

# Swedish Roots In Oregon

## *An Immigration Research Project*

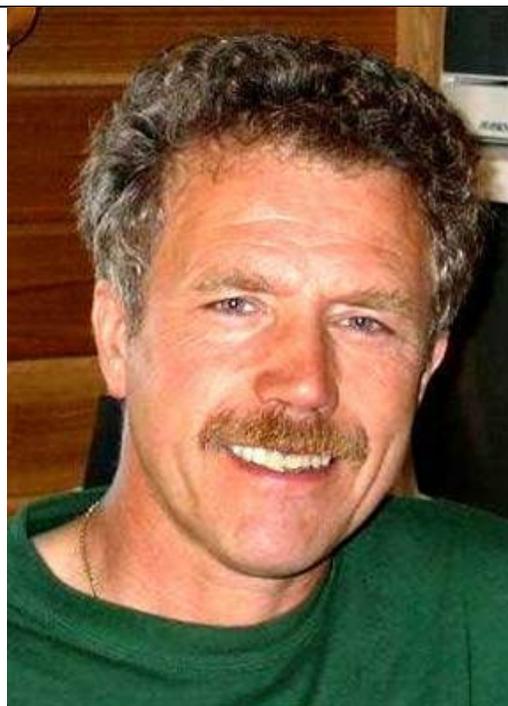
June 2011 Newsletter

Editor: Leif Rosqvist

Volume 23

### Message from the President--Lars Nordström

Dear friends and readers, as this cool Oregon May inches towards summer it is time for a look at our recent activities. As always, it has been a busy and productive six months for SRIO, primarily because of the publication of our second book, *Ten New Lives: Swedes in the Pacific Northwest*. The release party was held in Portland on March 24, 2011. About 65 people found their way to the gallery in the Gotham Building on North Interstate Avenue. I had the opportunity to thank everyone who helped make this book possible—from the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation for its financial support, to the story-tellers who are in the book, the editor and the proof readers, the cover artist, the SRIO Board of Directors, as well as many others. I also spoke briefly about contemporary Swedish emigration to the United States in the context of the old immigration to America and the new migratory patterns that have followed the 1995 Swedish membership to the European Union. Following this introduction, the audience had a chance to mingle, chat, and sip a glass of wine. SRIO felt that the evening was a great success.



During the spring I have given a number of presentations about the new book in Portland, Cannon Beach, Oregon City, Tacoma, and Seattle. Reaching beyond the SRIO Website and Newsletter is certainly a challenge. Making a book known to potential readers is difficult; finding distribution is also tough. Both are always major hurdles for small publishers, and the business of selling books is especially difficult in today's challenging economic environment with its relentless competition from film, music, and the inter-net. As you probably know, the book market is currently going through the same digitalization process that has irrevocably altered the nature of music and film. But, we firmly believe that the book, as we know it, is here to stay. The traditional book is a wonderful device for conveying of information that was perfected more than 500 years ago. It requires no batteries, no hardware or software, no updates, no support hotline or toll free number. A book is always open. It has no expiration date. You can put it on a shelf, and a hundred years later someone else can take it down from that same shelf and read it, just as it was when you put it there. This will not be true for any of the modern reading gadgets. "History," the historian Carl Becker once said, "is the memory of things said and done." Safeguarding the Swedish immigrant experience in a traditional book is a great way to make sure that it won't be forgotten or lost.

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In April, the umbrella organization supporting Swedish life in America, known as the Swedish Council of America, held its annual conference in Portland, Oregon. It was the first time ever that Portland hosted this gathering. Swedish Roots in Oregon was probably the only local organization with its entire Board present at the gala banquet, where two members were presented with Awards of Merit: Leif Rosqvist and yours truly. It was good to see eleven Oregonians recognized for their tireless work promoting Swedish cultural heritage locally.

After many months and countless hours of work, SRIO Webmaster Herje Wikegård has finally completed his overhaul of our website. Thank you Herje! You will find it clean and tidy and easy to navigate. We hope that you enjoy visiting and find interesting things to read there. It is a work in progress, so new material will be added as we have the time to put it there. Make sure that you swing by every now and then.

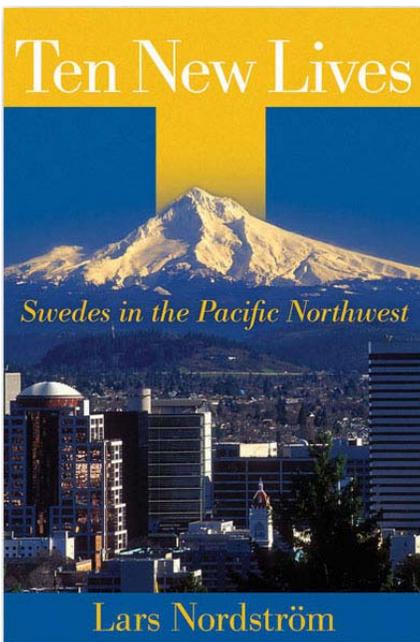
This summer SRIO will have a table at the Midsummer celebrations in both Astoria (June 17-19) and Portland (June 25), and at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Portland Book Festival in Pioneer Courthouse Square in Downtown Portland (July 30). We hope to see you there.

*Ha en riktigt trevlig sommar!*

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Why should you want to read -- *Ten New Lives: Swedes in the Pacific Northwest?*

by Lars Nordström



In Swedish history, the period from 1850 to 1930 is commonly referred to as the period of “The Great Migration.” During this time more than a million Swedes left their homeland to start a new life in the United States. In all, almost 20% of the entire population emigrated, and only Ireland and Norway had larger percentages of their populations leave. The exodus certainly altered Sweden permanently, and the large group of Swedes in the United States created many vibrant immigrant communities across America with their own churches, lodges, organizations, newspapers, schools, hospitals and stores. In 1910, the 600,000 Swedes in Chicago made it the second largest city of Swedes after Stockholm.

Eventually a number of historical forces combined to slow the exodus. In the mid-1920s there were the so-called “Quota Laws” that limited immigration to the United States, and that decade was followed by the Depression of the 1930s, which saw a reversal in Swedish migration.

At the peak of this re-migration, more than ten times as many Swedes went back home as came to America. Then, following World War II, Swedish emigration never gained momentum again. And why was that?

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Having stayed neutral during World War II, Sweden had been spared the ravages of the continent and had its entire transportation infrastructure operational—roads, bridges, rail lines, and airports. Since its soldiers had not been killed, Sweden also had a large and able work force for its factories. Finally, it had steel and lumber, and was able to export many of the things Europe needed to rebuild. Becoming increasingly urbanized and industrialized, Sweden grew into a wealthy country in the post-war years and there were simply fewer reasons to emigrate.

Nevertheless, there was still a small but steady trickle of people who found their way to the United States. They left a very different Sweden, and they came to a very different United States. It was a new kind of immigrant experience. A great deal has been written over the years about the Great Migration, but very little has been said about the more recent Swedish immigrants. *Ten New Lives: Swedes in the Pacific Northwest* changes that. This is the first book in English to explore this little-known subject, as far as we know.

The reader will meet five men and five women and hear their personal stories of how they became Swedish immigrants in the United States in the post-Vietnam War period, and learn what that experience has been like. As any observant reader will find, much has obviously changed, but many things also remain the same. 1975 may seem like an arbitrary date, but it is not. Three important changes happened in the mid-1970s that has helped alter the modern Swedish immigrant experience. First of all, the emigrant passenger ships that had shuttled back and forth across the Atlantic between Sweden and the United States for almost a hundred years went out of business. All emigrants after this became jet plane emigrants; not a single one has come by ship. And with jet travel, the sense of that enormous distance and finality experienced by the earlier immigrants simply disappeared. Travel became fast and relatively inexpensive.

Secondly, the large Swedish language press that had once existed in the United States also came to an end during this time.

The large wave of Swedish immigrants that had come before 1930, as well as their children, had assimilated and lost their native language. Fewer and fewer Swedes could read Swedish newspapers. As time went on, many other expressions of ethnic identity disappeared too—neighborhoods, stores, businesses, lodges, and so on. So unlike the earlier immigrants, who had been able to join already existing vibrant Swedish communities all over the United States, the new ones came to a complete vacuum with no Swedish community and no Swedish news sources.

Finally, the Swedish-American organizations that had evolved out of the assimilated Swedish-American community also began to change at this time as well. Many had activities and events that had little to do with contemporary Swedish traditions, and many newly arrived immigrants did not feel at home in these organizations. However, starting around that time there has been a revitalized interest in Sweden in many of these organizations, and it has given a more genuine ethnic character to many of these celebrations. This has helped to bridge the gap between the Swedish-Americans and the newly arrived Swedish immigrants. More recently, the inter-net has changed the immigrant situation yet again, and added another facet to the complexity of living in two worlds at the same time.

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In short, the Swedish immigrant experience is not just a thing of the past only. It is still a fact for Swedes in the United States, and we hope that you will enjoy reading about how these ten individuals contribute to the continuous evolution of what it means to be Swedish in America in the new millennium.

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## SRIO has a new web site

by Webmaster Herje Wikegård

It was already in 2009 we realized it was time to give the old SRIO web site a complete overhaul. The very first SRIO web presence was a page shared with a previous member's personal web site. I created the first SRIO specific web site in 2004 (7 years ago, which is about 50 years in technology time). That first web site was made with Microsoft FrontPage, but computer technology always moves fast and that tool was no longer adequate. FrontPage had served me well for many years, but now Microsoft had simply discontinued FrontPage and a software product without upgrades will not survive. Many new technologies had come along since the start and now I quickly got pretty overwhelmed in trying to learn all this (Cascading Style Sheets, JQuery with JavaScript etc...). First I tried the Dreamweaver tool, which is very popular among full time webmasters, but in the end I settled on a Microsoft tool that replaced FrontPage, Microsoft Expression Web 4. I found it to be a good compromise between the familiar and the new technologies.



SRIO has ambitions for this new site. We would like to evolve towards using web forms to fill in requests for book purchases that can be paid on-line via PayPal. We could add more interactive forms, downloads of articles in PDF format, and we have a genealogical database we would like to put on-line for anyone to browse and search. There are also new and more modern ways of displaying multimedia content and many new ways of making the user interface more dynamic.

SRIO has ambitions for this new site. We would like to evolve towards using web forms to fill in requests for book purchases that can be paid on-line via PayPal. We could add more interactive forms, blogging, downloads of articles in PDF format, and we have a genealogical database we would like to put on-line for anyone to browse and search. There are also new and more modern ways of displaying multimedia content and many new ways of making the user interface more dynamic.

With the new site in place we have a much better base for enhancements to come. It gives us a modern platform that lets us enhance the "look and feel" of the SRIO web site for years to come (hopefully at least another 50 technology years).

SRIO Website address: [www.swedishrootsinoregon.org](http://www.swedishrootsinoregon.org)

## "Liten notis" about our Oral Histories project

by Ingeborg Dean

SRIO has obtained some interviews with Swedish immigrants or their descendants, taped several years ago. These interviews offer a fascinating glimpse of Swedish life here in Oregon during the past 100 years and are an invaluable source of information for our organization's work. We would therefore greatly appreciate the opportunity to interview other Swedes, who could add to our knowledge of life here in Portland and the rest of Oregon, when immigrants were still arriving in great numbers. Please contact SRIO ([www.SwedishRootsInOregon.org](http://www.SwedishRootsInOregon.org)) or Swedish Roots in Oregon, 8740 SW Oleson Rd. Portland, OR 97223, if you would like to help.



The following is a sample of quotations from several interviews:

The day I arrived I was happy all the way through. "I'm in the United States. Nothing can stop me now!" I got across the country by railroad.

I was born May 19, 1905 in the province of Hälsingland. Father was a small farmer who worked with timber in the winter. There were six children in our family. Two died young.

I went out into the street and asked two fellows standing there, if they could tell me where I could find Linnea Lodge. One guy said, "Have you ever heard of her?"

The other guy answered, "You are stupid. It's the place where all the Swedes go."

When I left, I had 47 cents. When I came into New York, I had \$50, think of that! You see, there was my fiddle. I went ahead and bought nine acres of land east of here. They laughed at me and said I was a crazy Swede and that I had bought nothing but stumps on rocks.

My association with the Swedish organizations has been the focus of most of my activities and friendships.

There was a little settlement there of Swedes in Clatskenie. Most of them were from Dala-Järna. We even had our own minister, he was a travelling missionary from Tacoma.

My father worked in the Oregon Lumber Company. He was a foreman there and ran the knife sharpening machines. Unfortunately, he lost his left hand in an accident.

There was a Swedish bakery on Mississippi Avenue and we would get all our goodies there, because we lived not very far from it. Lots of Swedes settled in the Interstate area.

"The Scandinavian Hour" held the community together. It came on Sunday morning between nine and ten, and when he went to Sweden, he would tape his programs.

The first spring in Portland I worked as a gardener for a Mrs. Griswold, and that contact led to paint jobs for several house owners.

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His father had been here twice, and he had a number of aunts and uncles in this country, so it was almost like coming home.

As a high school student, I used to feel sorry for my friends, who weren't Linnea members. I would tell them about the dances and what a lot of fun we had at them, and my classmates wouldn't know what I was talking about.

I don't know if they continued the tradition of selecting a Midsummer queen after 1939. Before that each League member group would pick a candidate, who would then compete for the honor.

So that's why I ended up on a ranch in Wyoming. I had a cattle ranch but not enough livestock. Then the government told me I had to go into defense. There was a war going on after all.

My father wanted to leave Sweden because of class differences that made it impossible for the impoverished to rise up and improve their lot. Whether he found things to be true about America or not, I don't know. I know he never found what he had been looking for initially, but I don't think he ever wanted to return to Sweden.

I actually never had any plans to go to America, but I had two uncles there and my grandmother's sister had gone when she was really young.

People used to say "What do they do, if they aren't Swedes?"

SRIO is allocating significant resources to document these oral histories about Swedish immigrants before the sources are disappearing and the material is lost. The stories will appear on SRIO website and potentially in booklet form as well.

If you know about some Swedish immigrants whose history we could document, please make contact with Ingeborg Dean via email: [president@swedishrootsinoregon.org](mailto:president@swedishrootsinoregon.org)

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## 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!

If you feel you have something of interest contact us via email: [president@swedishrootsinoregon.org](mailto:president@swedishrootsinoregon.org)

## Genealogy

by Barry Petersen

Genealogy has been an interest of SRIO since its beginning 12 years ago. We haven't been too active, yet, with entering information on our website, but we have collected a data which will be placed there as we progress. We are using a program called The Next Generation that can effectively link with several other Swedish American websites. SRIO needs some volunteer hours and abilities to get this program up and functioning.

We continue to get a few individual requests for help in finding information about Swedish emigrant ancestors who lived in the Oregon in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These requests are encouraged with the understanding that the better data we receive, the easier the problem is to solve, in most cases. A few years ago, we had a request from Sweden about who settled in southern Oregon. We were able to come up with descendants within an hour who now live in Oregon and Utah. That was directly linked to the quality of the data contained in the original request.

Such fortune is not typical. Usually it takes some hours or days on-line and in local genealogy libraries to gather information and respond. We have one person doing this now in his spare-time. Now, in June 2011, we have four pending requests that we have begun working on to locate better information on their lives in Oregon and in some cases information about deaths in the US.

Lead names in these searches are:

John Crans;

Johan Theodor Karlström;

Philip Wilhelm Liljeson (son of Johan Philip Liljeson and Johanna Sofis Johansson of Grebo, Öst. Philip emigrated 19 Aug 1878); and

Eleanor R. Lofton, daughter of Victor & Elisabeth Rosene.

If you have any information about any of these persons, please contact SRIO.

SRIO continually seeks data on Swedes of the northwest that can be used on its web pages and, perhaps help those seeking genealogical information. More volunteers are welcome.

If you have questions or are trying to locate some persons please contact Barry Petersen via email: [president@swedishrootsinoregon.org](mailto:president@swedishrootsinoregon.org)



Meet up with SRIO at the following events!

Midsummer celebrations in Astoria ScanFest, June 17-19. SRIO will attend on June 18th.

Midsummer celebrations in Portland, Oaks Park, June 25

Beaverton International Celebration, July 30, noon-6

3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Portland Book Festival in Pioneer Courthouse Square in Downtown Portland, July 30, 11am - 6pm.

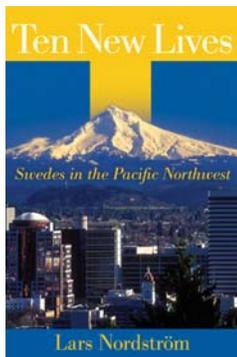
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## Books available for purchase from SRIO

### New Book Released

The story of 10 Swedish Immigrants in current times



\$15 per book, plus \$3.50 shipping & handling within USA

### New lower price on Swedish Oregon

The story about the early Swedish immigrants to Oregon



\$20 per book, plus \$3.50 shipping & handling within USA

### Combo Book Offer

Order **both** "Swedish Oregon" and "Ten New Lives" for **\$30**, plus \$4.00 s&h within USA.

This and much more is available on SRIO website: [www.swedishrootsinoregon.org](http://www.swedishrootsinoregon.org)