

A partial excerpt and condensation from a book written by Stephen Forslund on "The Swedes in the Pacific Northwest", given at a "senior citizen" family party at the Elks Club, Tacoma, July 30, 1978

Tacoma had not entirely lost its frontier status when we arrived here in 1911. It was not unusual to see prairie schooners on the streets; loggers and itinerant workers with their blanket rolls was a common sight. Pacific Avenue was the main drag. About every other door led to a saloon. No ladies allowed, but the Tivoli, the Annex, and a few others had a ladies' entrance. Tacoma was in the throes of a recall election when I arrived in the spring of 1911. Having just arrived from the Old Country my understanding of the issues was just about nil. I did comprehend however that the big bad wolf was a countryman, Peter Sandberg, who ran bawdy houses and saloons, and was a bad influence on the youth of the city. So the town was full of sin and iniquity mostly on his account. Later, when I had picked up sufficient English, I learned that the saloonkeepers were backing the "do-gooders" because the City Council had passed an ordinance forbidding treating in the saloons, which had caused quite a crimp in their business.

Crowds were parading up and down Pacific Avenue aimlessly, especially on Saturday nights. In the upper stories of the lower grade hotels the red lights were clearly visible. The area around 14th and Pacific Avenue was usually called "The Slave Market" for there were a number of employment offices there. It was the custom then to get jobs through these offices, but they did not always operate on the level. In a good many cases the bosses would fire a man after a few days, call for a new man, and the agent and the boss would split the fees. Things got so rank that these offices were put out of business by legislative action in 1914.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of "Daddy Bloom's" arrival in Tacoma. Olaf Bloom was the forerunner of all the Blooms-Johnsons-Martinsons-Swansons-Carlsons that arrived later over the next two or three decades. All were related or at least shirt-tail relations. It has been too much for me to try to figure out just how close they were related. Uncle Olaf was born in Eringsboda Parish, Blekinge, Sweden, in 1865 and passed away in Tacoma in 1934. He emigrated to the United States in 1881 when he was a lad of 16. He spent his first years in Illinois and Wisconsin and arrived in Tacoma in 1888. His best girl, Anna, who was born in Ostergotland followed him and they were married in 1889. Originally Olaf's last name was "Peterson", and for some reason unknown to us (probably too many Petersons around)—he chose the name "Bloom", and all his brothers who came later did likewise. While he was in the midwest two brothers arrived, Sven August and Manfred, but both returned to Sweden. Sven August married and in due time became my father-in-law. I understand Manfred contracted tuberculosis and died young. Uncle Charlie Bloom came to Madison, Wisconsin in 1887 and must have come to these parts in the 90s. Fred Bloom, accompanied by Martin Johnson, his nephew, came here about the turn of the century, and Edward Bloom arrived a year or two later.

Uncle Olaf Bloom was one of the earliest employees of the St. Paul & Tacoma Lumber Company and worked in the lumber industry the major part of his life. This nucleus of Blooms caused a number of relatives to head for Tacoma. Charlie Martinson came about 1903; Hilda Johnson-Lund in 1904; Alma Johnson-Nelson-Anderson and Edla Johnson-Ghilstrom-Bennett in 1907. A brother of Charlie Martinson, Ferdinand, must have come about that time. Ida Swanson-Forslund came in 1911; Helmer Johnson and Signe Johnson-Anderson, came in 1916. From another branch of Swansons came Albert Swanson at the same time. Edith Swanson-Alm came in 1922, and finally Gunhild Swanson-Lundquist in 1929. I don't know just when Martin Carlson, or Ted as he was called, came here but his brother Axel came in 1911—both of them settled in the Grays Harbor area.

This is just skimming the surface by mentioning only those that originally came from Sweden. Most of these married and raised families. By 1953 some of the younger generation thought there should be a family reunion. At that time 115 relatives were



located, of which 80 showed up for the event. Another reunion was held in 1970—Edie Lund-Davenport carried on an extensive correspondence and had located 205 descendants of the above mentioned families. 115 answered the roll call at that reunion. So even if Uncle Olaf's arrival in these parts did not exactly create a population explosion, it certainly created a population impact!

It is perhaps hard for the present generation to comprehend that the prevailing wages back in those times was about 25¢ an hour, with the craftsman getting 10¢ or 15¢ more. But everything is comparable. The young fellows would board and room for \$5.00 or \$6.00 a week, and if you happened to board with a family the lady of the house might throw in the laundry for the same price! A schooner of beer was a nickel, and a shot of the stronger stuff a dime. Pay day was always once a month, usually after the 15th. The young fellows would take the girls out and splurge right after payday. But a couple of weeks later they probably would develop a sudden interest in going to church or to the Scandinavian Salvation Army Hall. Admission was free and nobody knew how much one put in the ~~box~~ collection plate. Motion pictures were just coming in—admission was usually a nickel. Some of these houses had a piano player and a drummer and then the admission would be a dime. At the public dances at Valhalla Hall the admission was 50¢ and ladies free.

About as many young girls as young fellows emigrated from Sweden, and Scandinavian girls had the reputation of being natural born housekeepers and were very much in demand. Hours and pay was perhaps deplorable; in some cases some of the newcomer girls started for as little as \$10.00 a month and their keep. It was an unwritten law that Thursday afternoon was time off, and there would be dozens of the girls downtown doing their shopping. It could happen that some of the young fellows also took the afternoon off to meet his best girl for a matinee and an evening supper. The word in Swedish for "maid" is "piga" so somewhere along the line some bright guy coined the word "pigparadan" for this Thursday afternoon feature! (pigparade!) By 1930 the emigration from Sweden came to a sudden halt and this Thursday afternoon feature became a thing of the past.

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The above is what Uncle Steve told us at our party. A day or two ago I received this additional letter from him.

"Dear Edith and Don: Thank you for being instrumental in arranging such a wonderful party last Sunday. Would like to suggest that we have one like this every year, but at 86 you have "no promise of tomorrow". Did mention that I never did learn the last name of Mrs. Anna Bloom as a girl. Selma Bloom's name was Pahrson, and she was a niece to Gustave Pahrson, the tailor. Both came from the province of Närke, Sweden. Fred Bloom married Vera Seed, and a Mrs. Johnson when Vera passed away, and then Anna Lundell, a sister to Selma Bloom. Ed Bloom, who was called Adolph in the old country, married Tilly Detenhoff of Hamburg, Germany. Both were employed at the old Tacoma Hotel when they became acquainted. Fred Bloom and Martin Johnson were about the same age—have heard that Martin was called Fridolf in the old country. His wife, Emma Johnson, was born in Kramfors in the northern part of Sweden. Your dad and Andrew Nelson were both from Västerbotten in the north of Sweden. Victor Gihlstrom also was from Kranfors, a sawmill village, in Ängermanland in the north of Sweden. Aline Johnson was born in Munsala, Finland, and John A. Anderson in the vicinity of Gothenburg.

"I was born in the town of Borlänge, a little north of Stockholm. Ida, Edith, and Gunhild were born in Iving Parish in Blekinge. All the Bloom boys, the Martinsons, and Carlsons, came from the village of Gaddjöl in the Parish of Eringsboda in Blekinge. Your grandparents, Johan and Anna Martinson, moved to Skurebo after their marriage so you are not actually genuine Smälänningar.

"One of the most famous Swedish-Americans, Dr. Amandus Johnson, Professor of Languages at several universities, Founder of the Swedish Historical Society, and Curator of the Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia, was born in Skurebo. He died not too many



years ago at the age of 96. Your grandparents probably acquired the farm after Amandus Johnson's grandfather emigrated to Minnesota when Amandus was only three years old. Dr. Johnson returned for the first time in 1961 when he dedicated the monument to commemorate the hundreds of people from Långasjö Parish who had emigrated to America.

"I seem to have left out both Ivar Alm, who was born in Botholm in Ostergötland, and Gunnar Lundquist who came from Ångermanland. I have written this in case you would like to enlarge on the brief account of the family I gave at the dinner. So long, and hope to see you soon. Best regards. Ida and Steve"

We certainly all owe Uncle Steve a great big vote of thanks for the hours and weeks of study and research he has done - and especially for the work he has done on our branch of the family. In case you don't have it, his address is 506 North 2nd, #601, Tacoma, WA. 98403.

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Thought you might like a list of those at the reunion dinner:

Ida and Steve Forslund	Margaret Owen
Edith and Ivar Alm	Mariann Mills
Gunhild Lundquist	Robert and Alice Johnson
Helmer and Alina Johnson	Verena Rayl
Ruby Bennett	Margaret and Lloyd Tekse
Signe Benton	Edna Libby
Clarence Nelson & Sandy Sarasin (Granddaughter)	Mathilde Bloom
Eddie and Don Davenport	Elizabeth Copley

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The day after the reunion, I received a letter from Bev and Grant Burkman in Eugene, Oregon (Uncle Olaf Bloom's grandson), saying that they had already made plans for Sunday and were disappointed in not being able to attend, but sending greetings to all. They had been on a trip to Sweden three years ago and visited relatives on both sides of the family near Stockholm and Solvesborg. Grant plans to retire in two years.

I figured out that there are 8 still with us from Sweden--Auntie Signe only one unable to attend. Then of the first generation there are about 28 still living (not including spouses).

P.S. If any of you got pictures from Sunday would appreciate getting a copy--I was too busy yakking to use my own camera! Thanks for coming and hope you had a good time.

*Eddie*