

Swedish Roots in Oregon

An Immigration Research Project



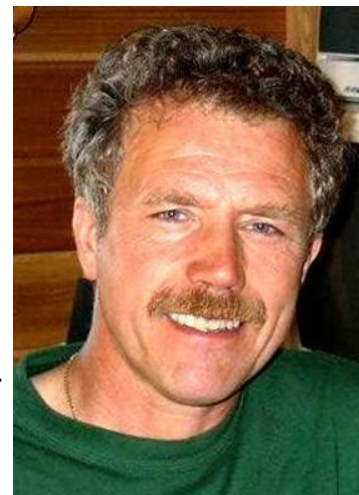
December 2012 Newsletter

Editor: Leif Rosqvist

Volume 25

Message from your President - Lars Nordström

The rains have long since returned to northwest Oregon and fall is already changing into winter. It is a good time of year to sink down in a comfortable chair, turn on a reading light, and take another dip into the Swedish history of the United States. That the Swedish presence in the United States is increasingly becoming a history of a long-ago past is a fact no one can dispute. Since 1970, Norway has been the most popular destination for Swedish immigrants, and today there are more Swedes living and working in Norway than there are in the United States and Canada combined. In Norway, unemployment is about 3%, wages are high, and Sweden is only a couple of hours away. Still, I am continuously surprised at how much there is left to discover and learn about the Swedes in Oregon. Even though Swedish Roots in Oregon has worked for well over a decade to research, translate and publish material on the Swedish presence in the state, much remains to be done.



The most recent addition to our website is a brief introduction to the Swedish artist Olof Grafström, who was a Portland resident for four years in the second half of the 1880s. During his formative years in Stockholm, when he trained as a landscape painter at the Royal Academy, he lived and traveled with many Swedish artists who would go on to become quite famous. Anders Zorn was probably the most prominent of them, but Grafström's friends Richard Bergh and Johan Tirén also had successful careers in Sweden. Shortly after graduating, Grafström had the great fortune to sell one of his paintings to the Swedish King, and instantly became recognized as one of the promising artists of the day. But he then did something which terminated his career in Sweden – instead of going to Paris, where nearly all successful Swedish artists sojourned between 1875 and WW I – Grafström emigrated directly from Sweden to Portland, Oregon. He did not return to Sweden until 1928, after a long career as a painter in the United States, and by that time he was completely forgotten in his native country. His work is still not represented at the National Museum in Stockholm, and at the Portland Art Museum Jonas Olof Grafström is unheard of. But you can see some of his wonderful drawings right here on the SRIO website.

Our webmaster Herje Wikegård has done a fantastic job with our website. The proof is that the number of visitors to the site is steadily growing. On average, more than 100 people visit our website every day. Ernst Skarstedt's biographies of early immigrants remain very popular reading, and Victoria Owenius' article on the state's Swedish newspaper Oregon Posten has also gained wide readership. In addition, genealogists are increasingly discovering our link to our list of Oregon Swedes.

And, best of all, it is all free of charge. Even though all Board Members work as volunteers, SRIO still has to pay to host our website, publish books, print our newsletter, pay various fees and registrations. That money has to come from somewhere. You can help. Please keep us going by making a donation to SRIO!

In Portland, The Scandinavian community will celebrate the beginning of Christmas at ScanFair on the weekend of December 1 and 2. As usual, SRIO will have its table there, and we hope that you stop by to say hello!
God Jul och Gott Nytt År!

SRIO at Oaks Park Midsummer event - by Ingeborg Dean

We participated in the annual Midsummer celebration hosted by the Scandinavian Heritage Foundation at Oaks Park, which in the past was where the Swedes for years marked this important summer date. SRIO's information table was visited by many Swedish-American Oregonians, who purchased the organization's publications and shared their ancestors' stories. SRIO, as always, was able to give advice on how to continue to search into the lives of Swedish immigrants in Portland and elsewhere in Oregon.



SRIO at the Beaverton International Festival - by Ingeborg Dean

SRIO was invited to present the organization and its interests at the Beaverton International Festival on July 28, 2012. Our organization represented the Swedes in the many cultures that make up that community. SRIO's caught the interest of a number of festival visitors, who spent time perusing the publications on display as well as reminiscing about their immigrant forebears. One woman told the SRIO representatives of a woman in her Swedish ancestry, who was actually put to death for being a witch! The festival was a fascinating and superior quality mix of dancers, musicians, singers, local museums exhibitors, art presentations etc. SRIO is looking forward to again meeting many people, whose roots are in Sweden of long ago.

Lars Nordström at Cedar Mill Community Library

Swedes began filtering into the Oregon Territory with the first wave of white settlers. At first their numbers grew slowly but after 1883, when the railroad connected Portland to the national grid, the flow accelerated. By 1910, the Swedes were the second-largest foreign language immigrant group in the state.

Compiling wide-ranging material – some of it never before translated into English – and none of it ever collected and introduced, Swedish-American author Lars Nordstroml presents a fascinating journey through the Swedish history of the state of Oregon from the 1800s into the 21st century.

The talk took place on November 16th, at the Cedar Mill Community Library, 12505 NW Cornell Road, Portland 97229.

A small, but attentive and engaged audience came to listen to the lecture. In the interesting question-and-answer session that followed, a member of the audience mentioned that there might be various collections of historical Swedish materials in Astoria. SRIO looks forward to learning more about the lives of the Swedes in Astoria. As often is the case, it is through interaction with the public that we get invaluable suggestions for future research!



SRIO will be at the 28th Annual ScanFair

The most significant Scandinavian Event in Portland will be held on December 1st and 2nd. Come and celebrate the sights, sounds, tastes and traditions of a Scandinavian Christmas at ScanFair Event in the Veterans Memorial Coliseum at the Rose Quarter, Exhibit Hall in the Veteran's Memorial Coliseum at the Rose Quarter 300 N. Winning Way, Portland, OR .

Saturday, December 1 ~ 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Sunday, December 2 ~ 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

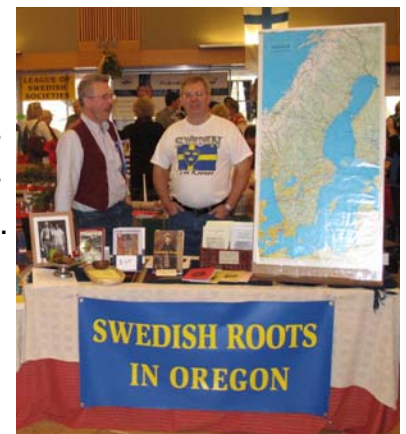
\$6 adults, \$5 seniors and students, children under 12 are free!

A festive celebration of Scandinavian Culture featuring ethnic crafts, foods, music and dance.

Don't miss the 57th official Lucia of Oregon crowned at ScanFair on Sunday December 2 at 1pm.

For more information, go to <http://www.scanheritage.org/c-50-scanfair.aspx>

Come and see us at the SRIO's information table serving many Swedish-American Oregonians, who also can purchase the organization's publications and share their ancestors' stories. SRIO, as always, will be able to give advice on how to continue to search into the lives of Swedish immigrants in Portland and elsewhere in Oregon.



A Few Thoughts on the Swedish-American Identity, by Lars Nordström

The following piece was originally published in a slightly different translation and format in the magazine *Sweden & America*, No.1, 2011, in response to a previous “Column” written by Byron Nordstrom on the same topic.

How is one to define the Swedish-American identity among 4.5 million individuals in the US Census, where an unknown percentage also claims an additional ethnic affiliation?

It is not entirely easy to answer that question, especially not for an expatriate Swede, because the original Swedish identity in America was formed quite a long time ago—from about 1850 to 1928. When the Great Migration came to an end, the Swedish-American identity was no longer renewed by impulses from Sweden. The trickle of emigration that has persisted from Sweden to the United States after WWII (an average of 1,500 to 2,000 individuals annually), has been so insignificant in comparison to the growing number of Swedish-Americans that it has not influenced the Swedish-American identity to any noticeable extent.

What has happened in the United States in the post-WW II period is, in other words, that two distinct populations have emerged: The Swedish-Americans and the expatriate Swedes. The former has grown increasingly larger, while the latter consists of a slowly but surely shrinking group. According to the US Census, the number of individuals in the USA born in Sweden has declined steadily since 1930. Today the expatriates number less than 50,000, a decline of more than 60 percent since 1970 alone, and nothing suggests that this trend will be broken.

When sociologists define “group identity” they usually refer to a shared ethnicity, language, culture, set of moral values, and political views. For this reason, it is perhaps easier to say what the Swedish-American identity is not, by comparing it to the expatriate Swedish identity. To start with, I would argue that most Swedes who currently live in the USA have come from one and the same country—the industrialized, secularized, welfare state Sweden became after WWII, with a homogeneous cultural heritage and a number of generally accepted values and ideas about the role of government, taxes, social responsibility, just to mention a few. And that view of society seems, from the American horizon, to be very Swedish, perhaps Scandinavian, and—to a certain extent—also European.

In addition, the language is a watershed. Less than one percent of all Swedish-Americans speak Swedish. When it comes to following developments in Sweden, one also notices a major difference. The internet revolution has made it possible for everyone (with a computer and a connection to the World-Wide-Web) living outside Sweden to keep in touch with family, relatives, and friends; or to read Swedish news, keep up with political and cultural news as well as entertainment. It is easy to contact government agencies, do bank errands, shop, and many other things. My impression is that the vast majority of expatriate Swedes keep in touch with Sweden and regularly travel back to visit, but that this is less common among Swedish-Americans. In other words, the expatriate Swedish identity is a way to relate to the American reality on the basis of one’s active Swedish ties.

Subsequently, expatriate Swedes regard Swedish-Americans as Americans with Swedish roots and with some Swedish interests, but not as Americans with Swedish identities. I believe that the author Don Lago hits the nail on the head when he writes that the Swedish-American self-image is primarily about identifying something distinct as compared to all the other ethnic groups in the USA. Perhaps it is the case that Swedish-Americans do not define themselves on the basis of what is going on in Sweden, but by preserving chosen elements of an old heritage in the multicultural USA?

Hunting Your Swedish Roots, by Barry Peterson

SRIO is interested in learning about your Swedish ancestors who settled in Oregon, even if just for a few years. You are invited to send us copies of material about them which will be linked into our system.

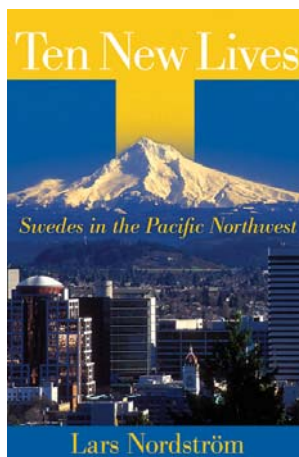
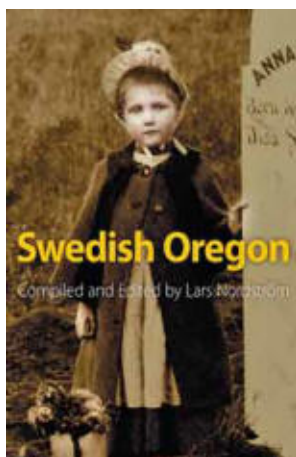
Currently, we have almost 1100 Swedish immigrants in our online file which can be seen from clicking the Genealogy tab on our website and then clicking on 'SWEAME Genealogy database - Oregon' or by just use this address: <http://www.sweame.org/showreport.php?reportID=115> .

We are now online because of the courtesy of SWEAME, Swedish American Heritage Online. You may now use an Oregon portion of that website to view the Oregon information now uploaded. We hope to be available on our own website with added information. We think these data are important for educational and historical research. If you find a match on our data base with one of your ancestors, please assist us by contacting us with added information you may have.

We also have many files about these immigrants which we are in an early stage of converting to electronic files and expect to start posting early in 2013.

More information on SRIO web site: <http://www.swedishrootsinoregon.org> and go to Genealogy tab.

Leverage SRIO Book Combo Offer
Order both "Swedish Oregon" and "Ten New Lives"
Together for \$30, and pay via PayPal.



Domestic shipping and handling \$4.00, when ordered together!

Reflections on Wilhelm Moberg's emigrant epic about immigration to America, by Ingeborg Dean

Introduction of Moberg's Emigrant series...

Moberg's most famous work is [The Emigrants series of four novels](#) written between 1949 and 1959 that describe one Swedish family's migration from [Småland](#) to [Chisago County, Minnesota](#) in the mid 19th century. This was a destiny shared by almost one million Swedish people, including several of the author's relatives. These novels have been translated into English: [The Emigrants](#) (1951), [Unto a Good Land](#) (1954), [The Settlers](#) (1961), [The Last Letter Home](#) (1961).

Story...

Recently I rediscovered the books on Swedish Emigration to the United States written by the great Swedish author, Wilhelm Moberg. It had been at least forty years since I first read them, and it was time to familiarize myself with Karl Oskar and Kristina Nilsson again. They are the protagonists of Moberg's emigrant epic. Since I have in the past year been privileged to hear many fascinating accounts of Swedes leaving the old country to start anew here in Oregon, Moberg's books have an even greater relevance. I started with the last book of the four in the series. It is called "The Last Letter to Sweden"(1959), a beautifully written and deeply moving account of Karl Oskar and Kristina's later years in America. Moberg's first book in the series is called "The Emigrants" and was published in 1949. In 1952 came "Unto a Good Land" and "The Settlers" appeared in 1956.

Karl Oskar and Kristina left Sweden very early, in the 1850's, and they settled in Minnesota, but whenever the immigrant Swedes came or wherever they began their new lives, they surely shared many of the experiences of Moberg's Karl Oskar and Kristina.

When Wilhelm Moberg started the research on his great work in 1948, evidently no one had seriously looked into the history of the substantial Swedish emigration to North America, its causes and effects. He had access to collections in the Midwest and spent considerable time in this country. Moberg himself had planned to emigrate in 1916 and had already seen many family members leave the extreme poverty of life in Smaland, a province that lost more people to emigration than any other.

Wilhelm Moberg's great work on the Swedish emigration to North America has been translated into English and many other languages. It was also made into an internationally acclaimed film in the 1970's. For me the rediscovery of this work is like finding treasure, and I advise anybody with Swedish ancestors to get to know Karl Oskar and Kristina and, through their ordeals and joys, learn more about their own courageous early family members.

The following is a quick translation from "The Emigrants". Robert is Karl Oskar's younger brother.

"Along with Robert, the United States had moved into their peasant cottage. Based on his book describing the Union, Robert knew everything about conditions there. He had long ago stepped ashore on the other side of the Atlantic and made himself at home. The map in his mind showed where all the lakes, rivers, plains, and mountains were in North America as well as where all roads and water ways ran.

Con't page 7

There was no way he could get lost in the New World when he arrived, he said, and now he wanted to teach his brother and sister-in-law how to find their way there. Karl Oskar had also begun to read his brother's book on the United States of America, and every day Robert told him something new:

In America there were thousands of wild horses and oxen. The fields swarmed with them. One could easily catch hundreds in a day.

In America David would not have been able to kill Goliath: he would simply never have been able to find a rock, regardless of how long he might have spent looking for one.

In America you could say "du" (familiar you) to the president, and you didn't even have to tip your hat to him if you didn't feel like it.

In America any able and honest man could step down from a manure cart and straight onto the president's throne.

In America there was only one class in society, the class of the people. And there was only one kind of nobility, the nobility of honest work.

In America nobody came to check your knowledge of the Bible.

In America anybody who didn't like his pastor could refuse to pay his salary".

Everything sounded beyond belief, and during the hard winter evenings Robert read to his brother and sister-in-law

Some of the chapter headings that follow hint at Karl Oskar and Kristina's story, as told in the first part of Moberg's emigration epic: The America Chest, A Farmer Bows for the Last Time, All Gates are Open on the Road to America, A ship Laden with Dreams.

The Swedes, who made their lives here in Oregon, also came on roads they had seen thrown open to them and as laden with dreams as Wilhelm Moberg's young couple, Karl Oskar and Kristina.

More information for the interested reader...

All Wilhelm Moberg's books about Swedish immigrant to the USA are available on www.Amazon.com (and type in Wilhelm Moberg under books)

Books about Swedish immigrants to Oregon is available on SRIO website www.swedishrootsinoregon.org

News on the SRIO website - Herje Wikegård SRIO Webmaster

The website has added a very interesting story about the Granat Family History in the form of an 89 page long PDF file that you can find under the “Stories” tab.

Immigration Stories

These immigration stories illustrate the shared tenacity and will that Swedish immigrants possessed in their search for a better life in the promised land of America. The stories are trying to recreate the route the immigrant followed when immigrating in to America, as well as trying to communicate the social and physical challenges they had to face during their journey to America.

The A Life Story - The Granat Family History

Per (John) Richard Carlson was born May 24, 1882 in Hova, Sweden. [Richard's last name was changed from Carlson to Granat when he was in the Swedish Military Service in 1905. This is the story of his emigration and his family generations to come



Under the Genealogy” tab you will find a link to a new database about Oregon immigrants. This is material from records that SRIO has had for a long time, but not been able to publish until now. We thank sweame.org web site for posting it.

Report: 'Oregon Emigrants Report' Print Bookmark

Description: A list of all emigrants who lived in Oregon and their record contains an immigration date.

Tree:

Matches 1 to 50 of 1084 [Comma-delimited CSV file](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) ... [22](#) [Next](#)

#	Last Name, Given Name(s)	Birth Date	Birth Place	Immigration Year Date
1	Adler, G. W. (Gustav Vilhelm)	12 Nov 1864	Backstugan Adlersö, Skirö parish, Småland, Sweden <small>P</small>	30 Sep 1891
2	Adolfsson, Emma (Emma)	19 Mar 1849	Fiorhult, Madesjö parish, Småland, Sweden <small>P</small>	5 May 1871
3	Ahlgren, Elof Hanson	9 Mar 1844	Genarp parish, Skåne, Sweden <small>P</small>	8 May 1875

On the home page you will find a new article about Olof Grafström. He was a Swedish artist in Portland and the artist behind the calendar we had last year. You can read about him and see his drawings by following the link on the home page.

Olof Grafström A Swedish Artist in Portland 1886 - 1890



Olof Grafström (1855 – 1933) was born in Attmar, Medelpad, the son of a well-to-do farmer. In 1875 he was admitted to the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm, where he became a protégé of Per Daniel Holm and was considered one of his most promising students. He graduated in 1882 as an accomplished landscape painter. During his years at the academy Grafström was a contemporary and friend of Swedish artists such as Anders Zorn, Bruno Liljefors, Richard Bergh, and Johan Tirén.

[Read more and see the pictures...](#)

SRIO is a 501 © (3) compliant non-profit organization, and we are able to accept on-line orders and donations. For on-line shopping all transactions take place on a secured pages hosted by PayPal.