerbread Cake". Copies of the recipe were also available so aunt Alma's cake might be enjoyed in many homes in the future.

Some of the visitors: An elderly man, seeing SRIO's display, told us he owns an old copper coffee pot that, judging from its construction, dates before 1870. We all agree that it quite possible came to Oregon in a Swedish immigrant's "America chest". It seems its present owner had found it in a house he once rented. If only it could tell its story.

Another man told us about his grandfather who immigrated as a very young man and later was able to persuade his parents and two brothers to follow him to North America. After some time the latter decided to return to Sweden, and on May 29, 1914 they boarded the steamer Empress of Ireland in Quebec, Canada. Shortly after leaving port their ship was rammed by a Norwegian collier (coal freighter), SS Storstad, and suffered such severe damage that it sank in a



Empress of Ireland

mere 14 minutes. The passenger list includes a family of four in a third class cabin; parents and two boys headed for Gothenburg. They perished along with over 1000 other passengers and crew, many of them Scandinavians. The sinking of Empress of Ireland is Canada's worst marine disaster and, as told by a present day Oregonian with Swedish roots and a terrible family loss, part of the great Scandinavian immigrant story.

A man, probably in his 20's, told us with great enthusiasm that he and his Swedish mother would be leaving for Sweden the following day. They were to spend two weeks with relatives in Kalmar in Småland, his first visit there since childhood.

A college student from Chicago was eager and proud to tell us about her strong Swedish heritage, "98%".

A young Swedish woman, here to attend a friend's wedding, bought a copy of "Swedish Oregon" as a gift for her mother.

Etc, Etc.

There were other visitor not of Swedish heritage but with interesting stories inspired by SRIO's map and display.

All in all it was a very enjoyable day and we hope SRIO's information, publications and display encouraged some of the visitors to look further for their Swedish roots.



Ingeborg Dean with SRIO's Map