

Mattias Sundberg Born in Stöde, Sweden. Stöde is in Västernorrlands län, about three Swedish miles (30 kilometers) north of Sundsvall. Born on November 30, 1891.

PARENTS Lars Eriksson and Anna-Lisa Persson. Father worked in the woods. Mother was a seamstress.

GRANDPARENTS Maternal grandfather, Per Henriksson was a tailor from Johannisfors, Sweden. Grandmother was named Greta. Grandfather worked in the woods in winter and sawed lumber in the spring. He did many things. Paternal grandfather was Mattias Sundberg. Grandmother was named Anna-Kaisa. They lived on quite a large farm. Grandfather was a carpenter and grandmother took care of the place. Mattias and his parents lived on the farm with his grandparents; he was 10 years old. Farm sold in 1901. Smaller place bought in the same area. Mattias lived with his grandparents until they died. Grandfather died in 1902. Grandmother died in 1905. His parents had rented a small farm in the area. They moved to grandparents farm. Mattias remembers getting equipment to cut and rake hay. They had cows and goats. They grew potatoes.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS One sister, Kristina Henrietta, two years older than Mattias. She stayed in Sweden. Lars Emil, year and a half younger, came to the U.S. with Mattias. Worked in the woods. Per Samuel, Jonas Walfred. Five children born that died when very young. Mother died when 53. Father remarried. Had three more children after Mattias left.

CHURCH Went one Swedish mile (10 kilometers) to church. Went fairly often. Confirmed when 14. Parents were Christian people.

CHILDHOOD Started working when 8 years old. When not in school, he was with his father in the woods. He cut wood and peeled logs. Childhood was 'no vacation.' They weren't allowed to run around on skis, they had to work.

CHRISTMAS Similar to Christmas here. They ate better food. Had a Christmas tree. Got new clothes. They ate rice for Christmas.

WORK IN SWEDEN Came to the U.S. when 26. Before then, worked in Sweden and in Bergen, Norway at an iron factory. He moved away from home after confirmed. He was in the army in Sweden when he was 21. WWI broke out during his second year in the army. Sweden was neutral so they just watched the border. He worked in Jämtland, Sweden during WWI doing farm work. Moved to Bergen, Norway when 23 or 24. He was tired of working in the woods. Better climate in Bergen. Not much snow. Saw American boats coming and going.

DECISION TO EMIGRATE Had a cousin, Gunnar Ashland (?) in La Conner, Washington, who came home for a visit. He said Mattias should go to America with them but there wasn't enough time. He had to write a letter to the king to get dismissed from the army. It took from Christmas to August to get permission. He was home for Christmas 1916. Left for America in 1917.

TRIP OVER Sailed from Oslo, August 1917 with his brother. Trip took two weeks. Trip was wonderful. Ship was called Bergensfjord. Sailed directly to New York. Entertainment on the boat. They danced and had fun. Mattias never got seasick. He had read about the U.S. No new feelings about U.S. as they approached the coast of New York.

TRAIN TRIP Stayed in New York for a couple of days. Came on a Saturday and had to wait until Monday to take a train. It rained and thundered and was awfully hot. He and his brother sat up all night from New York to Chicago. They shared a sleeping car when they got to Chicago. They were dirty with soot from the train when they got to Seattle. They stayed in a hotel in Seattle, WA for one night and then took a train to Mt. Vernon, Washington. Gunnar Ashland had a bus driver meet them at the train station and then they took the bus to La Conner, Washington.

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES All he could say in English was 'Are you going to shore?' There were lots of Scandinavians on the train. He met one who'd been to La Conner before. (See I-737 and I-1077)

WORK Worked for his cousin, Gunnar Ashland, fishing. He got fish poisoning in his hand. The doctor in Mt. Vernon 'cut up' his hand. It took a month to heal and by then fishing was over. His brother met another cousin and worked in logging camps. They learned English from other people. 'Not many could talk good English.' They learned the wrong way. He worked in a sawmill in La Conner in 1918. The mill closed. He got another job at a mill in Seattle. He got the Spanish flu during Christmas 1918. He wasn't in bed much. They said booze would keep him from dying of the Spanish flu. After New Years, he started working again. Worked during the summer for a friend in La Conner that raised cabbage. He got all kinds of work in La Conner. He never went back to fishing. He worked on farms.

COOKING A Swedish family moved to La Conner. They were bakers. Mattias worked at their restaurant and learned to bake and cook.

1919 Got rheumatism. Had to walk on crutches. 1923 cooked on tugboats in the Sound. He borrowed some money and opened his own restaurant in Everett, Washington. It was in Victor's Hotel. It's gone now. Meals were cheap. His brother's wife cooked part-time and waited on tables part-time. He sold the restaurant after a couple of years. He couldn't make enough money. Went to Alaska in the summer or 1926. Cooked on a fishing boat. Came back in the fall, out of a job. Took a job cooking east of the mountains. Stayed until springs. Went back to...

ALASKA IN 1927 Got a job with the Alaska Road Commission as a cook. Not easy work. Everything was in tents. Hard to raise bread in cold weather. Good cooking facilities, a big stove. Got time off in the winter when it was too cold to work. He worked there for 30 years all together. Got appendicitis while working for the Alaska Road Commission. Was flown to a hospital in Fairbanks, Alaska. Found out it was kidney stones. Cooked for seven years in a mining camp before WWII. Went back to the Road Commission. Retired in 1956.

MOST DIFFICULT THING ABOUT COMING TO AMERICA Learning English. Couldn't go to school; had to earn a living. Difficult times between jobs.

SICKNESS Got rheumatism in 1919. Couldn't walk. Had to spend money on a chiropractor. Went to Soap Lake, Washington to try and get cured. Felt good while there. Saw a doctor when he came back. Doctor said body needed more air. He couldn't wear heavy clothing. Slept in the nude.

COOKING FOR THE ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION Hard to cook for sixty men. There was a night cook that helped with the baking. Mattias made all the cakes and pies. He baked ten pies everyday before noon. He also baked ten loaves of bread. One day he'd make white, the next brown. Worked 12 to 13 hours per day. Somebody else peeled the potatoes. Mattias cooked a lot of meat, mostly beef and pork. They served some fish. Mattias liked his job.

CITIZENSHIP Became a U.S. citizen in Alaska. He had to study some. He'd learned the language by them. He read a lot of English books.

WAGES Paid by the month. First got \$5 a day with the Alaska Road Commission. Got room and board too. They slept in tents and had to have their own blankets. When social security started in 1937, they got a big raise of 50 cents an hour. They had to pay interest on their wages. They made about \$90 a month and had to pay room and board.

NATIONALITIES AT THE ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION Quite a few Scandinavians. A lot of Russians worked there. They'd escaped to England during the Revolution and then come to the U.S. People of all nationalities worked there, even Negroes. Mattias had seen Negroes before, first when he was 20 and then on his journey to the U.S.

REACTION TO INDIANS He was afraid of Indians when he first came to the U.S. because of the Indian stories he'd read as a boy.

CHURCH IN AMERICA Seldom goes to church; occasionally a Christmas service.

SCANDINAVIAN ORGANIZATIONS Never had time for that. He has spent his last 25 years taking care of his place and going to dances.

TRIPS BACK TO SWEDEN First trip back was after he'd been gone for sixteen years. The schools had changed. When he was in school all they taught was religion. When he went back to Sweden, his nephews were able to fill out their income tax forms by themselves because arithmetic was taught in school. Hymns and history of the Bible were taught after school and in Sunday school. They had to study religion for confirmation but it wasn't the school's major responsibility.

He speaks in Swedish.

TRIPS TO SWEDEN Sweden wasn't the same. Home was the same. People weren't the same. They weren't as polite as they used to be.