

When the America Fever Came to Klefmarken

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A piece of family history from Dals border parishes where Karolinen (Karolin a member of the Swedish Army during the reign of King Karl XII) Halfward Bryngelson received a homestead title from Karl XII. The document is now in the possession of Dr. Swenson in Portland, Oregon.

(Group picture)

Doktorinan (an obsolete title for the wife of a doctor) Ida Gawell-Blumentahl "Delsbostintan" (her pseudonym as a singer), Emanuel Swenson and Dr. Karl J. Swenson. In front of E. Swenson is Reed Swenson holding Karl XII's deed.

Many are the young and even older men and women from western Dals border parishes who during the latest seven to eight decades travelled across the Atlantic Ocean in order to, in the vast expanses and, considered the land of unlimited opportunities seek happiness and wealth. Some of these have in the distant land found affluence, and remained over there. Others have, after a varying number of years of hard work returned to their homeland with savings sufficient to provide for a worry-free life here at home. However, not all of them managed to gain what they had dreamed of when they left. For many it became broken visions instead of the dreamed for fortunes. Of these in most cases, nothing has been heard. They have not seen fit to inform relatives and friends about the bitter disappointments. The improved conditions which were hoped for have not materialized and eventually grottekvarn (industrialism without regard for how men are used) over there gulped down its victims.

The emigration trends have not been the same in all parts of the border area. While the trend in some areas has been more prominent and except for the latest two decades, has been rather stable, the emigration in other areas has been of a more occasional nature. So was the case with the homestead Klefmarken in Dals Ed Parish. There the emigration was concentrated in the latter half of the decade of 1860 and the first two years of the 70's. During the years 1866-187 no fewer than nine families totaling 48 members plus four servants left their homes and headed for the Promised Land.

The first one to leave was a man named Henrik Engelbrektsson. He was born in 1839 and had since his 16 th year spent most of his time working in Norway. On the 20th of May 1865 he obtained Flyttning-betyg (a document issued by the State Church to a person who plans to move to another parish) to Holmestrand, a community on the west side of Kristianfjorden and the following year he left for America. It did not go so fast and it was not so easy to cross the Atlantic at that time as in our days with the races for the Atlantic Blue Ribbon. The sea journey from Kristiania to America was hard and filled with difficulties. It lasted several months.

Henrik was fortunate from the beginning and in 1869 he sent for his parents, Engelbrekt Janson and his wife Kajsa, and a sister. In the same ship travelled 18 of their neighbors from Klefmarken. The previous year Jan Andreason from Neksane and his wife had left

Carl Svenson with wife and one child had left in 1867. Seven families had left during these years for America.

Success followed Henrik Engelbrektsson or Henry Bricson as he later called himself. He built and sold houses which gave him a good income. The same year he sent for his parents, he married Elisabet Andreasson from Strand in Dals Ed Parish. In 1919 they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. In the beginning of the 1920's the marriage ended with the death of the husband. His wife survived him for several years.

On Klefmarken lived Sven Andreason and Johan Jonson. Klefmarken's main farm which consisted of (illegible words) half mantal (a term used for taxation purposes and referring to a farm area large enough to support one family). (Part of the text appears to be missing) Klefmarken, which the farmer Halfward Bryngelsson had received as a gift from Karl XII in 1716 for his services to the king, had for three generations been a brukningsdel. (meaning unknown) After the death of Halfward, his son Engelbrecht Halfwardsson bought his brother's and sister's part of the inheritance and combined these parts with his own to form a brukningsdel. Engelbrecht had no surviving son but he had several daughters. One of them married Sven Asmundsson from Gesater who bought out his wife's co-heirs. After the death of Sven Asmundsson, his son Andreas came in possession of the farm. At the age of 70 Andreas turned the farm over to his son Sven and his son-in-law Johan Jonsson, a third generation descendant of the Karolin Tore Mattesson from Jakobsrud who was married to Halfward Bryngelsson's daughter Kari. Andreas built a gubbe stova (a dialectical word for a little house where a retired farmer lived on his former property) for himself and his wife. Sven and Johan each lived with their families in their own parts of the main building, a typical Dalsland house with a large kitchen and parlor in each half and two bedrooms.

Disagreements eventually ensued. In the middle 1850's Sven built a house on his part of the farm while Johan remained in the old house. Many drastic examples of their hostility have been told. For instance, they would collect vermin and dump the collection in the neighboring apartment.

In 1870 Sven Andreasson sold his farm, 934 Tunnland (one tunnland equals 4,936 square meters) total area, for 15,000 daler (about 2500 Swedish Kronor) to Arvid Arvidsson, even he a fourth generation descendant of Halfward Bryngelsson, and on May 17 he obtained attest for moving to North America for himself, his wife, two sons, and two daughters. His son Carl had, as already mentioned, emigrated in 1867 with his family; and a son and three daughters, two of whom were married, were among the 21 Klevemark inhabitants who had left in the beginning of June 1869. Of his ten children Sven thus had nine of them with him in America. The eldest daughter, Maja Lena, was married and remained in Sweden where she died Oct. 19, 1930, 94 years, one month and two days old.

The following year, 1871, Johan Jonsson was ready to leave Sweden. He sold his farm, 1005 tunnland, for 18000 daler (about 3000 Swedish Kroner) to Jacob Otto Arvidsson, an older brother of the previously mentioned Arvid Arvidsson. On June 1st he obtained flyttningssattest to America for himself, his wife, and seven of his eight children.

