

6-1-1995

Protection Certificates Issued to Swedish Seamen in Philadelphia 1824-1861

Ruth Priest Dixon

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



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

Recommended Citation

Dixon, Ruth Priest (1995) "Protection Certificates Issued to Swedish Seamen in Philadelphia 1824-1861," *Swedish American Genealogist*. Vol. 15 : No. 2 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol15/iss2/7>

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.

Protection Certificates Issued to Swedish Seamen in Philadelphia 1824-1861

Ruth Priest Dixon*

Seamen's Protection Certificates were authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1796 to identify American merchant seamen as citizens of the United States and as such entitled to protection against impressment. The British practice of forcing American seamen to serve in the Royal Navy was a major cause of the War of 1812. Accounts of the impressment by the British and other nations are found in *American State Papers*, primarily in volumes relating to Foreign Affairs and Commerce.

The Certificates were a kind of passport and apparently were useful to seamen in other situations, for they continued to be issued up to the Civil War. They were again issued 1872-1940, and are in Record Group 41, National Archives.

These applications contain information of great significance to genealogists, sociologists, and historians. As a group, seamen were unlikely to own land and often were missed at census time. This may be the only record available for many men and women serving in the early American merchant marine. In 1994 I compiled and published an Index containing 18,354 names gathered from the original applications for Seamen's Protection Certificates filed at the Port of Philadelphia between 1824 and 1861. Among these names are six women who filed as stewardesses. The Index gives the name, date of application, age at that time, color of complexion if of Afro-American or Indian descent and state or country of birth. The applications themselves contain additional information: city and/or county of birth, color of hair, complexion and eyes, as well as height. Information concerning identifying physical marks such as scars, injuries, tattoos and deformities are also included. Practically all of the applications were witnessed by someone who swore to or affirmed the information given. They often were someone with the same surname as the seaman, sometimes identified as a relative. Scholars speculate that some female witnesses were the sailor's "Wife in port," a common semi-permanent arrangement. Of particular interest is the fact that the sailor himself signed the application, if he were literate. If he was not, he signed with the letter (x).

* Ruth Priest Dixon, C.G.R.S., resides at 10450 Lottsford Road, # 2217, Mitchellville, MD 20721.

Protection Certificates Issued Swedish Seamen

For naturalized citizens, birth country, and the date, name, and location of the court of naturalization are usually given. In 1790 the U.S. Congress authorized the courts to grant citizenship to free white aliens who had resided in the country for two years, were of good moral character, and supported the Constitution. Most naturalized citizens came from the British Isles, Western Europe and Scandinavia. Several came from the Caribbean Islands and one with an Anglo-Saxon name was born in China.

For this particular study I have culled the certificate applications of the 79 Swedes listed in my Index. Dr. Nils William Olsson has kindly furnished ancillary information found in "The Master Index for Naturalizations in Philadelphia," a typescript copy on deposit at the Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia.

The names listed here are taken from the applicant's own signature and may differ from the name as listed in the Index itself. It was not unusual for the clerk to garble a foreign name, particularly if that name differed greatly from an Anglo-Saxon name.

Additional Information on These Records

Dixon, Ruth Priest, "Genealogical Fallout from the War of 1812," *Prologue*, Vol. 24, Spring 1992, pp.70-76.

Dixon, Ruth Priest, *Index to Seamen's Protection Certificate Applications. Port of Philadelphia 1824-1861* (Baltimore 1994), 170 pp.

Dye, Ira, "The Philadelphia Seamen's Protection Certificate Applications," *Prologue*, Vol. 18, Spring 1986, pp. 46-55, reprinted by the Archives in *Our Family, Our Town*.

Dye, Ira, "Seafarers of 1812 - A Profile," *Prologue*, Vol. 5, Spring 1973, pp. 3-23. *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives* (Washington, DC.: National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1985), pp. 189-191.

Horsman, Reginald, *Causes of the War of 1812* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962).

Olsson, Nils William, "Naturalized Scandinavian Seamen in Boston 1815-1840," *Swedish American Genealogist*, Vol. 1, 1981, pp.125-133.

Zimmerman, James Fulton, *Impressment of American Seamen*, Studies of History, Economics and Public Law, Columbia University Political Science Faculty, ed. (New York: Columbia University, 1925).

Name	Age	Date of Certificate	Court of Naturalization	Height	Hair	Complexion	Eyes	Miscellaneous
Johnson, Charles	26	12 July 1824	Mayor's, Philadelphia	5,7 1/2	Lt.Brown	Light	---	Born in Göteborg (x)
Anderson, Joseph	26	16 April 1825	Mayor's, Philadelphia	5,5	Brown	Light	---	(x)
Cloth, Börje	43	13 Feb. 1826	C.P., Craven County, NC	5,9 3/4	Dk.Brown	Dark	Hazel	Born in Göteborg
Henderson, Joseph	36	9 May 1826	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,4 3/4	Lt.Brown	Light	Blue	
Surling, Robert	29	13 May 1826	C.P., Philadelphia	5.5 1/2	Brown	Light	Blue	Born in Stockholm
Peterson, Peter	35	24 May 1826	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,7 1/2	Light	Fair	Blue	
Van Horn, William	25	6 Oct. 1826	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,7	Dk.Brown	Dark	Hazel	Died in Philadelphia 9 Oct. 1827
Anderson, Martin	36	1 Nov. 1826	Q.S., Philadelphia	5, 3/4	Brown	Ruddy	---	(x)
Anderson, Andrew	37	25 March 1827	D.C., Philadelphia	5,7 1/4	Dark	Fair	Blue	(x)
Clengstrom, Mathias	39	26 March 1827	D.C., Philadelphia	5,7 3/4	Lt.Brown	Fair	Hazel	
Mullin, John	25	10 May 1827	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,8	Dk.Brown	Dark	Dark	
Thompson, Christopher	33	19 May 1827	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,9 1/4	Light	Fair	---	
Green, Peter	27	7 Feb. 1828	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,5 3/4	Black	Fair	---	
Larsen, Jacob	29	24 June 1828	Mayor's, Philadelphia	5,6 1/2	Dk.Brown	Fair	---	
Roose, Peter	24	10 July 182	Mayor's, Philadelphia	5,7 3/4	Light	Light	Blue	Born in Gävle
Widen, Daniel	46	10 Oct. 1828	D.C., Philadelphia	5,7 3/4	Light	Light	---	Eleven years in the U.S.
Hall, Charles William	35	28 Nov. 1828	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,2 3/4	Auburn	Fair	---	(x)
Melton, Zacharia	57	18 June 1829	---	5,7 1/2	Brown	Dark	---	
Coutts, John William	28	2 July 1829	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,5 1/2	Dk.Brown	Light	---	Born in Göteborg
Armstrong, Lawrence	40	6 Aug. 1829	C.P., Philadelphia	5,4 1/2	Black	Dark	Black	

Name	Age	Date of Certificate	Court of Naturalization	Height	Hair	Complexion	Eyes	Miscellaneous
Anderson, Jacob	40	17 Aug. 1829	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,4 3/4	Dark	Fair	Blue	
Blanck, Jacob	38	17 Aug. 1829	C.P., Philadelphia	5,8	Dark	Light	Blue	
Adams, John	40	28 Sept. 1829	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,6 1/2	Light	Light	---	
Forss, Charles	29	26 Oct. 1829	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,6 1/2	Dk.Brown	Light	Blue	
Linn, Henry	48	12 Aug. 1831	S.C., Philadelphia	5,6 1/4	Brown	Light	---	
Anderson, William	25	7 Nov. 1834	City Court, Baltimore	5,6 1/2	Brown	Light	Blue	
Simpson, Peter	43	14 Nov. 1834	C.P., Philadelphia	5,5 3/4	Brown	Light	---	
Sundberg, Gustavus	35	9 April 1835	C.P., Philadelphia	5,9	Brown	Light	Blue	
Comet, Charles Fredric	41	15 Oct. 1835	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,9 1/4	Dk.Brown	Dark	Blue	
Nelson, John	27	5 June 1837	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,6 1/2	Sandy	Light	Hazel	
Johnson, John	47	3 Aug. 1837	Marine Court, N.Y. City	5,5	Sandy	Light	Blue	Born in Stockholm
Peterson, John	29	2 Nov. 1837	Marine Court, N.Y. City	5,6 1/2	Brown	Light	Blue	
Wilson, Alexander*	30	9 June 1840	---	5,5 1/2	Brown	Light	Blue	
Anderson, John	21	7 Sept. 1840	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,9	Brown	Light	Blue	
Sutherland, Andrew M.	24	19 Nov. 1841	---	5,9 1/4	Lt.Brown	Light	Blue	
Brown, Charles	32	10 Dec. 1841	---	5,7	Dark	Dark	Blue	Born in Luleå
Johnson, Amos	26	---	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,6 3/4	Black	Fair	Blue	
Wilson, John Alexander*	31	18 Jan. 1842	---	5,6	Dk.Chestnut	Light	---	Born in Karlstad
Swenson, Gustavus	24	20 May 1843	Q.S., Philadelphia	6 3/4	Light	Light	Blue	
Nordin, Lawrence**	26	27 June 1843	---	5,5	Light	Light	Blue	
Nordin, Lawrence**	26	13 Nov. 1843	S.C., Philadelphia	5,6 1/4	Light	Light	Blue	Born in Chester Co., PA

Name	Age	Date of Certificate	Court of Naturalization	Height	Hair	Complexion	Eyes	Miscellaneous
Thompson, John	23	21 Sept. 1844	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,5	Brown	Light	Blue	(x)
Davidson, John	33	4 Jan. 1845	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,9 1/2	Light	Light	Blue	Born in Stockholm
Jackson, Andrew Oliver	23	26 Aug. 1845	D.C., Philadelphia	5,9 1/2	Light	Light	Gray	
Johnson, William	32	11 Oct. 1845	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,7	Lt.Brown	Light	Gray	(x)
Batts, Erick	49	7 Feb. 1846	---	5,9 1/2	Light	Lt. Ruddy	Blue	
Bergner, John Magnus	46	---	D.C., Philadelphia	5,8 3/4	Brown	Light	Blue	
Chase, John	44	15 Feb. 1847	---	5,7 3/4	Light	Light	Blue	
Carlson, Peter Augustus	28	18 June 1847	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,8	Lt.Brown	Light	Gray	
Anderson, Peter	22	27 Oct. 1847	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,8 1/4	Lt.Brown	Light	Hazel	Born in Stockholm
Nelson, John	35	29 Oct. 1847	---	5,5 3/4	Lt.Brown	Light	Blue	(x)
Knutsson, William	26	16 March 1848	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,4 1/2	Red	Light	Blue	
Hammerfors, Johan	40	26 May 1848	Philadelphia	5,6	Brown	Light	Blue	
Emery, John	38	5 Sept. 1848	Boston	5,11	Dk.Brown	Swarthy	Hazel	Born in Kalmar
Down(s), Daniel	27	26 July 1849	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,3 1/2	Brown	Light	Blue	
Danielson, Charles	35	15 July 1850	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,5 1/4	Lt.Brown	Light	Gray	(x)
Norström, Axel	37	27 Jan. 1851	C.P., New York City	5,5 1/2	Lt.Brown	Light	Blue	Limps
Brant, Peter	48	16 Feb. 1852	---	5,8	Light	Light	Blue	Born in Göteborg (x)
Sherborna, Peter	51	16 Feb. 1852	---	5,6 3/4	Brown	Light	Blue	Born in Västervik (x)
Anderson, John	32	11 March 1852	---	5,10	Brown	Light	Gray	
Snow, Charles	32	21 Jan. 1853	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,7	Dk.Brown	Light	Blue	
Thompson, Peter	25	22 June 1854	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,8	Light	Light	Blue	(x)

Name	Age	Date of Certificate	Court of Naturalization	Height	Hair	Complexion	Eyes	Miscellaneous
Ahlberg, Lorentz	32	2 Jan. 1855	S.C., New York City	5,6	Brown	Light	Gray	
Thompson, Charles	37	5 Jan 1854 (1855?)	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,6	Brown	Fair	Hazel	
Sunman, Fredrik	31	1 Feb. 1855	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,5	Brown	Fair	Blue	
Nelson, Nel(s)	30	3 Feb. 1855	D.C., Philadelphia	5.7	Light	Light	Blue	
Thompson, Peter	27	15 June 1855	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,9	Brown	Fair	Blue	
Thompson, George	29	13 June 1856	C.P., Philadelphia	5,6	Brown	Light	Lt.Gray	
Peterson, Francis	35	8 Aug. 1856	C.P., Philadelphia	5,6 3/4	Brown	Light	Blue	(x)
Brown, Charles	46	12 Dec. 1856	New Haven, CT	5,3 3/4	Light	Light	Blue	(x)
Jinsin, Martin	44	21 July 1858	C.P., Philadelphia	6,-	Lt.Brown	Light	Blue	
Swenzon, Martin	43	19 Jan. 1859	Boston	5,7	Lt.Brown	Light	Blue	(x)
Walström, Charles Gustave	28	27 Jan. 1859	Q.S., Philadelphia	5,7	Brown	Light	Hazel	
Brown, Charles	28	11 June 1860	D.C., Philadelphia	5,5	Brown	Ruddy	Gray	
Johnson, Franz Emanuel	35	1 Sept. 1860	New York City	5,11 3/4	Lt.Brown	Light	Blue	
Burress, Charles	26	25 June 1861	C.C., Philadelphia	5,6 3/4	Light	Light	---	
Peterson, John	36	7 Nov. 1861	New York City	5,5 3/4	Light	Light	---	
Hill, John	45	11 Nov. 1861	S.C., Philadelphia	5,7 1/4	Dk.Brown	Light	Blue	
Robertson, William	38	19 Nov.1861	S.C., New York City	5,7 1/1	Chestnut	Light	Gray	

* The two seamen named Wilson may be identical;**The two seamen named Nordin may be identical.

Abbreviations

C.C. = Circuit Court; C.P. = Court of Common Pleas; D.C. = District Court; Q.S. = Quarter Session; S.C. = Superior Court

(x)= Individual cannot read nor write.