

# Swedish Roots in Oregon

## An Immigration Research Project



June 2015 Newsletter

Editor: Leif Rosqvist

Volume 30

### Message from your President—Lars Nordström

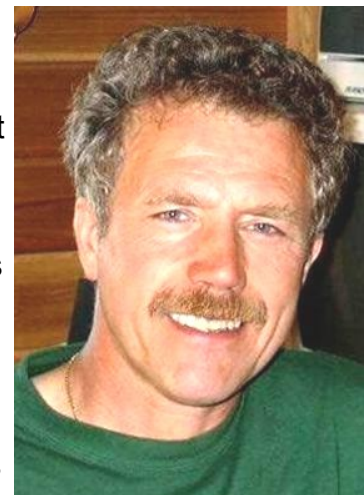
Sixteen years ago, when SRIO was formed, the initial discussions tried to answer one very basic question: Where do we start? We already knew that there had been a substantial wave of Swedish immigrants to Oregon after 1883 when the railroad connected Portland to the national grid, that many had stayed, and that there was at least one book written about the Swedes of Oregon. But that book was old and rare, and it was written in Swedish!

SRIO only had five volunteers and there was only so much that could be done. Eventually it was decided that we would focus on two things: to collect and compile as much genealogical information on Swedish immigrants to the state as possible, and to research and publish—in English—any written materials that described their experiences here. And this is, of course, what we have done.

But those early discussions also generated ideas that we could not prioritize at the time. One of them was to create an Oregon map that listed Swedish points of interest: Swedish settlements, churches, cemeteries, buildings, residences, and so on. Since this was in the early days of the internet, and we did not yet have our own website, we still thought of this as a paper map that we would print and make available to anyone interested in exploring them. We thought that both Swedish visitors to the state, as well as curious residents, would find such a guide useful. But we were so busy that we just never got around to it. However, we think that it is still a good idea and hope that we can start working on it later this year. We have some basic ideas for places to include, but would love to hear from our readers too. If you have any suggestions for this map, please send us an email.

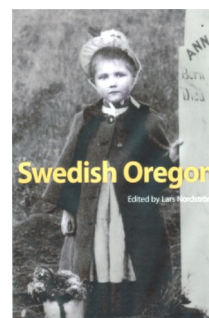
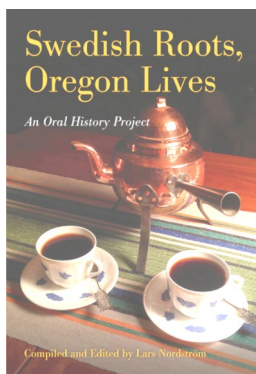
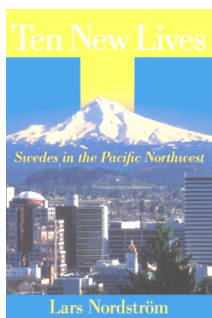
If you have not visited our website recently, we hope that you will take the time to swing by. Since our December Newsletter, we have added to our collection of stories, and there is more material on the way. We also have a team working on the Swedish settlement in Warren, and we hope that someone will help write something on the Swedes of Cherry Grove in Washington County. We are also exploring the possibility of publishing the translation of a book originally written in Swedish and published in Oregon in 1928. It details a long journey from Oregon to Jerusalem and Sweden and back to Oregon ... More about that in our next Newsletter!

*Trevlig sommar!*



## SRIO will participate in Portland Scandinavian Midsummer Festival

The 87th annual Portland Scandinavian Midsummer Festival will be held at Oaks Park in Sellwood, on Saturday June 13th from 11am to 6pm.. SRIO will have our traditional booth at the festival where we have books, maps etc.



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Please support the shops that sell our books:

Scandia Imports, 10020 SW Beaverton Hillsdale Hwy, Beaverton, OR 97005, (503) 643-2424

Finn Ware, 1116 Commercial Street, Astoria, OR 97103, (503) 325-5720

Beach Books, Beach Books, 37 North Edgewood, Seaside, OR 97138, (503) 738-3500

Scandinavian Specialties, 6719 15<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, Seattle, WA 98117, (877) 784-7020

Nordic Heritage Museum, 3014 NW 67<sup>th</sup> St, Seattle, WA 98117, (206) 789-5707

You can always reach us with questions or comments through our website:

Contact the SRIO President: [President@swedishrootsinoregon.org](mailto:President@swedishrootsinoregon.org)

Contact the SRIO Genealogist: [Genealogy@swedishrootsinoregon.org](mailto:Genealogy@swedishrootsinoregon.org)

Contact the SRIO Webmaster: [Webmaster@swedishrootsinoregon.org](mailto:Webmaster@swedishrootsinoregon.org) or write an old-fashioned letter to SRIO, 8740 SW Oleson Rd, Portland, OR 97223

[www.swedishrootsinoregon.org](http://www.swedishrootsinoregon.org)

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## SRIO Needs Help with Marketing

SRIO is, as many of you know, an educational, non-profit organization. We are a small research group that usually meets every month or so. Each member is asked to focus on some of the many tasks we do throughout the year. Still, even though our combined skills add up to a great deal of expertise, we need help with marketing the books we produce. Would you like to help us preserve and make the Swedish history of Oregon better known by promoting our books to bookstores and Scandinavian gift shops? We could really use your help and would love to hear from you!

## A little place called Warren, Oregon

by Rhonda Erlandson, SRIO Secretary

I've always had a fondness for a little place called Warren, Oregon, located about 25 miles northwest of Portland. My grandparents and their teenaged son (who would eventually become my father) arrived from Sweden in 1948. They had barely set foot on dry land in New York before they hopped on a train and traveled across the continent to their destination in Warren where family members welcomed them. They immediately felt at home in Warren and its surrounding areas. The gentle forested hills, streams, rivers and verdant farmland reminded them of the home they had left behind in Norrland. Moreover almost everyone in Warren spoke Swedish.

The Warren Swedish settlement was established by C. J. Larson in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when, after purchasing farm land there for his own family, he put the call out to Swedish immigrants across the nation and back home in Sweden, inviting them to start new lives in Warren. Many Swedes came from the Midwestern portion of the United States and many came directly from Sweden. In 1907, Larson helped found Bethany Lutheran Church by donating land for the church's construction and also including an additional parcel to be used as a cemetery. The little church quickly became a central feature of immigrant life in Warren as it served to anchor the community and provide a gathering place for its thriving congregation.

As an SRIO Board Member, I jumped at the opportunity to take a closer look at the history of Warren and its unique Swedish Roots. Knowing that the Lutheran Church has a long tradition of careful recordkeeping, I decided to start with Bethany Lutheran. In July 2013, I contacted Pastor Rory Scott and asked if I could drop by the church office and chat with him about Bethany's history. Keenly interested in my project, Pastor Scott welcomed me warmly and expressed pleasure in sharing whatever Bethany had to offer. During our conversation, he retrieved about a dozen ancient looking tomes from the church's safe. These books, written in "old" Swedish, are the diaries of Bethany's founding and contain membership rolls, minutes of meetings, notes and documentation of the daily decisions, transactions, and concerns of this young church formed by early Swedish immigrants. Recognizing that these books would provide fascinating historical information on the daily lives of Warren's community members, I eagerly sought permission from Pastor Scott to borrow these books – a few at a time – and preserve them by digitizing their contents.

Over a year later, I have scanned over 1000 pages of Bethany's record books. Ingeborg Dean and Mike Timshel have stepped forward to assist with translating the material into English, and we hope to have the first book available for viewing online within the next few months. My hope is that this project will provide a wide audience with a sense of what it was like to live in Warren in the early Twentieth Century and to be a member of a dedicated group of people who cherished the traditions of their homeland while starting new lives in America.

I wish to thank Pastor Scott and the congregation of Bethany Lutheran for their hospitality and generosity in sharing these valuable records. To all of our SRIO readers, be sure to watch for updates regarding this fascinating project in future editions of this newsletter.

## Request for Material on Swedish Loggers in the Pacific NW

That there were a great many Swedish loggers and sawmill workers throughout the Pacific Northwest a hundred years ago was once a well-known fact. Today the old-growth forest is mostly gone and so is the memory of the Swedish logger. In order to counteract that inevitable trend, SRIO would like to preserve at least a few glimpses of that magnificent forest and the people who worked there. Our vision is to gather as many historical photographs as we can and publish them in a coffee table book, and in order to do that we need your help. Please share with us any information you may have that could be included in realizing our new undertaking. We are looking not only for historical photographs, but also items such as old letters in Swedish or English, newspaper clipping, titles of books—in short, any historical material that fits our criteria. If you have something to share, we need to hear from you.

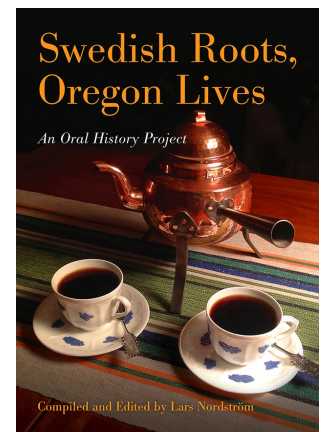


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## Website Corner,

by Herje Wikegård

The website was recently updated with some items that were overdue. For instance, we now have pictures from the *Swedish Roots, Oregon Lives* book release. Some other maintenance items were also taken care of. To get to new modern web features, I would really appreciate if a more professional web developer would donate time to help taking the SRIO web to the next level. This could be a time limited effort working with me, or it could also lead to a board membership. It all depends on ambition level and interest. If you are this person and interested in helping the SRIO web improve, please contact me by sending an email to [webmaster@swedishrootsinoregon.com](mailto:webmaster@swedishrootsinoregon.com)

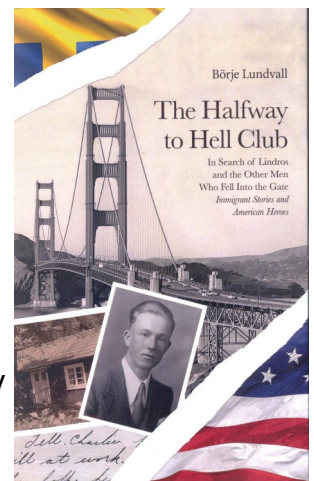


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## The Halfway to Hell Club

“I could hear faint baby-like cries. ... The net looked like a sinking raft with the tiny men entangled and trying to get free. ... Some drifted out of the Gate and out of sight,” said Tex Lester, a steelworker who sat atop the south tower on February 17, 1937, witnessing the deadliest day in the history of the Golden Gate Bridge, and even to this day, the worst ever in the history of bridge construction. Before the accident, the safety net had saved the lives of nineteen workers from a certain death, a lucky elite party calling themselves the “Halfway to Hell Club.”

Charles Lindros, a thirty-year-old Swedish immigrant, was one of the men killed in the accident. This book tells the epic story of his origins in Sweden, his journey to America, and his whereabouts and life in the Humboldt County redwoods and San Francisco. The book touches on the stories of all the victims. These were the forlorn men that never made it to the Club; they went the full distance, so to speak.



## A Swedish Immigrant Poet Arthur Landfors, by Ingeborg Dean

A couple of years ago a fellow Swedish immigrant showed me three short pages from a book written by Arthur Landfors. I was deeply taken by the text which rang so true, and I have no doubt most immigrants, regardless of native country, can attest to the feelings expressed by this wonderful poet.

For non-Swedish speaking readers I have translated Arthur Landfors' "Fosterlandet".



### Our Native Country

I remember what the steamship agent said to me when I paid for my passage.

He told me I would forget, out there in the turmoil of the world, among strangers and in new surroundings, where life moved at a brisker pace and where my future now awaited me.

He told me I would forget, forget the small, crowded world back home, forget my old friends as I made new ones, and that I would be drawn into the whirl of my new life and become a citizen of the world.

### Citizen of the World

Perhaps that is what happens to some, but it never happens to most of us. We build homes and grow climbing roses around our front porches. We greet neighbors as they pass by in the evening and exchange niceties with them; the Smiths, and Mrs. Jones, the Sullivan's and Mr. Tomasello, immigrants like us, perhaps from The Green Isle or from the sunny south.

Friends come to visit for dinner or for coffee in the afternoon. We meet in the clubs we all belong to, at church, and in halls to dance. We speak the language of our new country and learn its customs. But deep within we remain foreigners.

It is not that we live with constant longing, but we know we will never be truly at home here, will never quite feel at home.

We become citizens, we vote in the elections and check results in the morning papers. We are part of determining the fate of this new country. Still, we remain foreigners.

We live in cities and become part of their restless life. We go to the theater, watch the latest movie, we laugh and have a good time, but within we still remain foreigners.

### Our Native Country

What does "Native Country" mean? It is not the boastful recounting of a glorious past, such as is brought up on grand occasions. It is neither Gustaf Adolf, nor Karl XII.

No, it means Anders Olsson and Krongårds Johanna, it is Karl August and Jonsson's Greta. It is our Father and Mother, sisters, brothers and friends. It is the village cobbler, tailor, and tanner. It is the people back home as they lived and worked, all those we knew as we grew up.

## Our Native Country

It means a coast of bare rocks, where the sea comes crashing in. It means a sunny archipelago where shadows play among the islands. It refers to the fields of rye and a heather covered heath. It is the glen and the river, it is the sun setting behind the mountains. It is the ripening wheat fields and the marshes where cloudberry grew.

## Our Native Country

It is the perch shoals where we fished and the rocks we jumped on to cross the waterfall. It is the inlet where we sailed the first bark boats we had made, and where we ran barefoot in the sun warmed grass. It is the little store where we bought a paper cone of sweets for the first time.

It is all of this that we mean when we say "Our Native country".

And now I know that the steamboat agent did not speak the truth.

Some information on Arthur Landfors:

He was born circa 100 years ago in the far north of Sweden. With some he spoke about the cultural destitution that characterized his childhood. His poetry touched on this and very few people put any value to his work. He described the melting snow and the linnea flower awakening from its long winter's sleep, and the lark singing, seeming to illustrate Landfors' state of mind. In 1912 Landfors emigrated to America and settled in Massachusetts, where he wrote his first collection of poems, "Smältugnen" (furnace) published in Swedish in 1932. His second collection, "Träd som bara grönska" (trees that only turn green) appeared in the 1960's.

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## The Film: The Swedish Newspaper in America

141 years in 6 minutes. Nordstjernen, the Swedish newspaper in America—since 1872. From long-hand writing and backward typesetting (setting one letter at the time) to strong presence in interactive media. See the film on [youtube/nordstjernen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nordstjernen) or [vimeo/nordstjernen](https://www.vimeo.com/nordstjernen)

From the genealogy corner.

by Ann Baudin Stuller

Starting out on the search for your Swedish roots can be quite an adventure. There are several good places to start including interviewing family members. Memories may be jogged to recall long ago stories or conversations which can provide the initial information. Perhaps there is an old box filled with family mementos: old letters, post-



cards, photos, travel documents, even citizenship papers or a family Bible which can reveal the origins of your family members. Armed with place names and birthdates your access to Swedish church records may not be an insurmountable task.

Much information is available online including an introduction to Swedish genealogy written by James E. Erickson and Nils William Olsson, Tracing your Swedish Ancestry:

[www.swedenabroad.com/Selectimage/15063/tracingyourswedishancestry.pdf](http://www.swedenabroad.com/Selectimage/15063/tracingyourswedishancestry.pdf)

Two US websites have Swedish church records available: FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com. Ancestry also has immigration and passenger lists as well as vital records, US Census records, public records, naturalization records, and a selection of Evangelical Lutheran Church of America records. Riksarkivet (SVAR) and Arkivdigital are two Swedish sources.

Immigration information is available also on [www.CastleGarden.org](http://www.CastleGarden.org) and [www.libertyellisfoundation.org](http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org). It is helpful to know the name and approximate year of entrance to the US plus any variations of spelling of the last name. For example, Johansson sometimes became Johnson on a ship manifest.

To locate information about relatives currently living in Sweden, use any of the following: [www.hitta.se](http://www.hitta.se), [www.birthday.se](http://www.birthday.se), or [www.eniro.se](http://www.eniro.se) to find addresses and phone numbers.

When you find a "brick wall", and need some assistance, [genealogy@swedishrootsinoregon.org](mailto:genealogy@swedishrootsinoregon.org) may help you find an answer. If your family immigrated to Oregon, we always welcome additional information to add to our Swedish Roots in Oregon database.

The Christmas Doctor – The true story of Dr. John Weber

*- often risked his life for others*

The parents of Nancy Jacobsen left their home at Odense, Denmark, and came to America during the 1870's, settling in Portland, Oregon. Their daughter was born in the new country and eventually became a registered nurse. Raised in the Danish Evangelical Reformed Church, Nancy viewed her profession through deeply religious eyes. One day in December, 1904, Nancy found a teenage boy, John Weber, starving on the streets of Portland. She took him into her apartment and began nursing him back to health. Whenever he asked how he could pay her back for saving him she said, "just do something for somebody someday, John". After returning home from her nursing duties each day, Nancy would feed John and talk to him in a soothing manner, assuring him he would get well. She liked to charm him with stories of Christmas in Denmark which her mother had told her, of how the family member who found an almond in the dessert on Christmas Eve received a special gift. On each of the Sundays leading up to Christmas Eve an Advent wreath was brought out and each of its four candles was lighted by the children.

After the Christmas season, 1904, was over and John was feeling better, he promised Nancy he would follow her example. He caught a freight and headed back to his home in Iowa. For the rest of his life he would say of her, "She taught me what life is all about." Inspired by what Nancy had done for him, John Weber became a medical doctor and touched the lives of many patients for good in the wilds of Idaho. On Christmas Eve, 1927, Dr. Weber made a perilous horseback ride to see a critically ill patient, Marie Qualey. Immigrants from Norway, the Qualey family lived in a location on the side of the Snake River Canyon that was so steep folks sometimes said, "When they say, 'Drop in,' they really mean it." In 1926 John Weber married a woman he loved deeply, Ida Mae Ells. She died of a heart attack in 1934, and he was truly heartbroken. In 1942 he married a woman twenty-one years younger than he. They had three children.

