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# Laura Ingalls Wilder, Gustav Sunwall and Minnesota

A Swedish connection: Gustav Ferdinand Sunwall immigrated to America in 1869 at the age of 17, and came to Carver, Minnesota, probably living first with his sister, Sara Sundine. Sunwall clerked in the Carver general store of John Dunn from 1869-1872 before moving to found what became Walnut Grove, Minnesota, in 1873, building the first house there.

Sunwall and partner John H. Anderson owned the first general store in Walnut Grove, perhaps the model for the Oleson general store of Laura Ingalls Wilder. Ingalls' Walnut Grove's teacher, Miss Beadle, was likely fashioned from the wife of Lafayette Bedal, who taught school in her home. Bedal was a business partner of Gustav Sunwall.

Sunwall returned to Carver in 1879 where he was in charge of all the Carver grain elevators and engaged in the wheat buying business there until 1886 when he moved to Minneapolis to become the foremost Swede involved in that city's grain industry.

The *Delivering Grain* photo shows the Anton Knoblauch grain elevator in Carver, which was ran by Gustav Sunwall. Anton Knoblauch was married in 1864 to Swedish immigrant Anna Johnson, who fled to Carver with her family from Green Lake near Willmar, MN, to escape the Sioux Uprising of 1862, which saw about 500 pioneer immigrants massacred by the Dakota Indians. Anna was born in 1838 at Järvsö in Gävleborg. The three Carver houses next to the grain elevator were all owned by immigrant families from Sweden.

The *4th Street West* photo in Carver shows three houses, again all owned by immigrant families from Sweden. The house in the center was owned by Sara and her husband John Sundine (b. 1838), who fought in Company H of the 9th Minnesota Infantry along with other Swedes to quell the Sioux Uprising of 1862. Sundine's company was present and



*Delivering grain in Carver, Minnesota*



*4th Street West, Carver, Minnesota.*

guarded the gallows at Mankato on Dec. 26, 1862, when 38 of the Dakota Indians judged most responsible for the Uprising were hanged, the largest mass execution in U.S. history. Twenty-year-old Gustav Sunwall (1849-1933) probably first lived at the house with his older sister Sara Sundine (b. 1843 in Sund (Östg.)) when he first immigrated to Carver in 1869. The house at the far right was owned, and probably built, by Swedish immigrant John Snell born in 1831 in Visingsö in Jönköping län, who came to America in 1854 with his fiancée Esther, and who was one

of Minnesota's early photographers.

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## **Editor's note:**

According to *Emibas* and Sund AI:13, p. 174; *Sara Mathilda Carlsdotter* was born 1843 Apr. 21 in Sund, and immigrated in 1866. Her brother *Gustaf Ferdinand Sundwall* was born 1849 Apr. 11 in Sund, and immigrated without his proper papers in 1870. He had gone to school in Eksjö, where he started using the Sundwall name.