

When I emigrated to America

A Life Story about Per Johan Anderson

The beginning...

This story of Per Johan and Hulda Anderson and the journey that forever changed their life, and mine. I'm Carl Nelson, a great grandson born and raised in Portland, Oregon. I'm still not exactly sure what sets the Swedish-American apart from regular main-stream American, but I had an experience that made that part of me much more real.

In 2004, I had the privilege of traveling to Sweden and visiting my Great Grandparent's ancestral homes. In doing that I visited Styrshult farm that was the boyhood home of Per Johan. Styrshult resembles very much the farm they created when they came to America. It is in a quite rural setting, lying just across from a small creek from the old churchyard. With only a little imagination, I could hear the church bell pealing across the pastoral Swedish countryside and see young Per Johan walking with his mother, Sara Elisabeth, through the fields, across the creek and into the church. To the end, Per Johan (Morfar to us kids) and Hulda (Mormor to us kids) held closely their religious beliefs.



The old churchyard

I was never privilege to know Per Johan, but I know that the family speaks of him with great respect; and as a family, they were revered in their community. Their daughter Sara was my maternal grand mother. She was a kind of industries role model for us ten grandchildren.



Styrshult, Ljunghem

From the household examines (husförhörslängd) for 1861-68, we know that Anders and Sara Peterson moved to the farm at Styrshult, Ljunghem from Warola (later Varola, now Värås) in 1865. Peterson bought a 3/16 mantal, e.g. 3/16 portion of the complete original farm, situated across the creek from Ljunghem's churchyard, which he farmed. He seemed to move from surrounding parish to parish, which could mean that he was getting more responsible positions at mills. He also most likely worked a mill on the farm.



Anders and Sara
ca 1865

The couple had 13 children (10 sons, and 3 daughters) a common number of children at this time in Sweden. Per Johan was born July 25, 1855 and he was the second son Anders and Sara, with the consequence that the farm would go to the older brother the day the parents are gone. The rest of the children needed to find another way to earn their living.

The Promised Land

This was a critical period in Swedish history when a very slow change from pure agricultural to pre-industrial society was making it very difficult for non-farming families to earn their living.



Per Johan
ca 1870

At the time Swedes heard about a country far away, called the Promised Land, where anybody with courage and determination could make a dream come true. This was the period of "America Fever" with hot promises of ample land through the Homestead Act, providing cheap or free land if the settlers would clear at least some acres and put them into production and thus work for the common man.

Going West...

From the household examines for 1876-83, we also know that Per Johan emigrated to America on April 6, 1882. Per Johan was not a Pettersson but was listed as Andersson and later Anderson, due to the Swedish system of patronymics as he was the son of Anders (Anderson).

He most likely departed to America through Gothenburg via Liverpool, England, and landed in New York for further travel to his final destination Lohrville, Iowa. Very little is documented from this journey as this was for many emigrants a very difficult, cramped, unclean and tiresome journey in the late 1800..

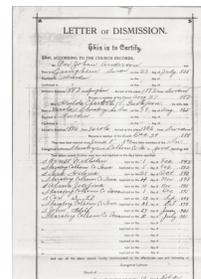


To the Midwest...

After arriving in Lohrville, Iowa, 1882, he worked in farming activities for 15 years. During his stay there he met his future wife Hulda Larson, daughter of Gustav Larson, a miller in the Svenstorp area between Skövde and Warola, indicating that they lived within seven miles of each other in Sweden. Hulda arrived in America in 1886.

Gothenburg 1870

Per Johan and Hulda were married on June 8, 1890. and were members of Skaraborg Lutheran Church of Calhoun, Iowa. From the "letter of dismissal" we know he became a member the church on August 27, 1882. She became member of the Church on December, 29, 1889. They had five children during the period 1892-1901(Ernst, Sara, Alma, Carl, John), all of them baptized at the Church.



Letter of dismissal



Wedding 1890

"Be it remembered. That at a term of the District Court holden in and for said County in Court House therein on the 10th day of October in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Eight, when P.J. Anderson, a native of Sweden to be admitted to become a Citizen Of The United States".

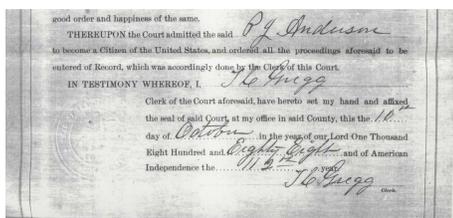


The Anderson children

the



Church in Calhoun



This is the magic moment that all immigrants are waiting for, and so did Per Johan Anderson.

To the West Coast...

Per Johan had an uncle who worked as a logger for the Benson Timber Co. in Oregon, which was logging in the Clatskanie area, and he moved the family to Longview, WA, at the behest of his uncle. His uncle had land in Longview and he sold Per Johan and his brother August some acreage.



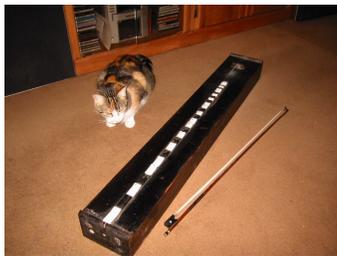
Timber train in Lavene, OR

Per Johan and Hulda built a farm along Cameron Creek in Longview, WA, where they earned their living though logging, first in Clatskanie, OR and later around Longview, WA.



Farm at Cameron Creek, WA

Their oldest son Ernest continued their work in the logging business beginning at the age of 10. Per Johan built a "Psalter" a single stringed instrument, played with bow and sang hymns.



Psalter built by Per Johan



Grandpa Reinhardt logging team and their "donkey"



Ernest #2 in back row



Ernest driving the Rusty Shay,

At the End...

Per Johan and Hulda Anderson ended their long journey from Ljunghem in Skaraborgs County, Sweden to their farm along Cameron Creek, Longview, WA, and are buried at the Bunker Hill cemetery in Longview, WA.

Per Johan died December 7, 1927 at the age of 72, and Hulda followed him, to the shining city upon a hill, on September 20 1958, at the age of 93.

The story is written by Leif Rosqvist, the editor of New Sweden Cultural Heritage newsletter, in Portland, Oregon, based on material provided by the family.