

6-1-1994

Naming Patterns Among Swedish-Americans

Nils William Olsson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Olsson, Nils William (1994) "Naming Patterns Among Swedish-Americans," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 14 : No. 2 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol14/iss2/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

Naming Patterns Among Swedish- Americans*

Nils William Olsson

It is a great honor for me to be here tonight to give the annual Ander lecture. I knew Frithiof quite well and always respected his scholarship and knowledge. Serving as Public Affairs Officer at the American Embassy, I had the privilege of making use of his abilities in Stockholm during the academic year of 1952-1953, when he and his wife were doing research at the Royal Library. Frithiof was one of my most successful lecturers on America and American life and culture as he travelled throughout Sweden visiting schools, universities and Swedish-American organizations.

I have been asked to speak to you about *Naming Patterns Among Swedish-Americans* and I will attempt to give you a sample of what I have in mind. Obviously it is impossible to do justice to this topic in a brief message like this, but at least I hope to pass on to you some of the results of my observations over a period of many years. The samples which I will demonstrate to you tonight are actual names which I have recorded in reading, interviewing people, reading grave stones, and perusing such important sources as naturalization documents and Swedish American parish registers. They are all genuine. The topic is a fascinating one since the theme is so universal. I dare say that everyone here tonight with Swedish forebears can suggest similar phenomena in name changes as I propose to demonstrate.

At the outset we should be aware of the fact that a person's name is one of his or her most valuable possessions. Every living person responds to his or her own name, which accompanies him or her from the cradle to the grave,-- if he doesn't change it. This is precisely the aspect of the topic we shall examine tonight. Let me begin by telling of an incident which took place at a midwestern college in Kansas a few years ago where a Polish exchange student was enrolled. As Thanksgiving approached he was asked to join a few other students at the home of a faculty member. He had a typical Polish name, as I remember it, I think it was Kovaleski. As he entered the home he was greeted by the host who told him, "You have such an unpronounceable name that tonight we'll just call you Smith." The poor student, far away from family and friends, was even bereft of his own name. And I suppose that many a Swedish immigrant, arriving in this country without knowing a word of English faced the same situation and dilemma and as a result

*This lecture honoring the late O. Frithiof Ander, professor of history at Augustana College, was given in Wallenberg Hall on the Augustana College campus 29 April 1994.

had his name changed whether he wished it or not.

Let us begin by taking a quick look at the naming patterns in Sweden itself. As in most cultures the patronymic was the standard way of differentiating two individuals with the same baptismal or given name, i.e. a person was given his or her father's baptismal name with the addition of *-son* or *-dotter*, depending on the gender of the name bearer. Thus Anders, the son of Johan, became Anders Johansson and his sister Maria Johansdotter. This was so common that even royalty used the patronymic, as for instance Gustavus Vasa, who ruled in the 16th century, and who during his lifetime was known as Gustaf Eriksson. There were also a few cases of matronymics. One of my ancestors in the Natt och Dag family was named Nils Sigridsson, probably because his mother came from a higher social stratum than his father.

The earliest breakaway from this norm involved the clergy who usually used only the baptismal name preceded by the Swedish form for lord or sir - *Her*. But even the clergy had to differentiate between two persons with the same given name, and being men of the cloth and being well versed in the classics, they latinized their patronymics. Thus the prominent churchmen in Stockholm during the reign of Gustaf Eriksson Vasa were Olaus Petri and Laurentius Petri, brothers from Närke, with the original names of Olof and Lars Pettersson. But the clergy was not satisfied only with a latinized form of their patronymics. They also latinized the locale from which they hailed. Thus we have forms such as Elfwedalius from Älvdalen, Cuprimontanus from Kopparberg, and Swerdsjöensis from Svärdsjö, all in Dalarna. From this start it was not long before the Latin ending *-ius*, became the norm and we get clergy named Bergius from Berg, Sundius and Sundelius from Sund, etc. The Greek word for man *-andro*, gave rise to the suffix *-ander*, used in literally thousands of Swedish surnames ending in *-ander*, such as Ahlander, Carlander, Erlander, and Brolander. An interesting clergy name is that of Cavallin, who took his name from Håldala in Småland and translated it into the Latin form *cava vallis*. From Cavallin we also have the forms Cavallius and Cavalli.

By the 17th century the nobility more and more assumed the family names given them at the time they were created nobles. In many instances, particularly for the older families, the names were tied to the emblazonment on their coats of arms. In some instances the popular interpretation of the escutcheon became a name. as with Natt och Dag, derived from the dark blue of the upper half of the shield, suggesting night, and the gold of the lower part of the shield, suggesting day.

By the end of the 17th century, as a new military system was installed called *indelningsverket*, farm youths called up for service often were given new names to replace their patronymics. Though the soldier could, at the end of his service, resume his patronymic, many did not, but chose rather to keep the soldier

Naming Patterns Among Swedish-Americans

name as a surname. Increasingly as time went on, more and more of the soldiers were given new names, so that by the middle of the 19th century, it was a rarity for a soldier to have a patronymic. Most of these soldiers' names were short, usually of one syllable, making it easier for an officer or non-commissioned officer to bark a command to a soldier to perform a certain task.

As an illustration of the usage of soldiers' names in various Swedish regiments, I refer to Sten Kreüger's study, *Om soldatnamn*, printed in Skara in 1957. Dr. Kreüger has shown that most soldiers' names were derived from their place names, the animal and vegetable kingdoms, some type of physical characteristic or occupation. As an example he has studied the soldiers in the Uppland Regiment. He has analyzed the military rolls for 1684, 1744, 1803 and 1881 for the Head Company (*Livkompaniet*). Here we see how the names of the soldiers serving in a typical military district (*rote*) have changed over a period of almost 200 years. An italicized name indicates that it was derived from the name of the ward. An exclamation point (!) indicates uncertainty as to the spelling of the name.

| <u>Ward</u> | <u>No.</u> | <u>1684</u> | <u>1744</u> | <u>1803</u> | <u>1881</u> |
|--------------|------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Halla | 1 | Berg | Berg | Lind | Skans |
| Munga | 2 | Skarp | Wällman | Ram | Lind |
| Munga | 3 | <i>Munk</i> | Lindgren | Blom | Asp |
| Munga | 4 | Elg | Hasselberg | Brandt | <i>Munter</i> |
| Djupa | 5 | Gumse | Blom | Eling | Volunteer |
| Untra | 6 | Mörk | Lilja | Rapp | Klinga |
| Munga | 7 | Frisk | Nyman | Stolt | Qvist |
| Untra | 8 | Uggla | Öman | Fork | Vacant |
| Dymelsbo | 9 | Ruda | Bäckström | Rask | Vacant |
| Villbo | 10 | Ros! | Rosenberg! | Björk | Björklund! |
| Bredängen | 11 | Stut | Rosendal! | Lo | Vacant |
| Halla | 12 | Hjerpe | Hjerpe | <i>Hallgren</i> | Ek |
| Svanby | 13 | Svan | Svan | Ferm | Volunteer |
| Västra Ensta | 14 | Qvist | Qvamström! | Ström! | <i>En</i> |
| Västra Ensta | 15 | Hare | <i>Wester</i> | Strömbeck | Spjut |
| Ensta | 16 | Fors | Wedberg | Blixt | Vacant |
| Väsby | 17 | Tordyfvel | Lindqvist | Lock | Elin |
| Vallby | 18 | Bruse | Fridström | Elg | Palm |
| Skämsta | 19 | <i>Krus</i> | <i>Krus</i> | Lans | Lans |
| Väsby | 20 | Råbock | Svanberg | Od | Od |
| Fäklinge | 21 | Orm | Åsberg | Bar | From |
| Svanby | 22 | <i>Korp!!</i> | <i>Svanberg</i> | Modig | Modig |
| Bäggeby | 23 | Ekrot | Wåghals | Eld | Eld |
| Bäggeby | 24 | Stolpe | Blom | Holm | Hall |
| Yttre | 25 | Lind | Borgman | Nyman | Vacant |
| Ullfors | 26 | Blom | <i>Ullström</i> | Sten | <i>Fors</i> |
| Åskarby | 27 | Trygger | Ruvill | God | Ledin |

Swedish American Genealogist

| <u>Ward</u> | <u>No.</u> | <u>1684</u> | <u>1744</u> | <u>1803</u> | <u>1881</u> |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Åskarby | 28 | Drum | Öström | Lejon | Larsson |
| Bultebo | 29 | Bult | Blom | Fors | Sällgren |
| Vallby | 30 | Wallman | Lindal | Hägg | Hägg |
| Västra Ensta | 31 | Sporre | Vänman | Örn | Volunteer |
| Frebro | 32 | Liten | Fridman | Krans | Krans |
| Frebro | 33 | <i>Ekorre</i> | <i>Ekorre</i> | Qvist | Fredman |
| Frebro/Ekesta? | 34 | Gris | Lorin | Vesterholm | Tor |
| Yttre | 35 | Spets | <i>Ytterling</i> | Staf | Fröjd |
| Yfre | 36 | Drake | <i>Yfverberg</i> | Vester | Vester |
| Månkarbo | 37 | Wåghals | Boman | Palm | Ström |
| Raklösa | 38 | Sturk | Burman! | Bur! | <i>Rak</i> |
| Ålfors | 39 | Grål | Gråberg! | Qvick | <i>Åman</i> |
| Grytjom | 40 | Gös | Gillberg | Strömbäck | Säfström |
| Bro | 41 | And | <i>Broström</i> | Fast | Stork |
| Grytjom | 42 | Lång | Bergström | Volunteer | Ny |
| Grytjom | 43 | Hjort | Hjort | Lager | Stare |
| Mehede | 44 | Skräddare | Kullström | Hjort | Hjort |
| Bro | 45 | Tiger! | Trofast! | Krats | Krats |
| Lundby | 46 | <i>Lund</i> | <i>Lund</i> | Glad | <i>Lundberg</i> |
| Gislebo/Ålfors? | 47 | <i>Ål</i> | <i>Ål</i> | Hök | Volunteer |
| Onskarby | 48 | Dyr | Forsberg | Ljung | Ljung |
| Frebro | 49 | <i>Gädda</i> | Björnberg | Ny | <i>Frid</i> |
| Skärävsta | 50 | Glader | Norman | Ferm | Ferm |

By the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, other Swedes began adopting surnames. These were the sons of farmers and crofters who left their homes to practice a craft, usually that of a tailor, shoemaker, coppersmith, etc. As he entered his trade he dropped his patronymic, assuming a surname, which may or may not have alluded to his home farm, village or parish. Usually they did not, as in Norway or Denmark, adopt the farm or village name unchanged, but rather concocted a name, in which the place name was an integral part. Thus we find thousands of names which hark back to the bearer's home turf. Examples of this are such names as Normelli from Normlösa in Östergötland, Lidman and Lidström from the city of Lidköping, etc. Most of the names were made up of two syllables, usually from the vegetable kingdom, animal kingdom and/or topographic terms. The linden tree was very popular and we have endless names having as a prefix or suffix the word *lind*. Very popular were other trees like *ek* for oak, *gran* for pine, *rönn* for mountain ash, *asp* for aspen, *al* for alder, *björk* for birch, *ask* for ash, *pil* for willow (but this could also be a soldier's name since *pil* also means arrow), *lönn* for maple and the exotic *palm*. Parts of the tree were popular - *stam* for stem or tree trunk, *rot* for root, *bark* for bark, *gren* for branch, *kvist* or the older form *qvist* for twig, *blad* for leaf and *blom* for bloom or flower. The usual topographic words were *berg* for mountain, *fors* for waterfall, *ström* for

stream, *flod* for river, *bäck* for rivulet, *strand* for shore, *sjö* for lake or sea, *ås* for ridge, *ö* for island, *sten* for rock, *malm* for ore and the four cardinal points of the compass - *Nord* or *Norr* for north, *Söder* for south, *Väster* or *Väst* (the older spellings were *Wester* or *West*) for west and *Öster* or *Öst* for east.

Despite the abundance of Swedish surnames and the campaigns carried on by official bodies to change one's patronymic, these still abound in great quantities. A look at the Stockholm city telephone directories will prove this statement. Thanks to Christopher Olsson, who checked the listings in the Stockholm books, he was able to estimate that as of today (in 1994), there were no less than 13,000 Anderssons, 11,000 Carlssons, 6,700 Larssons, 17,000 Jonssons and Johanssons, 5,700 Olssons and 6,250 Peterssons. In addition there were thousands of other patronymics, less popular, but ranging from the Aronssons, Fridolfssons, Oskarssons, Sigfridssons, all the way down to the Zachariassons.

Let us now turn to the American side. A quick overview will demonstrate that by far the greater number of immigrants to this country came from the rural areas, where patronymics were the rule rather than the exception.

Arriving at the Swedish settlements, they soon discovered that many of them possessed the same patronymics and in many cases the same baptismal names as their neighbors. In order to avoid confusion a spate of name changes took place. When and where these changes originated we don't know for certain, but it is surmised that this happened after the arrival in the United States, rather than before the migration. In many cases the name change took place at the time of naturalization, but many did not wait that long but simply announced the name change.

In the Swedish settlements, where the pastor kept the parish records, he occasionally would carry the individual's new surname together with the old patronymic within parentheses. But such occurrences are rare, making it extremely difficult for a descendant, whose ancestor assumed a new surname upon arrival, to ferret out the original patronymic and thus be able to research his or her family in Sweden.

Let us now look at some of these surnames and name changes. We will attempt to separate these names into categories. The first of these groups is the easiest one to study and we can here glean from it a clue as to the name's origin in Sweden. This group kept the patronymic and only altered it slightly so as to conform to American usage and be more easily grasped by the Yankee ear.

Some Swedish Patronymics Which Have Been Anglicized in the U.S.

| Original Swedish Form | American Version |
|-------------------------|--|
| Andersson | Anderson, Ander, Andrews |
| Bengtsson | Bengston, Benson, Benzon, Bankson, Banks, Benton |
| Carlsson | Carlson, Carlton, Charles, Charleson |
| Eliasson | Eliason, Ellison |
| Eriksson | Erickson, Ericson, Earickson |
| Gustafsson | Gustafson, Gustus, Gustavi, Gust, Justus, Justice, Justis |
| Hermansson | Harrison |
| Jacobsson | Jacobson, Jackson |
| Jansson, Jeansson, | Johnson, Johnnton, Jones |
| Jönsson, Johannesson, | |
| Johansson, Jonasson, | |
| Jonsson | |
| Larsson | Larson, Lawson, Lawrence |
| Nilsson | Nelson, Nielson |
| Olausson, Olofsson, | Olson, Alson, Alston, Wilson |
| Olsson | Woolson |
| Persson/Pehrsson | Pearson, Pierson, Percy, Perkins Parsons |
| Petersson/Pettersson | Peterson, Peters, Patterson |
| Staffansson/Steffansson | Stephenson, Stephens, Stevens |
| Svensson | Swenson, Swanson, Swan |

The second category, consisting of non-patronymics, where the bearer also attempted to retain as much as possible of the original surname but made some alterations, either by transliteration or spelling in order to conform to American usage.

Swedish Surnames Anglicized in the U.S.

| Swedish Version | American Version |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Areschoug | Woods |
| Berg | Berry, Barry |
| Bergendorff | Bergendoff |
| Berggren | Barragreen, Bergen |
| Bergström | Mountstream |
| Boman | Bowman |
| Bovin | Bowen |

Swedish Surnames Anglicized in the U.S.

| Swedish Version | American Version |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Braun | Brown |
| Cederschiöld | Cedershiold |
| Forsberg | Foster |
| Hedström | Headstrom |
| Högström | Hagstrum |
| Holm | Holmes |
| Holmström | Wholemstraum |
| Kindblom | Chindblom |
| Kvick | Cook |
| Liljeqvist | Lillequist |
| Ljungberg | Youngberg |
| Ljungdahl | Youngdahl |
| Ljungqvist | Youngquist |
| Ljungström | Youngstrom |
| Möller, Muller | Miller |
| Myrtengren | Murtengren |
| Nyberg | Newberg |
| Nystrand | Newstrand |
| Sandberg | Sandford, Sanford |
| Sjöholm | Seaholm |
| Sjöstrand | Seashore |
| Stenberg | Stoneberg |
| Törnsten | Thurstone |
| Wahlgren, Wallgren | Walgreen |
| Yman | Whyman |

In the third category the name bearer dropped his Swedish name entirely, adopting instead an Anglo-Saxon name which gives little or no clue as to his or her Swedish origin.

Swedish Surnames Metamorphosed into Anglo-Saxon Names

| Original Swedish Name | New American Surname |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Almström | Armstrong |
| Björkegren | Burke |
| Ekman | Tell |
| Esbjörn | Osborne |
| Fornelius | Edwards |
| Gagner/Weidenhielm | Gordon |
| Håkansson | Holcombe |

Swedish American Genealogist

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Hjerpe | Harper |
| Johansson | Ellstam, Litzén |
| Karlsson | Sander |
| Lönn | Johnson |
| Natt och Dag | De Remée, Franks |
| Nielson | Wilson |
| Nordensköld | Stern |
| Nordin | Hallander |
| Nyman | Lind |
| Olsson | Elmen, Elmer, Melin, Swedlund, Wilson |
| Persson | Youngberg |
| Pettersson | Boyse, Liday, Lind, Malmsten |
| von Qvillfält | Sjöberg |
| Ryström | Eriksson |
| Segeberg | Olsson |
| Sjöberg | Spalding |
| Sjödahl | Linn |
| Skytte | Scott |
| Stark | Carlson |
| Svensson | Barton, Blomquist, Brown |
| Torkelsson | Helmerich |
| Trägårdh | Trigard |
| Wettergren | Frank |

Swedish sailors serving aboard American merchantmen were notorious for adopting Anglo-Saxon surnames as they signed on board American vessels. Some of these names can be found in crew lists dating from the early part of the 19th century. Here is a partial list of Swedish seamen who signed aboard U.S. merchantmen in Philadelphia during the first two decades of the 1800s. Of the close to one hundred names listed here, 35 are patronymics, 26 are recognizable as Swedish surnames, the remainder are Anglo-Saxon or non-Swedish, amounting to some 47% of the listings.

Swedish Sailors Who Signed Aboard U. S. Merchantmen in the Port of Philadelphia

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Ahren, Johann | Anderson, William | Boman, Peter |
| Alfton, John | Asher, William | Coleman, Abraham |
| Anderson, Jacob | Aspe, Simon | Corlander, Johan |
| Anderson, Johan | Benson, Oliver | Daldarmus, Johann |
| Anderson, John | Blumster, Abraham | Eke, Johan |
| Anderson, Peter | Bolin, Magnus | Eklune, Anders |

Swedish Sailors Who Signed Aboard U.S.
Merchantmen in the Port of Philadelphia

| | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Engstrom, Peter | Langstrum, Gustum | Peterson, Swend |
| Ereichien, Niels O. | Langthorn, Christian | Peterson, William |
| Fick, Christian | Larson, Andrew | Petterson, Nicholas |
| Forstrom, Olof | Lawson, Elias | Rosenquist, Henry |
| Frederick, Hans Christian | Leiper, John | Rundelen, Hans |
| Gaibolm, Eric | Lind, Carl Frederick | Sedergren, Nils |
| Gerden, Henry | Lindberg, Carl | Sioberg, Edward |
| Green, David | Lovstrom, Peter | Nicholas |
| Gulstrown, Wilhelm | Lun, Peter Nelson | Sjogren, Henry S. |
| Haastrom, Andrew | Lundberg, Johan | Smith, Henry |
| Hallengren, Magnus | Magiol, Andrew | Smith, Johan |
| Hansen, Bawn | Malten, Morris | Soderborg, Peter |
| Hansen, John | Matten, Mons | Sodergren, Fred'k |
| Hansen, Paul | Mineur, Anders | Sundell, Charles |
| Hanson, Neil | Mollin, Peter Peterson | Svenson, Cornelius |
| Hanson, William | Nelson, Andrew | Svensson, Andrew |
| Henburg, William | Nelson, Peter | Swanson, Jacob |
| Hindrickson, Charles | Nickelson, Andreas | Vesterland, Andries |
| Jacobson, Christian | Nilson, Thomas | Wahlstrom, Magn. |
| Jansen, Hendrick | Oberry, John | Wallberg, Abraham |
| Johanson, Elias | Offan, Johan | Wenguish, Michael |
| Johnson, Andrew | Olsen, Jonas | Westerlund, Peter |
| Johnson, Charles | Olson, Frederick | Wilson, John |
| Johnson, Zachariah | Olson, Johan | Wilson, Thomas |
| Johnston, John | Oulson, Johan | With, William |
| Kobs, John F. | Paul, Hans | Wolf, Johan A. |
| Langstrum, Christian | Peterson, Olaus | |

O.G. Lange, a Swede from Göteborg, who sailed to the United States aboard an American vessel in the early part of the last century, mentions in his reminiscences that among the crew of his ship were three Swedes, all named Wilson, having dropped their Swedish patronymic of Olsson. Further proof of how widespread this practice was can be seen from the death announcements of Swedes who died in New York City 1820-1849. Most of these were sailors who found their final resting place in Potter's Field. Of the 131 Swedes listed, no less than 58 percent of the names can be classified as Anglo-Saxon or non-Swedish.

If we take a look at a seaport in New England, namely Newport, RI, we find another port where Swedish sailors signed on U.S. merchantmen. A sample from crew lists from the first two decades of the 1800s gives us the following. Of the 91 names listed here only 17 are patronymics, 24 are recognizable Swedish surnames but no less than 50 names, or 55% are Anglo-Saxon or non-Swedish.

Swedish Sailors Who Sailed out of Newport, RI
in the Early Part of the 1800s

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Akland, Henry | Hilbrandt, Jacob | Petterson, Peter |
| Alshun, John | Holt, Jacob | Pole, John Christ. |
| Anderson, Jacob | Indak, H. L. | Price, Peter |
| Anderson, John | Janson, Carl M. | Redman, Frederick |
| Anderson, Lorentz | Jewell, Peter | Reinstadt, Peter |
| Anderson, Oliver | Johnson, Christian | Ronstrom, Peter |
| Anderson, Peter | Johnson, Peter | Wilhelm |
| Barker, Thomas | Johnson, Thomas | Sandberg, Carl |
| Barns, Andrew | Julien, Christian | Silverkloth, Oliver |
| Berg, John | Kjelstrom, Charles P. | Sjoberg, Jonas |
| Berry, Peter | Kobs, Johan F. | Sjoholm, Charles |
| Castelin, Matthew | Kreeger, Charles M. | Smit, Hendrick |
| Colson, Zaccheus | Lamberg, Peter Johan | Smith, Andrew |
| Dalston, Henry | Laudnum, Peter | Smith, John |
| Davis, Christian | Lawrence, Andrew | Sohlgren, Olof |
| Ekelund, Nils W. | Lindon, Joel | Strim, Alexander |
| Enholm, Andreas | Lindson, Lind | Sullivan, Daniel |
| Evans, John | Linn, Isaac | Sunderlin, Sigfrid |
| Fellstrom, Jonas | Lovegrain, Christian | Swanberg, Chas. |
| Finck, Barthold | Loyd, William | Swanson, John |
| Folk, John | Lunberg, Peter | Thompson, Paul |
| Forsberg, Johannes | Lundrum, Gustaf | Thompson, Peter |
| Fostrum, Adam | Lyman, Christopher | Tidstrom, Jonas |
| Frederick, Carl | Miers, William | Tornquest, Eric |
| Frederick, John | Murray, John G. | Magnus |
| Green, Daniel | Natsen, Mons | Treyman, Johan |
| Hansen, Jacob | Nelson, E. A. | Watnar, Charles C. |
| Hanson, Pete | Newman, John | Westerling, Fred'k |
| Harrison, Jacob | Nicholas, John | Williamson, Peter |
| Hellstrom, Anders | Olsson, Gustaf | Willson, Peter |
| | | Wood, Thomas |

Of the approximately 2,000 Swedes who, according to Wretlind's Swedish City Directory of Boston, were residing in that city in 1881, a breakdown of the names shows that 48% were patronymics and 52% were surnames. The higher percentage of surnames may be due to the fact that immigrants from rural Sweden usually continued west to the farmlands, whereas artisans, craftsmen and Swedish urban dwellers opted for residing in the city. A glance at the Boston Directory shows the following names, all of them presumably Swedish, according to Wretlind.

Swedes with Anglicized Names Residing in Boston in 1880

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Alexander | Herbert | Okerberg |
| Andrew | Holk | Okerblad |
| Andrews | Hook | Okerlind |
| Bank | Hurter | Olander |
| Becker | Kendstedt | Paroth |
| Beyerlieb | Lamkey | Pearson |
| Edwards | Lee | Scheld |
| Eliot | Lloyd | Sikora |
| Forest | Lyon | Smith |
| Grosbie | Miller | Thompson |
| Hadberg | Millson | Weber |
| Headberg | Mortenson | Wilkens |
| Hemtz | Nelson | |

Swedish soldiers' names were carried to American shores and were sometimes translated literally, sometimes retained with the Swedish spelling intact. Here are two lists, the first comprising names which the bearers retained without change. The second list shows what happened to some of these forms when transliterated into English.

Swedish Soldiers' Names Which were Retained in the US.

| Name | Meaning |
|--------------|------------------|
| Ahl | alder |
| Asp | aspen |
| Bild | picture |
| Blixt | lightning |
| Dolk | stiletto |
| Fast, Fasth | firm |
| Kula | ball, projectile |
| Palm | palm tree |
| Pamp | large sword |
| Plym | plume |
| Qvick, Quick | quick |
| Rapp | swift |
| Rask | quick |
| Spets | point |
| Spjut | spear |
| Stadig | sturdy |
| Tapper | brave |
| Tolf | twelve |
| Varg | wolf |
| Wall | grazing area |

Swedish Soldiers' Names Anglicized in the U.S.

| Original Swedish Name | Meaning | American Version |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Äng | meadow | Eng |
| Ahl | alder | Alder |
| Alm | elm | Elm |
| Ask | ash tree | Ash, Ashe |
| Bäck | rivulet | Beck, Back |
| Björk | birch | Birch, Burk, Burke |
| Blom | bloom, flower | Bloom, Blum |
| Ceder | cedar | Cedar |
| Damm | dam | Stem |
| Dyk | dive | Dyke |
| Ek | oak | Oak |
| Eklöf | oak leaf | Oakleaf, Oakley |
| Fast | firm | Faust |
| Frimodig | frank | Freemoodly |
| Granat | grenade | Granath, Grant |
| Gren | branch | Green |
| Hammar | cliff | Hammer |
| Hjälm, Hjelm | helmet | Helm, Yelm |
| Hjort | hart | Gert, Hart |
| Käck | gallant | Check |
| Kanon | cannon | Cannon |
| Keiser | emperor | Chaiser |
| Kraft | power | Croft |
| Lamm | lamb | Lamb |
| Lind | linden tree | Linn, Lynn |
| Ljung | heather | Young |
| Löf | leaf | Leaf, Love |
| Mård | marten | Mord |
| Modig | courageous | Moody |
| Mört | minnow | Mort |
| Nord | north | North |
| Öst | east | Ost |
| Pigg | alert | Pig |
| Pihl, Pil | arrow | Peel |
| Rääf | fox | Raaf |
| Säll | happy | Sell |
| Sjö | sea, lake | Sjo, Lake |
| Sköld | shield | Shield, Shields, Shold |
| Spak, Spaak | humble | Spake |
| Spjut | spear | Spear, Spears, Speers |
| Stål | steel | Steel, Steele |

Swedish Soldiers' Names Anglicized in the U.S.

| Original Swedish Name | Meaning | American Version |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Stadig | sturdy | Sturdy |
| Stark | strong | Strong |
| Sten | stone | Stone, Steen |
| Strid | battle | Streed |
| Ström | stream | Stream, Strum |
| Svärd | sword | Sword, Sward |
| Svan | swan | Swan |
| Tång | sea weed | Tang, Tong |
| Törne | thorn | Thorn, Thorne |
| Wård | care, monument | Ward |

An interesting study is that of the Swedish Brothers in Minneapolis, a mutual aid society organized by Swedes who arrived in Minnesota. (Incidentally this valuable roster dating from 1876-1888 was found on the floor of a garage in suburban Minneapolis, ready for the trash bin.) Of the 283 names on this roster 143 were Swedish patronymics, eleven were Anglicized patronymics, 112 were Swedish surnames, while 17 of them carried Anglo-Saxon surnames. The intriguing aspect of this study is to show that of the 18% of the Swedes who traded their patronymics for surnames, the vast majority chose Swedish names.

Members of the Swedish Brothers in Minneapolis Who
Changed their Names

| New Name | Original Name | New Name | Original Name |
|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| Albin | Augustsson | Hultin | Isacsson |
| Allén | Jonasson | Lifholm | Svensson |
| Andrén | Andersson | Lind | Magnusson |
| Berg | Gustafsson | Linder | Holmqvist |
| Bergman | Andersson | Logan | Lagerqvist |
| Bjork | Johansson | Lund | Hemmingsson |
| Blomdahl | Olofsson | Lundgren | Gren |
| Blomquist | Johannesson | Mangness | Magnusson |
| Blomquist | Gustafsson | Mellquist | Andersson |
| Bohman | Pehrsson | Milstrum | Jansson |
| Bolm | Gustafsson | Norden | Pehrsson |
| Borg | Andersson | Nordström | Eriksson |
| Brown | Andersson | Nordström | Petersson |
| Brunse | Carlsson | Nylander | Pehrsson |
| Carling | Fredell | Newstream | Larsson |
| Carlson | Eriksson | Osander | Wikström |

Members of the Swedish Brothers in Minneapolis Who
Changed Their Names.

| New Name | Original Name | New Name | Original Name |
|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| Dahlin | Danielsson | Palmer | Danielsson |
| Ed | Ed | Ringlund | Nilsson |
| Engström | Nilsson | Samson | Samuelsson |
| Fagerström | Johannesson | Sandahl | Johansson |
| Fredell | Nilsson | Sandy | Jonasson |
| Freeman | Arvidsson | Steel | Ståhl |
| Grant | Johannesson | Wadman | Vahlman |
| Gusten | Yngling | Wennerberg | Eriksson |
| Håkansson | Färdig | Wicklund | Carlsson |
| Howard | Hård | | |

For many Swedish immigrants with patronymics and surnames containing the extra three Swedish letters, å, ä and ö, the dilemma consisted in retaining their Swedish names, while being mindful that the bearers were living in a country without the benefit of these three extra letters. As a compromise they dropped the diacritical markings, maintaining for the most part the sounding of the name rather than the spelling. Since å and ö were supplanted by the English letter o, it therefore becomes difficult to determine the original spelling of some of the Swedish names.

The Elimination of Diacritical Marks in Swedish Names

Swedish Name American Version

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Åberg | Oberg, Ober |
| Ådahl | Odahl |
| Ågren | Ogren, O'Green |
| Åhlund | Ohlund |
| Åhman, Åman | Ohman, Oman |
| Åkerberg | Okerberg, Akerberg |
| Åkerman | Okerman, Ackerman |
| Åkerström | Okerstrom, Ackerstrom |
| Åkesson | Ackerson, Okeson |
| Ålander | Olander |
| Åström | Ostrom, Ostrum |
| Änn | Enn |
| Berglöf | Barlow |
| Börjesson | Borgeson, Burgeson |
| Håkansson | Hokenson, Hawkinson, Holcombe |
| Häglund | Haglund, Hagelin |

The Elimination of Diacritical Marks in Swedish Names

| Swedish Name | American Version |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Häggman | Haggman, Hagman |
| Höglund | Hoglund, Hogeland |
| Högström | Hogstrom, Hagstrom, Hagstrum |
| Löfgren | Lefgren, Loffgren, Lovegrain |
| Löfving | Lopving |
| Månsson | Manson, Monson, Munson |
| Mörk | Murk, Murch |
| Nordström | Norstrum |
| Öberg | Oberg |
| Ögren | Ogren |
| Ölander | Olander |
| Öhman, Öman | Ohman, Oman |
| Örtlund | Ortlund |
| Örtman | Ortman |
| Östberg | Ostberg |
| Österberg | Osterberg |
| Österdahl | Osterdahl, Esterdahl |
| Östergren | Ostergren, Estergren, Estergreen |
| Östling | Ostling, Estling |
| Östlund | Ostlund, Eastlund, Eastland |
| Östman | Ostman, Eastman, Osmund |
| Öström | Ostrom, Ostrum |
| Skånberg | Skonberg |
| Skönberg | Skonberg |
| Wählen | Wohlen |

Naturalization records are an excellent source for studying the names of Swedish immigrants. These documents are extremely valuable in that in most instances the applicant in declaring his intent had to sign his name in the court records. If he had a patronymic he almost always signed his name with the double "s", which the county clerk conveniently either did not observe or ignored and the papers were thus issued having a name with the single "s". Much of the same thing happened when it came to surnames, where Anglo-Saxon variants of a name took precedence over the original Swedish.

Naming practices varied from one part of the country to another. In a city like Boston, where Swedes lived in close proximity of the Yankees, the number of English surnames was much greater among the Swedes than in Swedish settlements of the Middle West. I have made a study of the naturalization records of the courts of Boston MA, Travis County, TX and Bureau County, IL. These surveys cover approximately the same periods of time, in these instances the latter

part of the 19th century. The test areas included one mainly urban area, that of Boston. In Texas we have a mix, in that Travis County embraces the capital city of Austin, and finally Bureau County, IL, a mostly rural area, the largest city being Princeton. It is interesting to see how the number of Anglicized names drops with the intensity of the Swedish born population. I have noted the percentages for each area as follows:

A Comparison of Naturalizations of Swedes in Three Geographical Areas

Boston, MA

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Patronymics | 34.1% |
| Swedish Surnames | 31.0% |
| Anglo-Saxon Names | <u>34.9%</u> |
| Total | 100.0% |

Travis County, TX

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Patronymics | 39.6% |
| Anglicized Patronymics | 6.4% |
| Swedish Surnames | 38.6% |
| Anglo-Saxon Names | <u>15.4%</u> |
| Total | 100.0% |

Bureau County, IL

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Patronymics | 47.2% |
| Anglicized Patronymics | 10.7% |
| Swedish Surnames | 29.4% |
| Anglicized Swedish Surnames | 8.3% |
| Anglo-Saxon Names | 3.1% |
| Garbled Names | <u>1.3%</u> |
| Total | 100.0% |

As a result of these indiscriminate and mostly unregulated name changes, there were bound to be some gross and ill advised new surnames floating about, due either to ignorance or to the whim of the immigrant. Many judges, ruling on petitions at the time of naturalization, either did not understand the ethnic background of the applicant or they were too lenient in allowing the name change applied for to go into effect. Either way the practice came under the scrutiny of Swedish-American scholars, who, while not opposed to the taking of a new surname, nevertheless felt that some order had to be created out of the chaos that prevailed. One of these key scholars, who took up the cudgels for reform, was none other than the professor of Swedish at Augustana College, Dr. Jules Mauritzson, who had studied a couple of years at the University of Uppsala in Sweden and had

been a student of the well renowned scholar of the Swedish language, Dr. Adolf Noreen. Deciding to go to the best expert in the field Mauritzson dispatched a letter to Noreen, a copy of which, thanks to Dag Blanck, I was able to get from the Adolf Noreen Collection at Carolina Rediviva, the library of the University of Uppsala. The letter, dated Rock Island 10 April 1920, informs Noreen that Mauritzson and C.L. Esbjörn, professor of German at Augustana, had over a period of time been concerned over the name situation among Swedish-Americans and both had been cognizant of the fact that efforts had to be made to sanitize the situation where "such translations as Oakleaf for Eklöf, Swanson or Svensén for Svensson and Hogland for Höglund are not acceptable." Mauritzson goes on to discuss two things which could be done - first of all to publish a list of 10,000 acceptable names, and secondly to mount a public relations campaign, where leading scholars and well-placed individuals such as Hjalmar Branting, the Swedish Prime Minister, Selma Lagerlöf, the well-known Swedish author, Esaias Tegnér, a linguistic scholar and the grandson of the Swedish poet by the same name and of course Dr. Noreen himself would speak up. "These big names" would help give encouragement to such a reform. Mauritzson goes on to suggest that the underlying principle of a taken name should be "to indicate the bearer's Swedish origin, while at the same time be easy to pronounce in English. Furthermore a name should sound well to the human ear and be easily distinguishable." As an example Mauritzson then goes on to draw up a list of 89 names beginning with the letter "D", citing possibilities for the sensible system of adopting a proper surname.

Dr. Mauritzson's Suggested List of 89 Names

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Dacke | Dacker | Dag | Dahl |
| Dahlbeck | Dahlfelt | Dahlfors | Dahlgren |
| Dahlholm | Dahlin | Dahlman | Dahlmark |
| Dahlqvist | Dalfors | Dalgren | Dalin |
| Dallby | Dalman | Dalmer | Dalros |
| Dalson | Dalvin | Damfelt | Damgren |
| Damm | Damme | Damstedt | Danell |
| Danér | Danner | Dannqvist | Danson |
| Dardell | Darild | Darin | Darnell |
| Davidson | Degerman | Degermark | Dehlgren |
| Dehlin | Dehn | Delén | Dellman |
| Dellmar | Dellwik | Denckert | Denker |
| Dikman | Dillberg | Dillén | Dillner |
| Dinell | Dintler | Dittmar | Dittmer |
| Dittner | Dixén | Dock | Dolk |
| Doll | Donker | Donner | Dorén |
| Dott | Dragelin | Dragstedt | Drake |
| Drangel | Drevelin | Drill | Drott |
| Drotty | Druva | Dubb | Duva |
| Duktig | Dulin | Dunder | Dunér |

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| Dunker | Durling | Durr | Duse | |
| Dusén | Duwall | Dymling | Dyring | Dyrsen |

We don't have Dr. Noreen's answer, but we can infer that it must have been positive from the tone of Dr. Mauritzson's letter of 27 June 1921, in which he thanks Dr. Noreen for his "friendly and encouraging letter." Mauritzson continues by relating that he had had contact with his colleagues in the Scandinavian depart- of the Swedish-American colleges and that they had collectively drawn up an appeal which could be used in the drive to reform the naming procedures. He informs Noreen that the committee, made up of the cited professors, had to confront two extremes - "those whose reason is driven by sentimentality and a highly inflated filial piety and refuse to change their names, inherited from their ancestors, while on the other hand those Swedish-Americans, who from exaggerated zeal to show their true Americanism are driven to do everything in their power to blot out the fact that they have Swedish roots."

So much for the Mauritzson-Noreen exchange. Though we know very little of the results from the interchange, we do have a letter from Dr. Mauritzson to the Swedish consul in Sioux City, IA, G.N. Swan, dated 23 Feb. 1923, where Mauritzson, speaking for the five Swedish-American colleges, Augustana, Bethany, Gustavus Adolphus, North Park and Upsala, urges Swan to join his committee composed of himself, C.L.Esbjörn and Gustav André, the president of Augustana, in order "to reform Swedish-American family names." He goes on to explain the purpose by saying "our idea is nothing more nor less than to make a concerted and systematic effort to induce as many as possible of our young Johnsons, Olsons, Andersons, Petersons, etc. to change their family names to others not so common." Mauritzson then urges Swan to join the committee.

In a letter dated 31 March 1923 Swan answers the committee's appeal by saying that "you can count on my supporting the movement and in cooperating with your committee in every way." That Swan also perceived the confusion in Swedish America in regard to names is shown by the fact that he cited an inheritance case involving six brothers, of which three were named Anderson, two were named Lövgren and the sixth - Delmont! Swan ends by saying "this ought to be sufficient evidence of the necessity of the contemplated change."

Unfortunately we don't know what happened to this grand idea. Perhaps it was too late in the game. In the 1920s immigration had slowed to a trickle, World War I had created a climate in which foreign languages were suspect and the Americanization of Swedish religious organizations, cultural groups and ethnic societies was going on apace. New problems demanded new solutions and I think it would be fair to say that Mauritzson's eloquent plea for a better system of naming Swedish-Americans was placed on the back burner where it quietly died as a new generation of Swedish-Americans opted for a retention of the names of their fathers and grandfathers, no questions asked.