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Johan L. Saxon

Elisabeth Thorsell

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In California – Travel memories

(Såningsmannen 1930/1)

BY JOHAN L. SAXON

TRANSLATION BY ELISABETH THORSELL

Arrival

For my arrival in California I had decided to start in Los Angeles. But this young city, literally growing with American speed has no harbor, something that it feels bitter about, and with great expense has tried to rectify. We stopped in San Pedro, which is the harbor for Los Angeles.

There is a railroad from there up to Los Angeles, but the station is a good distance from the boat's landing place, so I take a cab. It takes a whole hour to reach the destination.

The first impression of the road is sand, sand, and more sand. Here they have not tried to get water to get the desert to bloom: one or a few palm trees, and a few small groups of gum-trees break the unbelievable boredom of the plains.

Soon oil pumps in fairly large number are seen. But it is a dead oil field. It has been "pumped out." The memory of this is a shanty town of simple constructions; wooden houses of one story and a few trying to hopelessly look more like a proper bungalow.

Little by little the manner of building becomes more solid, and there are shops, but only in one story, and most built like boxes of boards.

Los Angeles has no forest nearby, but huge shipments of timber go through the area, which large timber companies either saw or sell, or ship out of the area.

Also up in the city there are many wooden houses, and small such in the streets outside the city center with

its palaces of stone, made of concrete. There is no stone close to the city or its close vicinity. Sidewalks, staircases, walks in the parks, etc., are made of concrete or brick. The streets all have asphalt surfaces.

A Swedish newspaper

"Here we are," said the driver, and stops in front of a house, where one of the two shop-windows is filled with various examples of what the printing company can do: programs, address cards, book pages and much more. The other shop window shows that here the *California Veckoblad* is produced.

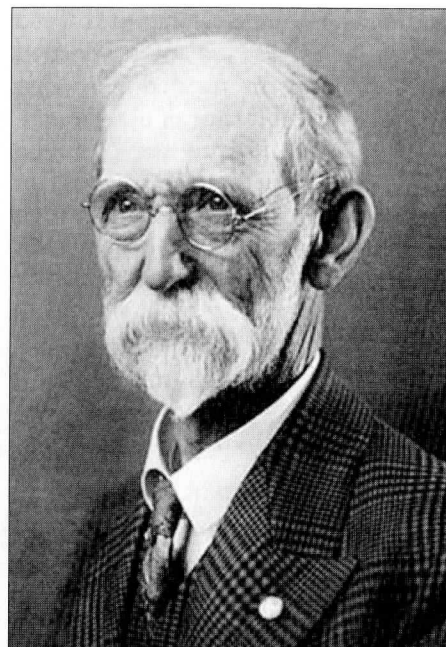
It is here, at West Vico Street 1421 – 1423, that Editor Alfred Haij lives, a man who has done more than most for the Swedes of California, and for the preservation of the Swedishness in this part of America.

Editor Haij is from Dalsland; his father was a master papermaker at Långed.

There is some calmness and confidence about this heavily built man and his heartfelt welcome greeting. He would so very much like to take me out in the city, but his closest employee is ill with the flu.

"Can one really get the flu in this land of the sun, where there is such a radiant spring?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. We have right now a bad epidemic in the city. Evenings and nights are cool, and people forget to be careful during the many changes of the temperature."



Johan L. Saxon (1859–1935).

He assures me I will not be forgotten by the friends who share my opinions in Los Angeles. In my pin with the mark of the Order of the Good Templars I have a good recommendation to numerous prohibition friends in the country,

He calls Dr. F. A. Lundberg on the phone, who is the pastor of the Swedish Methodist church in Los Angeles. This man answers that he is very busy, but that nothing will keep him from being of service to a friend that shares his opinions and who is from the old country. He will soon arrive with his car.

A Swedish print shop in America

While I am waiting for Dr. Lundberg, I ask to see editor Haij's print shop. Their big press is made in the city as well as the presses where the *Såningsmannen* is printed, and the type setting machine is of the same construction as the *Såningsmannen* uses. So is also the case with the proof press, smaller presses, and other equipment.

But as the *Såningsmannen* only has a Swedish staff, Mr. Haij also has to have an English staff as he also has orders in English.

The Swedish Lutheran Angelika Church celebrates 40 years

Just as we are standing there, in comes a print shop customer in Swedish clerical garb. He is presented as pastor J. Herman Olsson of the Swedish Lutheran Angelika church. The church is about to celebrate its 40th anniversary, and thus has lots of things to print.

I would not be a newspaper man if I did not take this opportunity to get some information about this church.

It was instituted when Los Angeles was just a small village and when they could not imagine that it would one day become one of the largest and most beautiful cities in the country.

"How many inhabitants are there now in Los Angeles? I asked. "A million." "And the Swedes, how many are they?" "Twentyfive thousand here and five thousand in San Pedro."

The Angelika church was started by 29 individuals and now has more than 1000 members, of which adults are 800, and the children 200. To the jubilee all persons that have been confirmed in the church will be welcomed to a special meeting.

The churches in America fill a great social need for the Swedes

Now Dr. Lundberg came outside the print shop with his "Studebaker." With swift steps he comes in, and we shake hands like old acquaintances. I feel that from him there also comes a heartfelt welcome greeting.

"What would you like to see, Mr. Saxon?"

"There are many things, but first I would like to see the church where my brother, Gustav Lindström, was the pastor."

My own brother Gustav, who is now well-known all over Sweden for his successful charitable work for the Christian prohibition movement, was for 35 years a Methodist pastor in America before he came to Sweden,

where he now will be staying, among other things, as a collaborator to the *Säningsmannen*.

"The church does not exist any more. When the city grew the lot became valuable. We sold it with a good profit that was used for the building of the new church."

I still wanted to see the place where it had been, so we went there.

"There was the church with the front porch; there was the pastor's house, where pastor Lindström lived" says Pastor Lundberg and points to a factory – whose speciality, according to the shop windows, seems to be name plates made of brass.

The trip goes from there to the Swedish Methodist church, with a fine architecture, built in some sandstone imitation in bricks.

We enter into the office. There we especially regard Dr. Lundberg's diploma from a medical school. He calls himself pastor.

The church is spacious with a large chancel window with stained glass, where the central part is a picture of Christ. On both sides of the chancel Swedish and American flags are placed.

There are no benches, but instead folding chairs. This is modern in America.

A large part of the church is used as school rooms for various ages, meeting rooms for festivities for youth, etc. When you have first seen this, you understand what a connecting ribbon a Swedish church is for the Swedes. It does not only fill a religious need, but also to a high degree a social need. This is where the Swedes meet, there is where old acquaintances are renewed and new ones started. This is where the newcomer is met and can feel that he is not alone. Here they talk about the homeland. And here they speak Swedish, but not only Swedish!

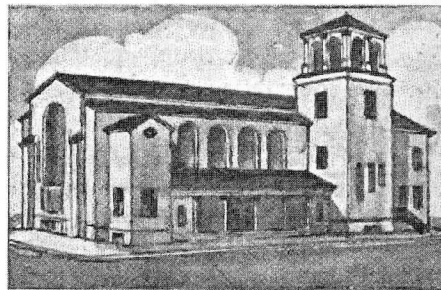
"Gustav left his American priesthood at the right time, says Dr. Lundberg." After the World War we got more and more Americanized and more and more forced to use English in our sermons and otherwise.

For a Swedish-American pastor the personal contacts with the church

members are much more important than in Sweden. If a member does not come for three times to the service, a pastor visits him. The Swedish pastors thus must have a car, as their members live in so different areas in this big city.

Later I was also told that in Los Angeles there is also a Swedish Baptist church, a Swedish Covenant church and a Swedish branch of the "Salvation army."

I might add that in Los Angeles there is also a Swedish lodge of the Good Templars, called "Oscar II" that meets in the Good Templars Hall, which is the meeting place of the English-speaking Good Templars. The lodge has classes and is collecting money to build their own house. The Sisters of the lodge were especially praised for their unremitting work.



The Swedish-American Methodist Church in Los Angeles 1930.

About the author:

Around 1905 Johan Lindström Saxon of Örebro (1859–1935) started the weekly magazine *Säningsmannen*. His intention was that the magazine should be an educational, popular magazine for the "common man," as well as less costly than other magazines. But it was also to reflect his own opinions on various matters. For instance, he hated coffee and tobacco, and was all for temperance. He also thought that life in the countryside was much better and healthier than living in the cities.

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Thanks to Mats Lundell for sending in these interesting articles!