

Going to America

Emigrant stories of the Danielson/Persson Family

The beginning...

This story is about the Danielson/Persson family and how their journey to America forever changed their lives, and mine, as I'm in the latter part of the family lineage. I'm Joyce Wicklund Nielsen and the granddaughter to Charles and Viktoria Pearson. I'm still not exactly sure what sets Swedish-American apart from main-stream American, but I had an experience that made that part of me much more real.

The big journey...

This story about Daniel Peder Persson and the journey that forever changed his life, and ours, was passed on to us by our Danielson family. Daniel Peder Persson was born 15 May, 1840 in Ramsele, in northern Sweden. His wife Ingeborg Ericksson, was born 4 March, 1841 in Skallsjön, Hammerdal, Sweden. .

Daniel and Ingeborg had 14 children. Their eldest son, Daniel, died at the age of 17, and another son died at birth. The older children went to America first. The exact departure dates are not known.

Gertrude Götilda "Tilda" went to Mahtowa, Minnesota, and married Alfred Bengtson, a businessman. Their home was always open to the family and most of them stayed there until they could find places of their own.

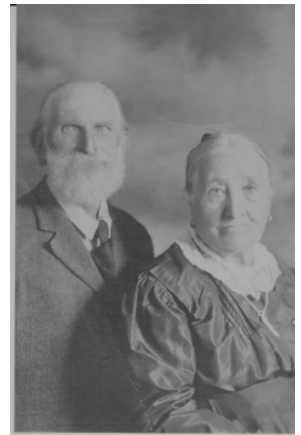
Per Danielson, born 18 December 1863, went to America. Jonas, born 29 December 1865, stayed behind and took over the farm at Vallåsen, Ramsele.

Andrew, born 25 October 1867, went to America, emigration date unknown. Emigration records show that Nils, born 10 April 1872, Ingel Haqvin, born 26 August 1877, and Axel, born 15 February 1880, were in Trondheim 26 November 1902, the year they left for America. Margareta, born 9 April 1882, also emigrated to America, after Nils, Haqvin and Axel left. Emigration dates unknown.

Daughters Sara Viktoria, born 2 February 1886, and Fannie Maria Danielson, born 26 September 1883, both born in Vallåsen, Ramsele, Sweden

Jonas had already decided to stay in Sweden as did Engla Johanna, born 4 March 1870. Johanna later emigrated after Haqvin's first wife died a couple of days after giving birth to their only child in Kalispell, Montana.

The story we heard was that the midwife was not clean, causing infection after birth. Haqvin asked Johanna if she would come and care for the baby. Emma would have liked to join the family, but she had tuberculosis and could not enter the U.S



Daniel and Ingeborg Persson, early 1900



Overlook over Vallåsen, Ramsele, Sweden

The big catastrophe...

As part of our family history in regards to the emigration of Daniel and Ingeborg Persson and their daughters Viktoria and Maria we were told that Daniel took his time sightseeing Trondheim, and as a result, they missed the ship they were scheduled to sail on. We were not told the name of the ship, but we believe it was SS Norge, as we were told the ship sank off Rockall in 1904, with few survivors, the biggest civilian maritime disaster in the Atlantic Ocean up to that time.

A letter was sent to the Norsk Utvandrermuseum in Norway, asking if they could tell the name of the ship. A return e-mail from Kristin Mikal-sen, Interreg Grensevandring at the museum. She was able to tell that the family was registered as emigrants in Swedish church records.

The four of them left Vallåsen, Ramsele in June 1904, with the pastor registering their departure on June 22, not necessarily their actual date of departure. Their destination is shown as Minnesota. The family left Trondheim on the ship "SS Salmo" June 29, and their destination was Port Arthur, Canada. She found the family arrived in Montreal (via Port Arthur) July 24 on the vessel "SS Canada".

As there were no direct lines between Norway and North America at the time, passengers would often travel to Hull, England, take the train to Liverpool, and then another ship from there. The only ship that sailed from Norway at that time and sank was the SS Norge which sailed from Kristiana (Oslo). Kristin felt our family could not have been booked on the SS Norge as she didn't feel that people from Northern Sweden would travel to Oslo to board an emigrant ship. (Coincidentally, we have a post card showing the SS Salmo which was sent to Viktoria by her sister Tilda. She wrote a message on it from Liverpool, but it has no year.)

However, through the web site for Swedish Roots in Oregon, I came upon a web site for Norway Heritage and logged on to it. I connected with the Norway Heritage site for Ship Disasters and discovered the SS Norge sank June 28, 1904. There were many interesting newspaper articles describing the tragedy. There were close to 800 people on board and approximately 125 survived. Among the survivors were two sons of Justina Maria Wedin who was traveling with her nine children to start a new life with her husband who was waiting for his family in Minnesota. The article states that Justina and Martin were married in Borgvattnet in 1884. Borgvattnet is quite close to where our family lived. A footnote to the story states that while everyone said they boarded the SS Norge in Trondheim, they were actually transported by rail to Kristiana (Oslo) by train where they boarded the ship. The Wedin family traveled by horse and wagon and train to Trondheim, no doubt the same way our family traveled. One of the articles at the Norway Heritage site said that the loss of Justina Wedin and her family was felt deeply in Sweden. Fifty years after the disaster, a memorial plaque was placed at the site of the Wedin home in Borgvattnet.

Our family oral history says that family in Minnesota was waiting for their four loved ones, and were concerned when they didn't show up on the designated date. They left Sweden June 22, time enough to reach Trondheim and go to Oslo by train. We have no way to prove this is true, but it all ties in with what the children of Viktoria were told. The daughter of Axel Danielson says her father told her the same story.



SS Norge sank off Rockall in 1904



SS Salmo, Wilson Line



SS Canada, White Star-Dominion Line

Life in America...

In Quebec, they no doubt had a emigration contract with the shipping line to reach their final destination. They stayed in Cloquet, Minn. for quite some time.

Viktoria went to work in a boarding house where she met Carl Persson (Charles Pearson). Karl Axel Persson (original spelling) left from Dömle April 11, 1893. The Emigrant's Attest shows that he was born 9 Mars 1873 in the parish of Ullerude, Kil, Värmland government, and baptized, is free to marry, has been vaccinated, reads (Swedish) pretty well. He possesses pretty good religious instruction, has been admitted to the holy communion according to the rites of the Swedish Church, and is still admitted. He enjoys the confidence of his fellow-citizens and belongs to the evangelic-Lutheran confession. The emigrates was provided with this certificate from the kingdom of Sweden to the United States of America; which is hereby certified by Nedre Ullerude parish of Värmlands government, 11 April 1893. Signed by A. N. Beckman, Pastor. (Clergyman of the parish).



Viktoria ca 1900

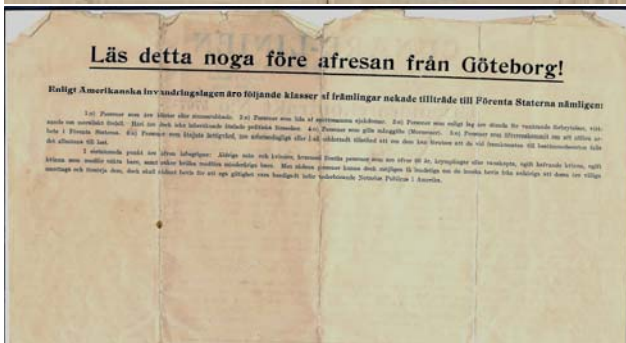


Dömle, Ullerud

We know he settled in Minnesota, but have no idea what ship he sailed on nor if he had friends or family members to assist him in the U.S. Records show that Charles A. Pearson (new spelling of his name) was fully naturalized in the District Court of Carlton County, Minnesota on the 6th day of August 1900.

One of Karl's sisters, Kristine Persdotter, emigrated in the 1899's to Wisconsin, where she married Karl Johan Lang and lived in Ironwood. They had four children.

We know that he went back to Sweden to visit his family as evidenced by an emigration contract with the Cunard Steam Ship Company for his return trip to Cloquet, Minnesota. These contracts were common as the Swedish emigrants didn't have any experience in world travel, speak much English and in most cases didn't read Swedish nor English well.



Utvandrare kontrakt (Emigration contract) No 57677, with Cunard Steam Ship Company

Viktoria and Charles were married 29 Nov 1905 in Cloquet, Minnesota. Their first two children, Axel Robert, 3 Oct 1906, and Rudolph Carl, 13 Apr 1908, were both born in Cloquet. Charles was working in a lumber mill.

In 1909 Viktoria and Charles moved their family to Alamogordo, New Mexico. Her brother Andrew had convinced Charles that they should try homesteading. We are not sure what the location of their homestead was, but it was not far from where the White Sand Missile Base was located years later. Charles could not make a go of farming so he went into the hills of New Mexico to work as a logger while Victoria stayed at the cabin with her boys. She had to store food under the front porch in an attempt to keep it cool. When she wanted to get food out from under the porch, she first had to poke around with a stick to try to scare rattlesnakes or other "varmints". There was no electricity, and there was a well for water. She became pregnant and their first daughter, Gertrude Ingeborg, was born in Alamogordo on May 16, 1910. Charles insisted that the baby be delivered at the hospital in town rather than having a mid-wife.

Moving west...

The young woman from Sweden was not happy with her life in the desert, and in early 1911, they left New Mexico and settled in Portland, Oregon.

Viktoria's brother Axel quit his job with the SP&S Railroad so Charles could go to work there. He retired from the SP&S as a clerk. Axel left Portland and settled in Kalispell, Montana where he eventually ended up owning a ranch consisting of 5,000 acres.

Letters to Viktoria and her father have been copied and need to be translated. Also some letters from sister Emma in Sweden as well as a cousin. We believe she had written to her father asking for help. The letters may confirm this. There are also many post cards to "Tora" from her family that are being scanned and copied, many she brought from Sweden with the rest having been sent to her in Minnesota, New Mexico and Portland, Oregon. Most are from family members, written in Swedish.

The first postcard sent to "Tora" in Portland were addressed to 525 Hoyt Street and General Delivery, St. Johns, Oregon. They lived a NW 12th & Hoyt for several years before buying a house on N. Montana Avenue. After retiring, they lived a short while in Southwest Portland, but their final address was 1313 Lambert Street in Sellwood.

What if...

Our family's history would have been very much different if Daniel and Ingeborg had boarded the ship SS Norge from Trondheim....

The Danielson/Pearson family descendants of Viktoria and Charles Pearson are glad our great-grandfather Daniel inadvertently arranged for his family to miss the ship!



Wedding picture 1905



The Pearson's children



Portland early 1900



SS Norge Memorial

The ones left behind...

In conclusion of this emigration/immigration story we would like to conclude with a summary of what happened to some relatives that stayed behind in Sweden, as they are very involved from the sense of missing, longing, concern and loss.

Jonas Erik Danielsson, born 12/29/1865, who stayed behind in Vallåsen, Ramsele, died 6/18/1941. He married Katharina Elisabeth Göransdotter, born July 10, 1864 in Ramsele, and died December 18, 1960 in Borgvattnet. Family information indicates they had five sons and one daughter, but information obtained by a friend in Sweden shows they had six sons and one daughter. A son must have died young.

And as in Wilhelm Moberg's book "The Last Letter Home" we would like to end this story with a "Letter From Home" written by Carl Persons's parents, Per and Johanna Svensson during the sunset period of their life.



Jonas and family

"9 September 1922

Dömle, Sweden

Our dear children,

Thank you for your letter and that you are well is the best news. Papa is in poor health. He does not get better, and I'm not in very good health either, but with God's help we get through one day at the time. It is so sad to see him in so much pain.

We have to thank you Karl so much for the money you sent. So far we have gotten along fine. You tell us that we can use the money. So far we haven't had to but it is so nice of you that we can use it if we want to. We have to tell you that my brother Ole is dead. He was buried the second day of Christmas, but I was in such poor health that I didn't go because it was so cold.

We can send you greetings from Johan in Karlshof. They are so nice to us. He helps with wood. Hilda comes and clean house for us. Even in Nyback in Nykelby they come and help us. Lotten sends her greetings. It is hard for them in Baksholm. They have no work.

We close now with our love,

Per and Johanna Svensson"

Story written by Leif Rosqvist, the editor of New Sweden Heritage Society and SRIO newsletters. The story is based on information by the family here represented by Joyce Wicklund Nielsen.

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, emotional and physical challenges they had to face during their journey to America.

References:

Norsk Utvandreremuseum in Norway, Interreg-projektet Grensevandring

SS Norge - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Ship lists—Wilson Line and White Star-Dominion Line

Interesting reading:

SRIO book: Swedish Oregon, available at www.swedishrootsinoregon.org