

FIRST SETTLEMENTS ON THE DELAWARE.

THE ORIGINAL SWEDES, WHENCE, HOW AND WHEN THEY CAME.

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Of the several branches of the Teutonic family of nations none have made a more vivid contribution to history than that which early peopled the peninsula of Scandinavia. In their sturdy march from barbarism to civilization the Anglo Saxon peoples have nowhere exemplified in so marked a degree their race characteristics—their rugged force coupled with fire-side gentleness, their burly virility with the old heroic tenderness, the fierceness of valor with the softness of home-spun virtues. Nowhere more than in that Northland has the Teuton's love of glory, his rude heartiness of purpose, his stern grasp of life's verities been happily tempered by the gentle fealties and sweet sanctities of home. And nowhere else is that home more the unit and core of civil society—more its steadfast anchorage against the besieging storms which threaten the fair fabric of modern civilization.

In Sweden centered the dispensing head and fountain of that ancient religion which was the common faith of our pagan ancestors. There stood that shining temple of Upsala the lofty hall of the gods, and there that vast unknowable tree with the mystic symbolism of mighty Yggdrasil spread far and wide its ominous branches and wrought its solemn spell. Near by on the one hand stood ancient Sigtuna where Sigge Fridulfson the historic Odin terminated his long pilgrimage from the East, and on the other lay that once Swedish province of Finland which the latest researches indicate as the original home of that germinal race of Aryans from which have come the most vigorous and prolific of the world's colonizing nations.

This great temple at Upsala was a common sanctuary for all the kindred but independent tribes of Teutonic origin; and later it happily served as a basis of national unification when the inferior Harads and Fylkis were successively subjected to that proud race of Upsala chieftains to whom all Scandinavian rulers were glad to trace their origin. Thus it came that after many struggles a compact autonomy of all Swedish peoples was evolved from the warring factions about the end of the ninth century, through the compelling power of that dynasty which claimed direct descent from Skjold, son of Odin.

Here begins the dawn of Sweden's strictly authentic history; and for nearly three centuries there followed a succession of wars with Norway and Denmark, and of struggles between Christianity and Paganism, in the course of which the great temple of Upsala was burned in the reign of King Inge, Christianity diffused under King Eric the Saint, and Finland conquered and christianized by Sweden. Then came the invasion of Sweden by the Danes under Magnus Henrickson who killed Saint Eric in 1160, when there followed a series of civil wars and short bloody reigns with various calamities lasting 200 years, to terminate which the Swedish nobles, in the national distress, offered the throne in 1389 to Margaret Queen of Denmark and Norway. This queen betrayed her trust and by the celebrated "Calmar Union" of 1397 Sweden was brought under one joint sceptre with Denmark and Norway. From this enforced union Sweden was liberated through the patient heroism and patriotic devotion of Gustavus Vasa, under whose wise and beneficent sway the Kingdom experienced a new birth of prosperous existence.

This was a most glorious epoch of Swedish history. Few heroes in the world's broad theatre have bequeathed greater names to succeeding ages than that left by Gustavus Vasa. As founder of the great Vasa Dynasty he was scarcely less the founder of his country. Had Sweden done nothing more than produce that illustrious line of monarchs she would have attained an imperishable place in history. Had she done less that place would have been far other than that to which she

has been assigned. With many of the characteristics attributed to the English King Alfred and the Swiss William Tell, Gustavus Vasa combined the great qualities of our own Washington and Lincoln. Like the hunted Alfred of England he was long a weary fugitive from his country's invaders and like the noblest men of our history he exhibited equal greatness in adversity and in prosperity.

Rewarded with the crown of the Sweden he had liberated Gustavus Vasa found a misgoverned kingdom exhausted by war, a people crushed by taxation and torn by religious dissension, a haughty clergy and disaffected nobility, a disorganized army, crippled industries and an empty treasury; he left it a free and happy kingdom with a loyal nobility and devoted clergy of restricted powers, an efficient army and navy, a full treasury, prosperous trade and manufactures and rapidly spreading art, learning, science and religion. The vast improvements thus inaugurated by the first Vasa sovereign were maintained by the second till the reign of the grandson the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, when the national power and prosperity were so augmented that Sweden became one of the leading nations of the world, rising to such influential and dazzling eminence as excited the envy and admiration of all Europe, which made her alliance eagerly sought by Richelieu and Cromwell and the proudest sovereigns of Christendom.

It thus remained for the grandson alone to dispute with his illustrious grandparent, the first Vasa, the glory of having bequeathed the grandest name to Swedish history. If the one was the father of his newborn country the other was its preserver, and while the first nourished its tender infancy the second led and promoted its proud and stalwart growth. The history of no country indeed shines with a juster or nobler fame than that of Gustavus Adolphus; and there are no recorded feats of arms or tests of invincible valor excelling those of the Swedish soldiery under his heroic and consummate generalship. To ardent patriotism, wise statesmanship and military genius of the first order this great leader added lofty consecration and prophetic fervor in a noble cause such as lifted his aims above the scope of mere ambition. To his gen-

ius and devotion protestantism owes its practical existence against the anathemas of popery; to his valiant services and the sacrifices of Sweden in the great Thirty Years War the christian world owes a debt of gratitude for the priceless boon of religious liberty; and with the honored name of Gustavus Adolphus the vindicated rights of conscience will be sacredly associated by unborn generations of free and enlightened peoples throughout an advancing world.

Such is a hurried summary of Sweden's early historical career. At the summit of that career—in the glorious reign of Gustavus Adolphus—the kingdom took its first step in that great movement for peopling the New World which then engaged the attention of European nations.

Awake alike to the cause of christian propagandism and to whatever promised to better the practical condition of his people Gustavus Adolphus quickly foresaw the various advantages to be derived from an organized colonization of his countrymen; and he joined heartily with the wise Oxenstiern, his great war minister, in pushing the scheme to practical consummation. Upon application of William Usselinckx a merchant of Antwerp, who had projected the Dutch West India Company, a similar plan was recommended by the king; and a charter for the Swedish West India Company was granted under date of June 14, 1626, which was confirmed in the Diet of 1627. The instrument fully recites its various purposes, among which it is specified that produce and commerce "should be furthered by all proper means" and it goes on to state that "good information had been received of credible and experienced persons" that in Africa, Asia, America and other parts of the world "very rich lands and islands do exist, certain of which are peopled by a well governed nation, certain others by heathen and wild men, others still uninhabited and others not as yet perfectly discovered, and that not only with such places a great trade may be driven, but that the hope strengthens of bringing said people easily, through the setting on foot of commercial intercourse, to a better civil state and to the truth of the christian religion etc., etc." Therefore, concludes the document "for the spread of the Holy Gospel and the pros-

perity of our subjects" the king proceeds "to erect a general company or united power of proprietors" of his realm and such others as shall associate themselves with them and help forward the work, promising to strengthen it with his succor and assistance, founding and providing it with various privileges which are therein fully detailed.

The charter was generously supported by subscriptions from persons of every rank, and the project was carried forward with the utmost zeal. In the following year it had attained to such a state of readiness that the historian Campanius and other early authorities affirm that the expedition actually sailed at that time and was captured by a Spanish fleet. But there is no record or other evidence to support this statement, and there is no room to doubt that all further exertions for the movement were suddenly suspended by the imperative and exhaustive preparations for the great Thirty Years War into which Sweden was about to throw her whole resources.

To share in that prolonged conflict Gustavus Adolphus embarked with his small army in June, 1630, and by the valor of that army with his own masterly leadership amazed the world with an unparalleled series of victories against the ablest generals and best troops of Europe. But amid all these stirring events—absorbed with affairs which would have wholly engrossed an ordinary mind—gaining such applauded triumphs as would have turned the head of a less exalted victor Gustavus Adolphus never lost sight of his cherished purpose to plant a Swedish colony in the New World. In November, 1632, on the eve of the great battle of Lutzen, in Germany, where he lost his life, the great king, as with a solemn premonition of his speedy end, again urged with much earnestness that the scheme for Swedish colonization be renewed and consummated as soon as the exigencies of the war should permit.

The last wishes of the king thus expressed were more than sacred in the hearts of his people; and accordingly in April of the following year Minister Oxenstiern published the unsigned proclamation of Gustavus Adolphus for the Swedish Emigration Company. No formal command could have been more imperatively binding upon his devoted subjects than the

mute pathos of their dead king's unfinished plans, and the suspended preparations for the expedition were at once resumed with new vigor. But the proclamation was followed on the twenty-sixth of the ensuing June by a published address assigning reasons for delay. This was found to be necessary by unexpected and unavoidable hindrances connected with the great war which continued its exhaustive demands many years longer. Indeed such were the waste and dire exactions of that fearful struggle that more than four years elapsed before it was found practicable to complete adequate preparations for the enterprise.

But at length all matters being in readiness the expedition sailed. It consisted of the "Key of Calmar" an armed ship, and a transport sloop or ship of smaller size called the "Bird Grip" or "Griffin" both under command of Peter Minuit. When they left Sweden its receding shores were white and cold in their wintry vestments; when they caught sight of the New World its shores were smiling and fragrant with the breath of an early spring. Entering the Bay of Delaware and coasting its westerly shore the immigrants were welcomed to their new home by budding leaves, warbling birds and all the balmy allurements of the glad spring-time. Coming from the wintry shores of the fatherland with eyes long wearied with the forlorn sameness of the ocean the glowing picture must have been indescribably winsome and refreshing to the gazing pilgrims; and as they exchanged the confinement and sickening odors of the ship for the freedom and verdurous scents of their first landing place, they hailed their deliverance with such exuberant hearts that we can not wonder at their naming the place "Paradise Point." Thence after a brief stay they proceeded up between the slowly narrowing shores of bay and river until they reached the mouth of the Suspecough or Minquas creek, to which Minuit first gave the name of Elbe, and subsequently changed to that of Christina in honor of the Swedish queen. Turning into this stream they pushed up its crooked channel through low marshy levels toward the westerly highlands beyond. Going thus about two English miles they reached a little rocky promontory which thrust its bold

front into the stream with a border of deep morass on one side and a little sheltered harbor on the other. Minuit was quick to perceive the advantages of the spot. It was the dwelling place of the Indian Chief Metasiment or Mattahoorn from whom Minuit at once purchased the site, together with six acres of adjacent mainland on which to plant their little village of Christinehamn. Upon this narrow peninsula Minuit landed his colonists and his supplies, and near its rocky front he built Christina Skants or Fort Christina, a small enclosure of palisades in the general form of a square, within which were erected two log houses for barracks and storage, and later, a chapel in which Rev. Reorus Torkillus who arrived in the next expedition, held the first christian services on the Delaware. Here, too, a few years later were held the first law courts on the river; so that the little promontory which is within the present boundaries of the city of Wilmington is distinguished at once as the place of the first actual settlement, the place of first military occupancy, of first christian worship and of the first sessions of courts of justice of the first permanent settlement on the Delaware; and it is claimed that no other equal area on the continent is more replete with historical significance than a spot thus early linked with four primal usages of civil society.

Neither the exact date of the departure of this first expedition nor of its arrival on the Christiana has ever been ascertained; and until recent times even the *year* of its arrival was quite uncertain. But late researches have disclosed conclusive evidence that the arrival of the first Swedish immigrants was in the spring of 1638, with the strong presumption that the two vessels left Sweden late in 1637 or early in 1638. The proof as to date of arrival is comprised in several concurrent records, the first of which is the action of William Kieft, director of the Dutch Company at Manhattan (New York), who in May, 1638, sent a formal protest to Peter Minuit against the Swedish occupancy of the South or Delaware river as an encroachment upon the prior rights of the Dutch; and this was followed in July of the same year by a letter from the same Director Kieft to the Company in Holland stating that "Minuit has built a fort near the Delaware five miles (Dutch) be-

low our fort (Nassau now Gloucester a few miles below Philadelphia) and draws all the skins toward him by his liberal gifts; he has departed with the two vessels he had with him, leaving twenty-four men in the fort provided with all sorts of merchandise and provisions and has put down posts on which are the letters C. R. S." Later and more explicit testimony as to date of arrival has been found in a letter of Jerome Hawley, secretary of the Virginia Company, to Secretary Windebank of the London Company, written from Jamestown under date of May 8, 1638, in which he states that since his last letter of March 20th, there had arrived there "a Dutch ship with a commission from the young Queen of Sweden and signed by eight of the chief lords" of that kingdom, and that "the ship remained here about ten days to refresh with wood and water, during which time the master of said ship made known that both himself and another ship of his company were bound for Delaware Bay."

This ship it has been assumed was the Key of Calmar, carrying Minuit and the first Swedish colonists to the Delaware where it was thought they must have arrived about the middle of April; but Prof. Odhner has quite recently shown by means of a letter from Blommaert, a prominent actor in early Dutch movements, that instead of being the Key of Calmar *en route* to the Delaware, the vessel in question was the sloop Griffin, which *had already been to the Delaware* with the Key of Calmar and her immigrants, and had then been dispatched upon a trading voyage to Virginia. Thus it would seem that notwithstanding Secretary Hawley's report that the ships at Jamestown late in March were at that time bound for Delaware bay, the colonists had actually already planted themselves on the Christiana river; and this is moreover fully confirmed by the recent discovery in Sweden of an old document showing that Minuit purchased land on the Delaware from an Indian chief as early as March 29th, 1638. This with little doubt was the purchase of the site of fort and village made by Minuit upon his first arrival on the Christiana; and it fixes with reasonable certainty upon the last week in March in the year 1638 as the proximate date of the event now celebrated.

In addition to their first purchase on landing on the Christina the Swedes, soon after their arrival, bought of the Indians all the west side lands from Cape Henlopen to the Falls of Trenton, to which they affixed national stakes and marks and sent the deeds and proofs of title to Sweden for preservation in the archives of Stockholm. They moreover claimed that Charles I. had, in 1631, upon application of Minister Oxenstierna relinquished to Sweden all English claims to territory on the Delaware based on grounds of discovery, which, with the purchase from the Indians, they averred, gave them exclusive right to the west shore, as the Dutch with their shifting posts for mere traffic had never acquired any rights by actual settlement. Whatever the truth or justice of such a claim, it is certain that the Swedes invariably recognized the prior rights of the Indians, and by friendly purchase began that wise and peaceful policy which William Penn afterward faithfully pursued with such happy results to his followers as well as to his own just renown.

Following the first Swedish expedition in 1638, various preparations were made in the Fatherland for further emigration to America. In 1640 a vessel named Fredenberg, Captain Jacob Powelson, was dispatched from Holland under auspices of Swedes at Nykoping, laden with men, cattle and supplies for settlement in New Sweden, and two other ventures of similar character were soon after provided with authority in blank from the same source; while mention was repeated of the prospect of other expeditions, and the promise of more vessels from Gottenberg the next spring with more provisions and more detailed instructions. In 1642 the famous John Printz was appointed governor of New Sweden and set sail with his two vessels, the Stork and Renown, upon his memorable voyage of one hundred and fifty days which terminated by their final arrival at Fort Christina "by God's grace" on the fifteenth of February, 1643. This Gov. Printz, who, it was reported "weighed upwards of 400 pounds and drank three drinks at every meal," took possession of Tinicum island (below the mouth of the Schuylkill) upon which he erected a fort and a large brick mansion where he lived in state, and exhibited a rather swaggering

officiousness in asserting Swedish interests. Upon his resignation and return to Sweden in 1653, Printz left the government in temporary charge of his son-in-law, John Pappegoya, who was succeeded by the contentious John Risingh. This new governor, upon his arrival in May, 1654, suddenly siezed the Dutch Fort Casimir at New Amstel, now New Castle, and established himself at Fort Christina. From here in his first letter back he requested an official personage in Sweden "*to procure for me a good wife.*" But the next year he won a different, if lesser, distinction by his skilful audacity as a persistent negotiator. For when Gov. Stuyvesant made his memorable voyage from New Amsterdam with his seven ships and nearly 700 troops to capture Fort Christina with its garrison of thirty sick men, Gov. Risingh kept the besiegers at bay for two whole weeks by an obstreperous fire of bloodless diplomacy, soliciting repeated parleys and pretending ignorance of the intentions of the assailants to the very moment of final surrender.

The scene of this event which was the historic landing place of the Swedes, has undergone a radical change in its appearance. Originally a bold, rocky promontory, it was long used as a quarry for building stone, a large portion of which went toward the construction of the Delaware breakwater some fifty years ago, while so much material has been taken from the spot for various purposes, that the original hill has wholly disappeared, and directly beneath its former apex is now a pool of spring water. Yet the conformation of the narrow highland and contiguous marshes can still be traced with reasonable certainty.

Prior to their conquests on the Delaware the Dutch had at various times, with odd inconsistency, complained that the Swedes had grown prosperous by the ruin of the Dutch trade with the Indians, and yet declared at the same time that the Swedes were so discouraged with repeated failure that they had fixed upon a certain day for their departure, which was only prevented by new arrivals from Sweden. However this was the Swedes were generally more disposed toward farming and mechanism than trading, and it is certain that upon the arrival of William Penn, in 1682, there were prosperous

settlements of Swedes both upon the eastern shore of the lower waters and upon the entire western banks from New Castle to the falls of Trenton. Early Swedish settlers held the original town sites of Wilmington, Marcus Hook, Upland (now Chester), and Philadelphia. In all these places a large proportion of the leading and best citizens of to-day are descendants of the first Swedish settlers, some of whom still retain their original names; but a far larger number, through intermarriages and the inevitable changes of time and orthography, have sunk their Swedish identity under mixed and strange names.

Most of the land upon which Wilmington stands was first granted by Col. Francis Lovelace, governor general of the Duke of York's territories, to two original settlers named Tymen Stidham and John Anderson. The latter was a Swede who according to tradition came to America as cook in a Dutch ship. He wore a woolen cap, which during the voyage was so constantly used in lieu of a towel that it became saturated with grease, and by constant handling acquired a shining surface resembling polished steel. Hence the sailors nick-named him Staelkappe or Staelcop, by which he was ever after known. The original site of Upland, now Chester, was held by a Swedish settler named Kyn, who was the direct ancestor of Prof. Gregory B. Keen, the scholarly antiquarian who to-day sends you a cordial letter of congratulation; while part of the ground upon which Philadelphia stands was once the farm of three Swedish brothers named Swenson, for whom one of the city streets was named. In exchange for the surrendered farm the Swenson brothers received from William Penn a larger grant on the higher bank of the Schuylkill.

Although under the successive rule of the Dutch and English there was an increased intermingling of nationalities, the Swedes continued much discontented with repeated annoyances and curtailments of their ancient rights by their inimical rulers, and accordingly they hailed the news of the great grant of territory to William Penn as a promise of deliverance. Upon Penn's arrival in 1682 the Swedes gave him a cordial reception and *as a distinct people* deputed Captain

Lasse Cock to address the proprietor in their behalf. He assured Penn that they would love, serve and obey him with all they possessed, declaring "that the day of this meeting was the best day they had ever seen." In return the friendly governor assured them of his warm interest in their welfare, which he confirmed by volunteering to supply himself, some of the books of their church service and to intercede in their behalf with the Swedish embassy in London. It was partially through his influence thus exerted that there began to be a revival of attention by the Swedish government to that distant colony whose existence had been almost forgotten.

But the prime mover in the practical renewal of home interest was a comparatively new comer, Charles Springer, who, upon his release from a term of enforced servitude in Virginia, joined his countrymen in Christina and became an active and useful manager of their affairs. Upon a petition written by him three clergymen were sent over with ample supplies for their religious needs, one of whom, Rev. Eric Biorck, at once took measures for building a house of worship and by zealous exertions, with the active aid of Mr. Springer, carried to completion that simply tasteful edifice to-day known as the "old Swedes' church," which, built in 1698, continues a venerable and treasured relic of that primitive era of small things out of which have been evolved the proud results of to-day. It must not however be inferred that so pious a people as the first Swedish pilgrims had remained for sixty years without a place of worship; for besides the chapel first built within the walls of fort Christina they had erected a log church in 1667 at Crane-hook, near the shore of the Delaware, about half a mile below the mouth of the Christina. But aside from its perishable materials this edifice stood in an unfavorable situation and suffered increasing neglect; so that the people contributed with cheerful alacrity to the erection of that stone church which still stands a memento of the pious and affectionate zeal of the early Swedes. It was built upon ground which had long before been used as a place of interment. About it lie the remains of many of the adventurers from Fatherland, who in faith and hope first

set foot upon the soil of the New World, and there sleep successive generations of their descendants down to the present day. The site was donated by the Swedish settler Anderson or Staelcop before referred to, or by his son John, who was one of the active supporters of the church and a signer of the contract for the construction of its new edifice. This contract was executed on the nineteenth of May, 1698, and the completed building was formally dedicated on Trinity Sunday in 1699, when Rev. Mr. Rudman, who officiated, took for his text Psalm cxxvi-3. "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

This now ancient structure stands but a few rods from the original landing place of the Swedes on the Christiana. Between the two pass more than hourly trains of cars, and all about are the kindling sounds and latest forms of busy industry. There in vivid juxtaposition is seen an eloquent representation of the Old and the New, and perhaps nowhere else in the New World is the contrast presented with more pathetic and impressive significance.

And now it can hardly be necessary to conclude with a reference to the genius or capacity of a people who, to say nothing of their old heroic age, have produced a Vasa dynasty of soldiers and statesmen, have afforded an Oxenstiern to wise diplomacy, have given a Linneus to botany, a Berzelius to chemistry, a Bellman and a Tegner to poetry, a Swedenborg to religious science and philosophy, an Ericsson to invention, a Fredricka Bremer to fiction, a Jenny Lind and a Nilsson to enchanting song. It is enough to know that they have contributed their full share to whatever in human concernment has enhanced the glory and happiness of mankind. In their blue eyes and sunny hair not less than in their strong physique and the calm sincerity of their manners, we recognize the characteristics of that sturdy race from which our English-American people have so largely descended. No other foreign born residents so quickly acquire our language or so readily conform to our customs and institutions. Their hatred of oppression is a tradition earlier than their oldest annals as well as the burden

of their authentic history. With them love of liberty and sympathy with popular institutions have the truth and quickness of instinct. The descendants of those first Swedish colonists on the Delaware to-day honorably fill every position in the walks of industry, art and learning, and as there can be no better element in our composite population, we may welcome new acquisitions from the Swedish fatherland with every assurance that they will still better acquit themselves in the grand possibilities of the future.