



THE SWEDISH COLONIAL SOCIETY

# JOURNAL

A photograph of the Gloria Dei church, a brick building with a steeple, surrounded by a cemetery and trees. The church is the central focus, with a brick path leading towards it. The cemetery is filled with various gravestones, and there are large green trees in the background. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

**Gloria Dei's 325 Story**  
Original Swedish Congregation  
Births Centuries of Historical Heritage

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2 | FALL 2025

PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF THE NEW SWEDEN COLONY IN AMERICA



## THE SWEDISH COLONIAL SOCIETY

THE LAZARETTO, 97 WANAMAKER AVE., ESSINGTON, PA 19029-1424

### A Letter from Our Governor

We remain busy here in Tincicum. Every first Saturday of the month we open our Farmstead and History Gallery to all visitors, from 11 AM to 2 PM. On every other Wednesday in the summer, Tincicum Township has a Farmers Market from 4:30 to 7:30. We open the Farmstead at these times as well. And we will open by special appointment. If you or someone you know would like to visit us, let us know and we'll help plan your visit. You can call me at 856-405-7152 or email me at [jpmathews1@aol.com](mailto:jpmathews1@aol.com).



On May 25, 2025, we attended the rededication ceremony of the Old Swede Burial Ground in nearby Chester (See photo below). This capped a three-year-long project by the the PA chapter of the DAR to restore the cemetery after a car accident in 2022 caused extensive damage to the brick fence and grounds. Much work still needs to be done. One was reminded of the restoration project carried out by the SCS in 2016 specifically for the John Morton memorial obelisk (see the Fall 2017 Journal for its coverage of this project). There is so much history here! This was where the glebe farm of the Tincicum pastor Johan Campanius was located. Campanius named the farm Upland after his home province. The name would stick. And it was here he wrote the first draft of his translation into Algonquin of Luther's "Small Catechism." Later in 1702 St. Paul's Church would be built on this site.

I learned about Campanius' glebe farm from Ken Peterson's and Kim-Eric Williams' excellent 2013 now-out-of-print photography book, *New Sweden on the Delaware*. It should probably be reissued! New Sweden history is not easy to master. Even though I have lived almost all of my life in New Sweden territory, I was ignorant of it until relatively late in my life. Now, when I think of New Sweden, I think of borrowing David Hackett Fischer's seed analogy in his book, *"Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America."* The Swedish seed definitely sprouted roots in the Delaware Valley and later, with the migrations of the 19th and 20th centuries, throughout the U.S.

Finding myself involved with New Sweden history and the Swedish Colonial Society, I wanted to know more about Sweden itself. Accordingly, I have traveled to Sweden no less than five times in seven years, usually for a couple of weeks each time. First in 2019, then every year since 2022 when I became Governor. You can follow my travelogues in this and past issues of this Journal. Surprisingly, the New Sweden story is not all that well known in Sweden which is why we support Bengt Faleskog's work in Bottnaryd so much.

Several of us want to try to promote interest in New Sweden among SCS members in Sweden and the U.S.. Maybe we can find ways to promote relations and even travel between Sweden and the U.S. We had a meeting at Linnaeus' Sävja--described briefly in my travelogue in this issue--where we discussed what we could do, so we'll see. We will be working on it. As always with historical organizations, we must find ways to attract and engage our young ones.

*Joseph P. Mathews*

Joseph P. Mathews  
governor@colonialswedes.net





## ***The Swedish Colonial Society Journal***

(formerly the *Swedish Colonial News*) has been published twice-yearly (Spring and Fall) since 1990 by The Swedish Colonial Society, 97 Wanamaker Avenue, Essington PA 19029-1434

Visit us on the web at [www.ColonialSwedes.net](http://www.ColonialSwedes.net), [www.ColonialSwedes.se](http://www.ColonialSwedes.se) (på svenska). Visit us on social media at [www.facebook.com/SwedishColonialSociety](https://www.facebook.com/SwedishColonialSociety)

Copies of all past issues are available without cost by visiting [www.ColonialSwedes.net](http://www.ColonialSwedes.net) - click "News".

**Journal Editor:** Lawrence Backlund, PhD  
Articles or letters to the editor may be sent to [LBacklund@yahoo.com](mailto:LBacklund@yahoo.com)

**Design Layout:** Laura L. Luther at Creative Presence Design Works, Downingtown PA

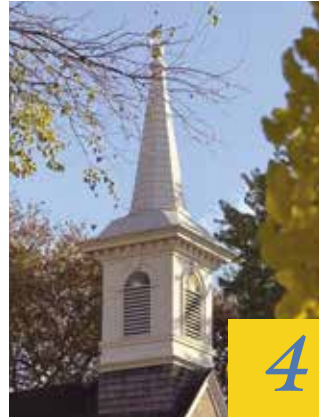
**Contributors to this issue:** Joseph Mathews, Kim-Eric Williams, Jeanette Woehr, and Larry Backlund. (PHOTOS AS CREDITED)

**On the Cover:** A designated National Historic Site, Gloria Dei Church and graveyard in Philadelphia is considered the oldest church in Pennsylvania.

PHOTO CREDIT: JOE MATHEWS

### EDITOR'S NOTE

In this issue of the SCS *Journal* the focus is on Gloria Dei, a church founded by descendants of the New Sweden colony in Philadelphia—celebrating 325 years of service—and the second part of Kim-Eric Williams’ appreciation for Bishop Jesper Svedberg, who personified the continued relationship of colonial Lutherans and the Church of Sweden. The tragedy of loss is also marked with notices of the death of two people close to the Society: Kristina Antoniades and Hans Ling. Our regular features can be found, as well as news of our role in the Pennsylvania Daughters of the American Revolution’s activities, and Kim-Eric Williams’ appearance on New Jersey public television. In another article, the Rambo saga continues. Much to enjoy!



## Gloria Dei: *325 Years of Historic Heritage*

by Jeanette Woehr

IMAGE CREDIT: LAURA LUTHER



## Svedberg and the American Mission

by Kim-Eric Williams

IMAGE CREDIT:  
AMERICA ILLUMINATA



## Governor’s Travel Log 2025

by Gov. Joe Mathews

IMAGE CREDIT: JOE MATHEWS



# Gloria Dei:

## *325 Years of Historical Heritage*

By Jeanette Woehr, Church Historian,  
and Dr. Kim-Eric Williams, Swedish Colonial Society Historian

**A**fter the founding of New Sweden in 1638, the first clergyman to serve as a resident of the Delaware Valley was Chaplain Torkil. He presumably had some sort of a chapel in the original Fort Christina, in what is now Wilmington, Delaware. In 1643, Governor Johan Printz moved the capital to a more central location, to the north, on Tinicum Island. There he erected Fort New Gothenburg and his gubernatorial mansion, “Printzhof.” There, on September 4, 1646, Pastor Johan Campanius presided at the consecration of a log chapel as the first church in the Delaware River Valley.

Finally, the colony had a place of worship and a base for missionary work among the Lenape.

Some years after the loss of New Sweden to the Dutch (1655), many Swedes began moving to points farther up the river. At the Indian village of Wicaco, meaning “a pleasant place” or the “place of the pine tree, at the river’s edge,” a blockhouse was erected. There, on June 9, 1677, the Swedes transferred their house of worship and the first Christian worship was held on this site. The congregation engaged Jacob Fabritius to conduct services, which he did for 14 years; he was blind for 9 of those years. Many parishioners arrived by boat to attend. And, in 1909, when the Swedish Colonial Society was founded, its official seal displayed this early blockhouse church.

William Penn arrived in 1682 and founded the City of Philadelphia. He spoke of the first settlers in a letter, writing: “The first planters in these parts were the Dutch, and soon after them the Swedes and Finns. The Dutch applied themselves to traffic, the Swedes and Finns to husbandry. The Dutch have a meeting place at Newcastle, and the Swedes one at Christina, one at Tinicum, one at Wicaco, within half a mile of this town. The Swedes inhabit the freshes of the river Delaware. They are plain, strong industrious people. They kindly received me.”

More than a decade later, on June 30, 1697, three clergymen arrived from Sweden—Eric Björk, Andreas

**LEFT:** Church tower housing the historic bell.  
IMAGE CREDIT: LAURA LUTHER

Rudman, and Jonas Aurén. They wrote in their chronicle that they were “received as angels from Heaven.” Under their leadership, the people began to build churches. Rudman, who rests beneath the stone in front of the altar at Gloria Dei, helped build the church with his own hands.

The three clergymen divided their mission, one leading each congregation: Rudman, as Senior, settled in Wicaco at Gloria Dei, Björk at Holy Trinity in Christina, and Aurén made a special effort among the Lenape and founded St. Anne’s in North East. Maryland.

Unfortunately, the church at Tinicum was dilapidated and the roof so leaky that pastor and congregants were drenched, when it rained during services, which happened often during certain seasons of the year. The blockhouse church at Wicaco was apparently in equally bad condition. Extensive repairs—or new buildings, therefore, were an absolute necessity.

Wicaco’s Vestry discussed this at its May 17, 1698, meeting, during which a decision had to be made regarding where to locate the new church. The choices were either Passyunk or Wicaco. An unusual method of deciding took place—determined by two exactly same sized pieces of paper. One was marked “Passyunk,” the other “Wicaco.” A man ignorant of writing and reading (Michael Likon) was selected as judge. The papers were tossed into hat then thrown on to the floor. Likon selected one, which was then placed on the Bible. The paper read “Wicaco.” This decision was not completely accepted by some members of the congregation. Much discussion followed. In the end, the Vestry laid a fine of 10 pounds on anyone who might continue to oppose the outcome. Pastor Rudman was so discouraged by the behavior of the congregation that he considered resigning and consulted with Björk in Christina, who persuaded him to return to his post. As a compromise, a parsonage was built in Passyunk at Point Breeze, accessible to members west of the Schuylkill.

The May 17, 1698, Vestry Meeting also decided to acquire more land in front of the original donation by the Swanson family, landed property extending to the Delaware River. This was so no ship building or fire danger would be close to the church. On the new land, a small sexton’s house would be erected.

Records indicate that Swanson family had been very generous in donations of land for the church. Here are the recorded deeds:

**RIGHT:** Oil painting by Olof Grafström, 1919, Augustana College, Rock Island, IL

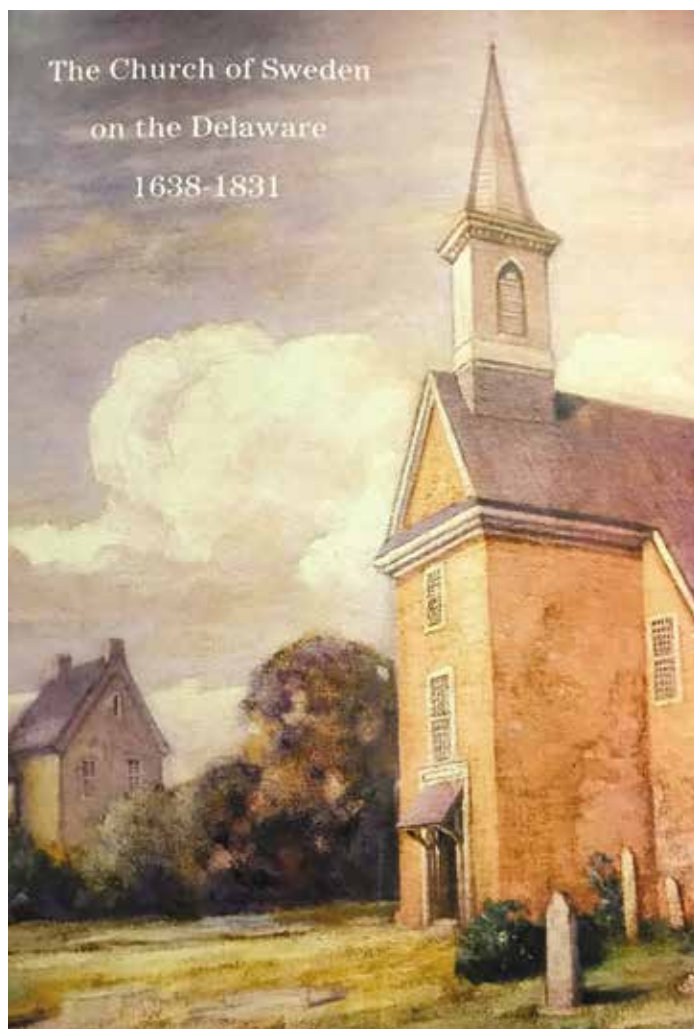
IMAGE CREDIT: BOOK COVER/KIM-ERIC WILLIAMS

(Deed 1) Catherine Swanson, widow of Swan Swanson, Swan Boon and Brigita, his wife, Hans Boon and Barbara, his wife, and Peter Bankson and Catherine, his wife, and Brigita, Barbara, and Catherine, daughters of Swan and Catherine Swanson. One and a half acres and 4 perches (For a Church).

(Deed 2) Hans Boon and Barbara, his wife, daughter of Swan and Catherine Swanson. One acre for a rectory.

(Deed 3, dated June 19, 1719) Martha Cook, daughter of John and Margaret Cook (daughter of Swan Swanson) to Peter Rambo, John Stille, John Scute, and Jesta Jestason. 25 acres. Purchased by congregation for ninety pounds.

Gloria Dei’s cornerstone was laid in 1698. The church building was dedicated two years later, on June 2, 1700. At the ceremony, Pastor Björk preached on a text from 2 Samuel, Verse 29: “Therefore, now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant that it may continue forever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, has spoken it, and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed forever.” There were three



sermons that day, including a sermon from an English clergyman. The church's name—Gloria Dei (“to the Glory of God”) had been selected by Pastor Rudman.

These events were unique in another way as well. The first orchestral music in Pennsylvania was likely played by the monastic German pietist Brothers of the Wissahickon at both the laying of the cornerstone and the dedication.

Not only did Rudman name the church, but he wrote a description of the building. According to his account, the church is 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 20 feet high. The roof is made of 18,000 cedar shingles. There are six windows, 12 feet high, three on each side. The interior of the church is covered with plaster. One each side the pews arranged in two quarters, and in addition there is a lengthwise pew under the windows, with an aisle between this and the quarters. The chancel and pulpit were of black walnut, intricately turned. The chancel itself stands three steps higher than the church floor, so that the chancel rail and the pews are of the same height, and the altar rail, as well. The tower was 26 or 28 feet high. When the tower is completed, it may reach 80 or 100 feet (if one dare risk so high a tower). The church cost £1000 or 20,000 daler in copper coin. This was given and contributed by 80 or so households.

Pastor Rudman remained active for the next two years. He published two small paperbound hymnals in 1700, to encourage congregational singing. They were the first Swedish language books of original hymns in America. They were used in combination with the 1695 official hymnals sent over by Bishop Svedberg. Most congregational families owned them. It is also true that the church's fine acoustics encouraged a strong interest in the use of music. The regular High Mass included five hymns. Swedish pastors chanted part of the Liturgy each week.

Pastor Rudman preached his last sermon on July 19, 1702, planning to return to Sweden afterwards. His voyage was delayed, when a Dutch congregation in New York, which had been without clergy for some time, asked for him to come to them. He could not refuse and, for a year, he served churches in Amsterdam, Albany, and Hackensack (New Jersey). His health prevented him staying longer. He returned to Philadelphia and officiated at the English Church Trinity, Oxford, and Christ Church, whose clergyman had returned to England, until his death in 1704.

**RIGHT:** Altar and Pulpit on June Anniversary Sunday.

IMAGE CREDIT: JEANETTE WOEHHR



The Gloria Dei building underwent some changes in the 18th century. Because the roof was too heavy for the walls and caused them to bow, two side rooms were added in 1704 to act as buttresses. The upper masonry tower was completed first in 1774. A wooden frame steeple was constructed in 1803, in keeping with the tradition of hanging the bell from trees. The bell itself had cracked and was remolded in 1801.

In the meantime, Gloria Dei remained a very active congregation.

During early times, it had close affinities with the German Lutherans, whose first clergyman in Pennsylvania, Justus Falckner, was ordained at Gloria Dei in 1703. Later, the pioneer missionary and founder of the Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, was installed as pastor of three German congregations at Gloria Dei in 1742.

The second rector at Gloria Dei was Pastor Andrew Sandel. He paid close attention to weather conditions:

October 10, 1704: “fell a heap of snow. Never happened like that before”

October 18, 1704: “in the evening a hurricane caused great damage”

November, December 1704 and January 1705: “many great and lasting storms. Few could remember such a severe winter”

April 5, 1708: “so cold water thrown on ground at noon froze immediately

February 8, 1714: “uncommonly warm wild flowers spotted in the woods. That is usually unheard of in Philadelphia”

A series of noteworthy developments centered on Gloria Dei.

In 1710, an English church (Christ Church) held services at Gloria Dei for three Sundays while they enlarged their church. A Swedish hymn was sung at

each service as evidence of the unity between the two churches.

The marble baptismal font was made in 1731. It is one of the nation’s oldest fonts in continuous use.

Music remained a key element in worship at Gloria Dei. A portative organ may have been used originally. Parish records indicate that an organ was built in 1739 by the German immigrant Johann Klemm, the first known organ builder in Pennsylvania. In 1902, the superb Hook & Hastings organ, made in Boston, was placed on the balcony. It was renovated in 1969 and 2025.

Here are some further highlights worth recalling:

**1733:** Parsonage house at Wicaco was built, the initial one at Passyunk was sold

**1749:** Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism* published in English by Pastor Johannes Dylander. This was the most read and memorized book for parents and youth for many years. An additional edition was published in 1761.

Benjamin Franklin placed lightening rods on the church, probably 1752, when he installed lightning rods on tall buildings in Philadelphia.

**1759:** The Reverend Carl Magnus Wrangel arrived. He was so popular that he often preached in the open air. He is known to have baptized over 20 Africans as Gloria Dei members, making it one of the first multi-racial congregations in the country. Wrangel also organized two other Swedish congregations—one in Kingsessing (St James in 1762) and one in Upper Merion Township (Christ in 1763). All three sites were united as a single parish; the two “annexes” used only English in its services. St. James won renown for being the church attended by John Morton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

In 1774, the Pennsylvania Legislative Assembly met in Gloria Dei. Later,

during the British occupation, it served as a hospital. Its pews were burned as firewood, pages were torn from the record books, and the 1715 altar painting by Gustavus Hesselius disappeared.

On June 15, 1777, Betsy Ross married Captain Joseph Ashbourne at Gloria Dei.

In 1786, a new pastor, Nicholas Collin, arrived after a successful ministry in Swedesboro, New Jersey. He used the Episcopal Prayer Book and was assisted by Anglican clergy. In 1795, he married 199 couples. Over the 45 years he served as rector, he married 3,375 couples—averaging 84 a year! He was active in the American Philosophical Society and was a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, two institutions attributed to Benjamin Franklin. He was also in constant touch with faculty at Uppsala University, exchanging new ideas and reporting on conditions in America.

Gloria Dei underwent significant changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, adjusting to new conditions and joining the Episcopal Church.

In 1801, its bell was remolded from the original bell at Tinicum. The inscription on the bell reads: “Cast for the Swedish Church in Philade’a. Stiled Gloria Dei. G. Hedderly Fecit. Partly from the old bell dated 1643. “I to the Church the living call and to the grave do summons all.”

In the 1830s, Gloria Dei had a sewing school, where young women would come and be taught the fine art of stichery. One of these works of art by Sarah Barnes still hangs in the Rectory. Meanwhile, the Rectory was rebuilt and a Sexton’s home was erected.

**1831:** With Nicholas Collin’s death, the Swedish Mission in America ended, but Gloria Dei lived on in the Episcopal tradition. (In 1843, the three formerly Swedish churches officially separated from each other, allowing each to go separate ways.)

**1834:** Bishop William White of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania performed the first Confirmation at Gloria Dei.

**1845:** No longer under the control of the Church of Sweden, Gloria Dei applied for admission into the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania and was accepted. Dr. Jehu Curtis Clay, a descendant of Colonial Swedes, was the first Episcopal Rector. He wrote a history of New Sweden called *Annals of the Swedes on the Delaware*, noted the church's excellent acoustics, and guided its destiny through the Civil War.

In 1846, because of a growing number of worshippers, a new center pulpit, a stained glass chancel window, a reordering of pews, and an extension of the back balcony were installed, giving the interior its present appearance. In 1863, the Parish (Riverside) Hall was added.

In 1850, the "Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind, touring with P.T. Barnum, sang G. F. Handel's "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth" from the organ loft to a filled house.

Gloria Dei continued to serve in the years that followed.

In February 1941, following extensive work and petitions to Congress by the influential Governor of the Swedish Colonial Society, Colonel Frank Worthington Melvin, and Rector Dr. John Craig Roak, Gloria Dei was named a National Historical Landmark, the first religious site to be so recognized. At the same time, the government purchased adjacent property, cleared it of decaying housing and factories, and built a strong brick border wall.

Gloria Dei had other connections with the Swedish Colonial Society. In 1969, the Colonial Revival Roak House was dedicated, named for long-time Rector Roak (1933-1972), who served as the Society's Chaplain beginning in 1944 and its Governor, 1972-75. In 1992, the Society moved its headquarters and archives from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to Gloria Dei, remaining there until its move

to the Lazaretto in Tinicum Township in 2023. In 1994, the preeminent New Sweden scholar, Dr Amandus Johnson, died at age 97 and was buried at Gloria Dei.

Gloria Dei celebrated its 325<sup>th</sup> anniversary on June 1, 2025, capping off a series of monthly events. On that occasion, a festal Eucharist, a picnic, and a concert of Swedish folksongs took place, performed by Swedish Colonial Society Forefather vocalist, Emily S. Tepe.

The Church can be proud of its historic heritage: the oldest brick building in Philadelphia in which William Penn walked, the first and oldest church in the Commonwealth, and the oldest congregation in the United States in continued existence.

More recent developments underscore this heritage. In 2000, the carved angels and open Bible that hang below the organ loft were carbon-dated to determine whether they were from Sweden or carved by a local shipbuilder. The results were inconclusive—yellow pine was common in both Sweden and North America, when the Church was built. But an inscription on the lefthand page of the Bible reads: *The people who sat in darkness here have seen a great light*; on the righthand side: *Glory to God in Highest*.

These texts were always used at the Swedish Christmas dawn service, the candlelit Matins or *Julotta*, and must have had special relevance for worshippers who perhaps felt alone and isolated in the New World.

NOTE: For a more detailed history of the 1646-1789 period, consult *Colonial Records of the Swedish Churches in Pennsylvania*, published in nine volumes. Details on the website [www.colonialswedes.net](http://www.colonialswedes.net). The Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States adopted the following resolution following the exodus of a large number of members from St. Michael's Church to found St. John's Lutheran Church in 1806: "That the present Lutheran Ministerium of

**ABOVE:** Photo taken following Lucia Fest December 5, 2014.

IMAGE CREDIT: JOE MATHEWS



Pennsylvania and Adjacent States must remain a German speaking ministerium, and that no regulation can be adopted, which would necessitate the use of another language besides the German in its Synodical Meetings and Business.” In Helen E. Pfatteicher, *The Ministerium of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: The Ministerium Press, 1938), pp. 41-42.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jeanette Woehr** is the official historian and Archivist of Gloria Dei Church, where her family has been active since the 19th Century. She is Vice President of the Board of Directors of Historic Gloria Dei Preservation Trust and a member of the Council of the Swedish Colonial Society.

PHOTO CREDIT: AMY GRANT

# The Kvarken Connection

## *A Vital Link*

By Lawrence Backlund

Peter Gunnarsson [Rambo] was a passenger on the Kalmar Nyckel, which sailed from Göteborg to the Delaware River Valley in 1638. He was accompanied by his wife, Brita Mattsdotter.

There has been some question about his birthplace and birthdate. Was he born at Ramberget, near Göteborg, or a place named Rambo in Degerfors parish on the Ume River in Västerbotten on the shores of the Gulf of Bothnia.

A claim for the Västerbotten site has been made by a descendant of Brita Mattsdotter, the Vasa-born spouse.

This has introduced some confusion. Place names, as we know, frequently were taken as surnames, especially after the takeover of New Sweden by the Dutch in 1655.

Carl-Henrik Svensson, who has traced his descent from Brita Mattsdotter through ten generations of daughters, has proposed the Västerbotten Degenfors Rambo as the birthplace of Peter Gunnarsson, who died in 1698.

In a June 12, 2025 email to Ron Beatty, who edited the second edition of *The Rambo Family Tree*, Svensson presented his “arguments and facts supporting the hypothesis that Peter Gunnarsson Rambo descends from Rambo in Västerbotten.”

One: the geographic connection between Vasa, Brita’s birthplace, and the Degenfors parish, upstream on the Ume River in northern Västerbotten, on the shores of a portion of the Gulf of Bothnia called “Kvarken” which can be crossed over the ice in winter and small boats in summer. In essence, Göteborg was too far away for marriage to be likely.

Two: there is a Ramberget in Västerbotten.

Three: DNA matches between Svensson’s father Kurt in Västerbotten outnumber matches from the Göteborg region.

Four: the Ramberget outside Göteborg was part of Norway until 1658. Thus, Svensson reasoned, a royal border was a “barrier.”

This latter argument is a relatively weak one. There were few border controls in the 17th century and ports, like Göteborg, attracted “foreigners.”

Svensson, in the email, urged further DNA studies to clarify the situation.

Genealogist Ron Beatty sent an email in reply on June 17, 2025, in which he explained that an earlier generation of writers had named Ramberget as Peter’s birthplace simply because of a “similarity of names.” There is no official documentation.

The issue gets even more complicated when Beatty wrote that Peter’s grandson had told Pehr Kalm in the 1740s that his grandfather sometimes had used “Ramberg” as a surname. Beatty remarked that “Ramberg” obviously had “morphed” into “Rambo.” If this is the case, then Ramberg or Rambo was a choice made in the Swedish Nation after the Dutch takeover and might have had little to do with placenames in the “old country.”

Nonetheless, the Kvarken connection, the Peter-Brita marriage, Beatty thought, is worth following up with DNA studies.

Because Peter Gunnarsson’s birthdate and birthplace remain undocumented, the Rambo family story continues as an open book, with the Kvarken connection a vital link to be further investigated.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Larry Backlund, PhD** was born in a Swedish-Finn family and enjoys a career as an academic historian. Larry now lives in Philadelphia and is an excited new SCS Journal editor.

PHOTO CREDIT: RUTH RIZZI

# Svedberg and the American Mission

By Dr. Kim-Eric Williams

---

*In the Spring 2025 issue of the SCS Journal, we read about Bishop Svedberg and his early career, including his work in obtaining three priests to travel to North America. The conclusion of that document now tells us about founding more churches in the Delaware River Valley, his amazing publication projects, his three wives and nine remarkable children.*

---

Jesper Svedberg, who served as Court Preacher, Dean of Uppsala Cathedral, hymnwriter, religious reformer, and Bishop of Skara, took up the cause of the nearly-forgotten Swedish Nation in the 1690s. He was central to the Church of Sweden's missionary activities among the descendants of the New Sweden colony, dispatching talented clergy and religious materials. These activities assured the permanence of the congregations established and thus eased the transition to English as the language of worship over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Meanwhile, in Sweden, changes were taking place rapidly in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1700, old Archbishop Swebelius died and Erik Benzelius, a former conservative professor at Uppsala and Bishop of Strängnäs, was promptly consecrated as his successor. In 1702, when the city and Uppsala Cathedral were severely damaged in a fire, King Carl XII named Svedberg Bishop of the historic see of Skara in Västergötland. It was a big challenge to move to a mostly rural diocese that had been poorly managed and whose clergy were discouraged, but Svedberg took up the position with his usual energy, honesty, and zeal.

It also seems that church politics were involved in this appointment. There were people who wanted to be sure that Svedberg would not be Archbishop and wanted his new ideas and liberalism out of Uppsala. Benzelius had



**ABOVE:** Bishop Jesper Svedberg in middle age in Skara  
IMAGE CREDIT: AMERICA ILLUMINATA IN A VERSION BY  
ROBERT MURRAY. STOCKHOLM: PROPRIUS FÖRLAG. 1985

opposed Svedberg's hymnal and made sure that the new Bible translation project Svedberg's committee had been engaged in for many years was quickly published as the "Carl XII Bible" with as few changes from the 1541 and 1618 editions as possible.

Svedberg's exile to Skara did not dampen his interest in the America Mission. In the Delaware River Valley, significant developments took place associated with Svedberg's labors among New Sweden colonist descendants.

One of these was the Tolstadius affair. In 1702, when Pastor Andreas Rudman was ill and expecting a replacement, a Swedish priest named Lars Tolstadius arrived and promptly proclaimed himself the new Senior Pastor. Yet he had no official documents confirming his appointment. He said they had been left in New York, where he had landed. He assured Rudman the documents would soon arrive. Rudman was suspicious but also very much in need of help, so he agreed to hire Tolstadius as an Assistant for six months. The ruse was exposed when the legitimate appointee, Andreas Sandel, arrived and assumed the Senior Pastor position. Despite this scandal, Rudman agreed to allow Tolstadius to accompany him to New York, where he would present him as a candidate for a position in the Dutch Lutheran congregation. Tolstadius failed to impress the Dutch Lutherans, who decidedly disliked him.

Tolstadius was not done yet. He returned to the Delaware River Valley and schemed to create a Swedish congregation in New Jersey. Amazingly, he received a written call from six families along the Raccoon Creek in May. A month later,

he wrote in their name to Archbishop Benzelius seeking permission to start a new congregation.<sup>1</sup> It was not given because of Tolstadius' questionable reputation, an earlier refusal by the Uppsala Cathedral and Chapter, and objections from both Rudman and Erik Björk, since he would be taking away worshippers who still had financial pledges due for building two new churches.

Tolstadius was not deterred. He answered the call of the six families and remarkably had a log church ready to dedicate in 1705.<sup>2</sup> All of the other Swedish priests boycotted the ceremony dedicating Trinity Church in Swedesboro, not far from Raccoon Creek.

His triumph was short-lived. The new congregation found him argumentative and divisive. On May 29, 1706, his empty canoe, with a new plowshare and his cloak, was found on the shore of the Delaware River. His body was found nine days later at Upland. He may have either had an accident or committed suicide. At the time, he was under indictment by the Burlington Court for fathering a child with Catherina, a daughter of Church Warden Olaf Petersson.<sup>3</sup>

Jonas Aurén proved to be another troublesome clergyman. At the time, he was serving St Mary's Church in Maryland. To replace Tolstadius, the new congregation asked Aurén to come to Swedesboro. He was willing, but there was a problem. While he had organized a congregation and built the church in Maryland, his minimal theological education and a literal reading of the Book of Exodus persuaded him that worship should always be on Saturdays. He had become a Sabbatarian. And he had written an English defense of his views called *Noah's Dove*. In response, when he learned of this, Björk had been incensed and wrote a longer argument in English published in New York as *A Little Olive Leaf Put in the Mouth of that So-Called Noah's Dove*. It was a classic description of the Resurrection and its centrality for Christians. The message reached Aurén's congregation. Aurén thereafter continued to preach on Sundays but privately observed Saturdays.<sup>4</sup>

In the end, Aurén accepted the call to Swedesboro and, after extensive consultations, Björk approved his appointment arguing that because of the "affection he had for Aurén and for the people who desired him," he would not oppose his work in Swedesboro.<sup>5</sup>

The new pastor was only able to serve until 1713, when he, his wife, and infant son died of a communicable disease. Two other children survived in Maryland, but St Mary's Church had no priest until 1722, when the congregation was adopted by the Anglican mission of the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, in Sweden, Bishop Svedberg was constantly in motion—preaching, catechizing, visiting, and promoting

District clergy seminars. He prohibited dogs from attending worship and condemned the vanity of men wearing wigs! As a bishop, he was ex officio a member of the Riksdag in the Clergy Estate and had to attend the Riksdag whenever it was announced. These duties did not deter him from continued support for the America Mission. He set up a printery and was soon publishing all sorts of needed materials for his diocese and the America Mission. In 1723, for example, he published a catechism for youth in America called *A Divine Children's Catechism for the Use of Youth in Swedish Congregations Outside of the Kingdom*. In addition to Luther's Five Parts, there were divine exercises and a letter to the priests then serving in America: Andreas Hesselius, Samuel Hesselius, Jonas Lidman, and Abraham Lidenius.<sup>7</sup> He also had a Bible printed in 1729 in smaller-Octavo-form. A businessman in Göteborg, Sebastian Tham, contributed a huge sum to its printing as a gift to the Swedes in America, as well as to bring down its sales price.<sup>8</sup>

Svedberg clearly understood the importance of books for the more than the 1500 parishioners being served by the thirteen priests he had supplied. He also knew there was no place in America where Swedish typeset, with its idiosyncratic vowels, was available. Indeed, Swedish researcher Daniel Lindmark has estimated that by 1720 the Swedish population in North America had received 4,000 books and that every individual could have a hymnal and every four people a Bible. Thus, every household had almost 15 books, which was even more than the average in Swedish parishes.<sup>9</sup>

Svedberg wrote often to the pastors he had sent to America, encouraging them and giving them spiritual counsel. Few of these letters, however, have survived. The Swedish Colonial Society's *Colonial Records* translates only six of these, although more were no doubt penned and had responses. Many were presumably lost because Svedberg lived through three fires—one in Uppsala and two in his episcopal residence Brunsbo at Skara.

Three years before his death in 1732, he collected much of what remained of his records and published them in a volume



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dr. Kim-Eric Williams** has retired from teaching Swedish at the University of Pennsylvania and from being an Archivist at the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia. He lives in Exton, PA. With Ruth Nelson Rizri, he is Curator of the New Sweden History Gallery at the Lazaretto in Essington, PA. Dr. Williams is also the Historian for the Swedish Colonial Society.

PHOTO CREDIT: RUTH NELSON RIZZI

called *America Illuminata*. Here we read that besides the books, Svedberg took care to find decent positions for the priests who had served in America on their return to Sweden. He even persuaded King Frederik I to give them the title *Magister*. This was usually a high academic degree. In this case, it was honorary recognition of their hard work and a further credential for their placement at home. And since they had been away for such a long time, they were excused from presiding at clergy seminars held in Latin.<sup>9</sup>

Following the death of Tolstadius in 1713 and when he was ready to return to Sweden, Erik Björk, noting that the debt on the Holy Trinity church building had been eliminated, was ready to admit the Swedes across the Delaware River in New Jersey did need their own parish.

Svedberg and the Uppsala authorities agreed. Thus, in 1715, a third parish was recognized—Swedesboro/Raccoon. With the coming of a new priest, Abraham Lidenius, the congregation grew and was divided into two parts with an additional church built in 1717



**ABOVE:** Trinity, Old Swedes, Swedesboro, NJ. gathered in 1703 and recognized by Svedberg in 1713.

IMAGE CREDIT: KIM-ERIC WILLIAMS

in Penn's Neck (Pennsville) named St. George's.<sup>10</sup>

After Svedberg's death in 1735, oversight of the America Mission was the responsibility of the Archbishop and Cathedral Chapter in Uppsala. They faced serious challenges. Indeed, there would be difficult times in America with an influx of Moravians eager for Swedish converts, a mass migration of German Lutherans, and the transition to using English. The Archdiocese could not give the Mission the personalized support that Svedberg had provided. Yet, in 1749, the Archdiocese issued an official "Instruction" spelling out the Dean's duties for Israel Acrelius, newly called to Holy Trinity, Wilmington.<sup>11</sup> And, in 1758, the Chapter issued another "Instruction" for Carl Magnus Wrangel, who had been called to Gloria Dei, Philadelphia, with guidance on how to manage the American District renamed the "Swedish-American Ministerium."<sup>12</sup>

This new entity met with some success. Three more Swedish Lutheran congregations were organized in areas originally part of Gloria Dei. The parish furthest west was in Douglasville/Morlatton, Berks County, where there had been Swedish services sporadically held since 1708. In 1736, a log church was erected called St. Gabriel's after Pastor Gabriel Falk, who served there after a short and controversial term at Gloria Dei. He returned to Sweden. Because of the great distance between Philadelphia and St Gabriel's, however, by 1762, responsibility for the church had been taken over by the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. This was an example of the ongoing fusion of Lutheran and Anglican.

On the other hand, when Wrangel arrived as both Dean and Senior Pastor in Philadelphia in 1759, he was ready to inspire the gathering of two more congregations. First, in Kingsessing—now Southwest Philadelphia—a stone

church was erected in 1762 called St. James. The next year another stone church—Christ, Upper Merion—was also dedicated. Both of these congregations became a part of a three-church parish, with clergy supplied by Gloria Dei.

From 1699-1763, the Church of Sweden mission in America had given birth to eight churches, built and supported by active congregations in the Delaware River Valley, and talented clergy had been sent from Sweden on Bishop Svedberg's original initiative.

Many have considered that New Sweden ended with its conquest by the Dutch in 1655. In fact, because of weekly church services and the use of Swedish in teaching and preaching, its culture existed for another one hundred years. The reasons are many. One was the great concern for basic Christian knowledge of the youth. There were no Sunday schools, nor Confirmation classes, but parents were expected to help their children memorize hymn lyrics, Bible verses, and Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*, with its explanations of Christian belief. To make sure this happened, each congregation was divided into districts, and priests sought to find out how families were faring. According to Swedish church law, the parish priest was required to personally visit each family and quiz children once a year. Ledgers listing each family member and their progress—or lack of it—were faithfully kept by the clergy. Those ledgers provide evidence of social conditions, population and gender data, and degrees of literacy—all important components of vital statistics before the constitutionally-mandated U.S. census came into being in 1790.

To a large degree, Svedberg's family life was typical of members of the priestly class in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At home in Uppsala and later Skara, Svedberg fathered nine children with three wives married in succession.<sup>13</sup> One son died

## Kalm on Svedberg

By L. Backlund

Pehr Kalm, who visited the Delaware Valley in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century on a mission for Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus, frequently interacted with the descendants of the New Sweden colony. On several of these occasions, he was shown some Svedberg letters. These letters reveal that Svedberg's labors in the New World were certainly not forgotten by Swedish worshippers, who expressed their thanks with gifts of animal skins. Kalm learned that mink pelts had been sent in 1708 to compensate for the books and other materials sent by King Charles XII. In 1713, when Erik Björk returned to Sweden, he brought 115 various pelts with him. Initially, as Kalm noted, Svedberg had protested in a letter that he had performed his duties "from love for the Swedes and not for love of the skins."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, subsequently, Svedberg came to accept these gifts, expressing sincere thanks in a December 5, 1719 missive Kalm was shown.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Svedberg seemed overjoyed, as Kalm recorded, in an October 15, 1731 letter. According to Kalm, Svedberg "thanks them for the skin gifts they had sent him, but which he had not yet received."<sup>3</sup>

Svedberg's gratitude was real.

<sup>1</sup>Peter Kalm, *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*. The English Version of 1770. Revised from the Original Swedish by Adolph B. Benson, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1987), 684-5.

<sup>2</sup>Kalm, 685.

<sup>3</sup>Kalm, 685-6.

at birth or soon thereafter, another named Albrecht died at 13, while a third son, Eliesar, who owned a copper mine near Falun, died at age 26. Three daughters—Hedvig, Margareta, and Catharina—all seemed to have married well in church or governmental circles.

One daughter, Anna (1686-1766) married Erik Benzelius, the son of the Archbishop. The younger Benzelius had been Librarian at Uppsala University and a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. She was no doubt proud when Erik supported the work of her brother, Emanuel. Benzelius later became Bishop of Linköping and Archbishop of Uppsala.<sup>14</sup>

A surviving son, Jesper Svedberg, Jr. (1694-1771) was considered by his father to be a son at "loose ends." The elder Svedberg wrote in a letter: "Because he wanted to sail and see the world, I let him first travel to England, before coming to you."<sup>15</sup> His travels took him to Philadelphia in 1716. Then, from 1718 to 1720, he was Schoolmaster at the Swedesboro/Raccoon congregation. Before his next stop in the Caribbean, the young Svedberg assisted in the establishment of a rectory in Pilesgrove, half way between Pennsville and Swedesboro, for the New Jersey parish. At some point, he turned his attention to religion and, returning to Sweden, he translated a German devotional book. This was only temporary, because he then ultimately pursued a military career as a lieutenant.

Svedberg's most famous son was Emanuel, ennobled as Swedenborg (1688-1772), perhaps Sweden's most famous polymath. He undertook a five-year intellectual pilgrimage of European cities—the so-called Grand Tour. He was an engineer, mystic, psychic, scientist, philosopher, and mathematician. As an engineer, he reorganized and modernized



ABOVE: Ulrika Eleonora Church in London, founded by Svedberg in 1710 and still a thriving congregation. IMAGE CREDIT: ULRIKA ELEANORA CHURCH

Sweden's mining industries. Then in 1741, he began to have religious visions and wrote down his ideas in thirty large Latin volumes. He moved to England because of its more international and liberal society that welcomed speculative work. Moreover, in England, there was no book censor as in Sweden.<sup>15</sup> He died in 1772 and was buried in the very Swedish Church in London his father had help to found.

About ten years after Swedenborg's death, some of his admirers in England decided to found a new church based on his writings, the "Church of the New Jerusalem," popularly called the "Swedenborgians." It never grew into a large group, but it did establish a large cathedral and parochial schools in Bryn Athyn, a community near Philadelphia. By 1910, there was enough knowledge and respect for Swedenborg's scholarship to arrange for his body to be moved from London to Uppsala Cathedral, where a huge granite sarcophagus honors his intellect.

By contrast, Jesper Svedberg is buried in an obscure exterior corner of Varnhem Monastery Church. He seems hardly remembered at nearby Skara Cathedral.

Svedberg was certainly one of the most colorful, outspoken, and talented church leaders in Swedish history. The Swedish scholar Robert Murray reminds us that with his intellectual gifts and

personal charm, he could be witty—the first skål at every meal was for “all the devils in hell.” He could also relax over a game of backgammon with his good friend and neighbor, Lieutenant Hammarhielm. While the stakes wagered in the game were low, Jesper did interpret it theologically as illustrating the dangers in life.<sup>16</sup>

In the game of life, he no doubt had more wins than losses.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Kim-Eric Williams and Peter Stebbins Craig, *Colonial Records of Swedish Churches in Pennsylvania*, Volume 2: *The Rudman Years, 1697-1702* (Philadelphia: Swedish Colonial Society, 2006), 184-197.

<sup>2</sup>Otto Norberg, *Svenska Kyrkans Mission vid Delaware/Nord Amerika* (Stockholm: A.V. Carlsons Bokförlag-Aktiebolag, nd), 28-29.

<sup>3</sup>Peter S. Craig, “The Swedish Church at Swedesboro,” *Swedish Colonial News*, Vol. 2, Number 7 (Fall 2202), 1 and 4.

<sup>4</sup>Kim-Eric Williams, “American Lutheranism’s First Dispute,” *Lutheran Forum*, Vol. 45, Number 4 (Winter 2011), 20-22.

<sup>5</sup>Nils Jakobsson, *Svenska Öden Vid Delaware* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokförlag, 1938), 223.

<sup>6</sup>Kim-Eric Williams, *The Eight Old Swedes Churches of New Sweden* (Wilmington, DE: The New Sweden Centre, 1999), 11.

<sup>7</sup>Jesper Svedberg, *America Illuminata, Skriven och utgiven av dess biskop år 1732*. Med inledning av Robert Murray om biskopen som vägrade att glömma svensaterna på andra sidan havet.

(Stockholm: Samfundet Pro Fide et Christiansmo samt Propius Förlag, 1985), 53.

<sup>8</sup>*America Illuminata*, 141.

<sup>9</sup>Daniel Lindmark, *Ecclesia Plantada, Swedishness in Colonial America* (Umeå: Kulturgräns norr, 2005), 60.

<sup>10</sup>*America Illuminata*, 142.

<sup>11</sup>Williams, *The Eight Old Swedes Churches*, 13, 15.

<sup>12</sup>For the entire text, see Norberg, 214-215,

<sup>13</sup>For the entire text, see Norberg, 216-220.

<sup>14</sup>Craig and Williams, *Colonial Records*, Vol. 6A, 134.

<sup>15</sup>Oliver K. Olson, ed. “The Church in New Sweden,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. II, Number 1 (Spring 1988), in *Robert Murray, Jesper Svedberg, Bishop of America* (Milwaukee: np,nd.), 124.

<sup>16</sup>GENI (Website), “Jesper Daniells Swedberg.”

<sup>17</sup>Erik Benzelius, The Younger,” Wikipedia.

<sup>18</sup>Craig and Williams, *Colonial Records*, Vol. 3, 216.

<sup>19</sup>Craig and Williams, *Colonial Records*, Vol. 3, 202.

<sup>20</sup>Ingum Montgomery, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria, Del 4: Enbetskyrkans Tid* (Stockholm: Vderbum, 2002), 185. At the insistence of the Priest Estate, a book censor existed from 1687-1766. It alone decided what books could be published and sold in the kingdom.

<sup>21</sup>*America Illuminata*, 35.



## Governor Mathews presents SCS Award to the Dala-Floda Local History Association

This summer I visited Sweden again to visit old friends and make new ones. I especially wanted to attend the annual meeting of the Dala-Floda Local History Association or Hembygdsgrd on Sunday, September 7, to present them with the Society’s New Sweden Historic Preservation Award for their role in the making of our Farmstead. This was a long-overdue honor that the SCS was extending to them at long last, for it was their member, Gunnar Zetterqvist, who, in 1988, was immersed in Dalarna’s folk-building traditions and came to Bridgeton, New Jersey, to design and build the Farmstead’s seven log cabins, thus transferring Swedish practices to the New Sweden habitat. Thanks to Bridgeton’s initiative in engaging Gunnar, we now have the Farmstead in Tinicum. This has been a gift that keeps on giving!

It was especially pleasing that the person accepting the Award was the current president of the Association and Gunnar’s niece, Karin Zetterqvist. Also present were Helena Höij, Governor of Dalarna County and president of the County Archaeological and Local Heritage Association, and Anna-Karin Andersson, chairman of the national Local Heritage Association, which oversees over 2000 associations, 410,000 members, and around 5 million visitors each year. The Swedish Colonial Society should be proud to be a part of that!

ABOVE: Joe Mathews holding the history book *Det Gamla Floda* with Karin Zetterqvist holding the SCS Award certificate.

IMAGE CREDIT: Lars Redhe

SCS Governor Joe Mathews:

## *My Travels in Sweden in 2025*

While Dala-Floda may have been the climax of my trip, I can tell you I enjoyed all of it! I arrived in Sweden on August 21st and right away visited our hard-working SCS Council member Leif Lundquist, who lives not far from Arlanda, the Stockholm airport. He and I visited the Milles Museum (Millesgården), which is situated high up on the island of Lidingö overlooking the archipelago around Stockholm. We both were impressed by the beauty and variety of Milles' sculptures and their settings. We took the opportunity to inquire about his New Sweden monument at the harbor in Gothenburg. It's the smaller, copper replica (perhaps the prototype?) of the one in black granite at Fort Christina in Wilmington. We learned that it was the American historian Esther Chilstrom Meixner who purchased it from the Museum in 1958 and had it installed in Gothenburg that year. The salt air has turned much of it dark, but it still has pride of place. I think a group of us SCS members should consider traveling to Gothenburg to pay homage to it soon. An SCS group was last there in 2004.

Then Leif took me to Wira Bruk, the industrial-scale sword factory, or Blade Smithy, now a museum, founded in 1630 by Clas Fleming, the naval commander who organized the 1638 expedition to New Sweden. There must have been 20 hearths under the one roof along with massive mill-driven hammers that had to have made an awful noise for the workers. They were producing weaponry for the Swedish army in the Thirty Years War.

Then we had the scheduled organizational

meeting of what I'll call the SCS-in-Sweden Subcommittee. This took place at Sävja, Linnaeus' second home. In attendance were myself, Leif, Hans-Björn Ericsson (known to friends as HB), and the Uppsala University professors emeriti Hans Norman and Harald Runblom. HB and his wife Boel provided a delicious lunch for us all: gravad lax, boiled potatoes, HB's home-brewed beer, etc. The two of them had been hosting at Sävja for 20 years, but that was coming to an end this year because of changes at the municipality. HB's hops plantation was most impressive. We had a fine time discussing what SCS might do to increase interest among Swedes in New Sweden history and the work of the SCS itself. More on this later.

After this meeting, I got my rental car and immediately visited Linnaeus' first home, Hammarby, which was nearby. Predictably, its gardens seemed to be in full bloom, setting off his homestead admirably. The tour of Linnaeus' two-story log manor house — filled with family portraits — transported one to his world. HB suggested I also visit an ancient hill fort nearby called Broborg. It was strewn with rocks and boulders, which made my footing difficult, but it was fascinating to try to imagine its even earlier time period.



Then a long drive to Bottnaryd--Johan Printz's hometown--to meet with Ingvar Jardenius and others in his group, the Johan Printz Foundation. I was informed that the museum devoted to New Sweden, put together by the retired shop teacher and hand-craftsman extraordinaire, Bengt Faleskog, had been taken down from the room where it was displayed because the room was unheated and his displays were subject to the resulting damage. As if to compensate for the museum's loss, the group made a video of Bengt discussing New Sweden history, using artifacts from the museum. We watched and discussed the video which was still under development. Then we drove to Gunillaberg, Printz's manor house. It was undergoing renovation under the direction of a young man,

**Background:** Wooden buildings near Visby Town Wall, Gotland

**Top:** The Carl Milles New Sweden Monument at Gothenburg Harbor

**Center Bottom:** The Garden at Linnaeus' home, Hammarby

ALL IMAGE CREDITS: JOE MATHEWS

Sebastian Götesson, who lives nearby. He showed us around the entire complex. The next day the Bottnaryd Local History Association held its annual Home Day which I attended. I enjoyed the surroundings: the churchyard, the historical buildings, the forest and the lake.



I should mention that Bengt Faleskog and the Bottnaryd Home Village Association received our first New Sweden Historic Preservation Award in February, 2024--see the article in the Spring 2024 SCS Journal. I will hope to see Bengt's museum resurrected.



My next destination was the island of Gotland. I took the ferry in Oskarshamn and landed in Visby 3 hours later. I drove about an hour south to Per Ehn's home in Alva near Hemse. In 1988 Per had been an 18-year-old exchange student at Cape May Court House, New Jersey. He saw the Farmstead when it was new and has been enthusiastic about New Sweden history ever since. He is now a high school teacher and in his spare time he cares for several log buildings that he owns in Estonia. I traveled around Gotland, with its medieval walled city of Visby, over the next 4 days, finding its natural beauty and history quite exhilarating. On one of those days Per showed me his favorite open-air museum at the village of Bunge. However, it was soon time for me to leave Gotland and Per who I think will be a good ally for the SCS. I was on my way to Floda, the end of my visit to Sweden this year. I have included just a few photos, but you can find and explore online most of the places I visited: Dala-Floda, the Milles Museum, Wira Bruk, Linnaeus' Sävja, Linnaeus' Hammarby, Broborg, Bottnaryd, Gunillaberg, Visby, and Gotland. *Sweden is wonderful!*



**Top:** Windmill, Burgsvik-Vamlingbo, Gotland.

**Center:** Wooden animal carving from the Viking Age, Gotland Museum, Visby.

IMAGE CREDIT: JOE MATHEWS

**Bottom:** Governor Joseph Mathews speaking with Helena Höij, Governor of Dalarna County, at Annual Meeting of Dala-Floda Local History Association. See page 14.

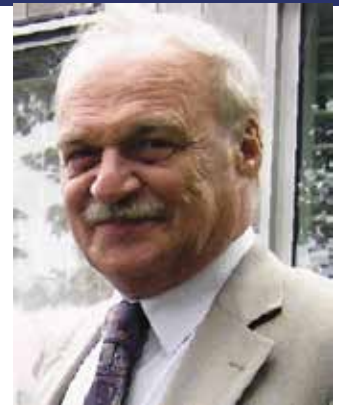
IMAGE CREDIT: LARS REDHE

## IN MEMORIAM

### Hans Ling

1940-2025

By Hans Norman,  
Leif Lundquist and  
Kim-Eric Williams



Hans Ling, long-time Swedish friend and the first Swede and Forefather member ever elected to the Council of the Swedish Colonial Society, died at age 84, on April 17, 2025. Our thoughts go to his children, Sofia and Robert and their families.

An important link between the New Sweden area and the home country has been severed. Hans had a great interest in the Swedish heritage and the preservation of old traditions from the colonial era on the South River, as the Delaware River was called. He made many personal friends and contacts with whom he shared his interest. He researched sources, notably in the National Archives in Sweden, and wrote many articles and books on the subject. He read old handwritten minutes of meetings and reports

from the Council of the Realm, unearthing many fascinating stories about the New Sweden adventure and the people involved, both high and low. He was a gracious host and guided many SCS visitors to Sweden to places related to the over 300 years of history of the colonial adventure, often enabling visitors to find their ancestral origins.

Hans was born in Västerås, about one hundred miles west of Stockholm, Sweden. His father worked for the County Administrative Board, and, although there was a war going on, neutral Sweden was a safe place for him and his sister. It included summer vacations in a family cottage by Lake Mälaren and a house keeper who meant a lot to Hans as he grew up. After he finished high school, it was time for compulsory military service. He turned out to be, like his father before him, an excellent marksman but that was the limit of his interest in competitive sports. But he was a strong young man, which he demonstrated by making a challenging journey on his own through Egypt and Iran to India.

He returned safely and came back to Uppsala University, where he studied law and also found his wife, Margaretha, known to friends and family as Meta, another law student. Like most Swedish law students, after University they went to work at several District Courts: Falun, Gävle, Stockholm and finally Eskilstuna. In 1979, Hans, Meta and their two children

moved back to Uppsala where the family settled down. They found a vacation home on a lake, not far from where Hans's grandmother was born. They didn't give up traveling but Uppsala was home.

Hans's work as a lawyer and legal specialist on housing led to a long civil service career, including senior positions at Swedish County Administrative Boards and Ministries. He served for a period as the Ministry of Industry's top civil servant, overseeing administrative operations. In preparation for Sweden's entry into the European Union, he gave an appreciated speech to the European Parliament on Swedish building legislation and how it was influenced by the nation's geography. Later on in life his interest in history took him to a senior position at The Swedish National Heritage Board. History brought him in contact with other history buffs working together in a wide network, and he participated in the production of several articles and books.

Hans was an accomplished genealogist and he successfully mapped his family roots back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He found that he was a descendant of Erik Björk, the priest who, together with two other priests, was sent to New Sweden by King Karl XI in 1697. Shortly afterward, Erik Björk married Christina Stalcop, granddaughter to the soldier Johan Stålkofta who was sent to New Sweden in 1641. Erik and Christina turned out to be Hans's 6<sup>th</sup> great grandparents. Searching through the SCS's extensive database, Hans was able to find records that pointed to two portraits of his ancestors, which were in the collections of the Nordic Museum in Stockholm. They were painted in 1712 by Gustavus Hesselius, one of the earliest – some would say the first – professional portrait painters in North America.

SCS was elated by the discovery of these portraits and decided to finance their renovations. The renovated portraits, now at the Delaware Historical Society, were unveiled in 2003 during the 365<sup>th</sup> celebration of the founding of New Sweden. Crown Princess Victoria was present, as were Hans and Meta. It was a great day for the two of them, and the following year Hans – as the first Swede ever – was made Fellow of the Swedish Colonial Society for his work.

In 2004, he wrote a book in English, published by the Society titled *The Faces of New Sweden*, with a Preface by Dr. Peter S. Craig and edited by Dr. Kim-Eric Williams. The book presents the genealogical background of Erik Björk and Christina Stalcop and a biography of the artist, Gustavus Hesselius.

For many years Hans and our current Swedish Counselor, Leif Lundquist, managed a Swedish website devoted to New

Sweden. When this project concluded, all of their research was published in 2021 in a book called *Nya Sverige i Nordamerika – En stormakts äventyr på 1600-talet*.

Hans was a person of integrity; he liked order and he was serious about his endeavors, but at the same time he had a happy boyish side as well. His sense of humor and curiosity made him open to new contacts and new undertakings. But mostly he was a tolerant, warm and empathic person with strong bonds to his family and his family history. He was very fond of his children and grandchildren; he was liked and now missed by many.

#### IN MEMORIAM

## *Kristina Antoniades*

1936-2025

By Kim-Eric Williams

Dr. Kristina Antoniades was the beloved Secretary of the Swedish Colonial Society for ten years, until shortly before her death on May 7, 2025. She was born in Finland on June 25, 1936, the daughter of a Swedish-Finn family. She earned her medical degree in Helsinki before moving to the United States with her physician husband, Dr. Johannes Antoniades. She practiced as an anatomic pathologist at Crozer-Chester Medical Center until her retirement.

She was active in both the American Swedish Historical Museum and the Swedish Colonial Society for many years. We honored her at the Julmiddag in 2023 with the prestigious "Fellows Award" for distinguished service. An expert in Scandinavian art, she contributed an excellent overview of Swedish art in Philadelphia in the Fall 2016 issue of the Swedish Colonial News. Following her retirement, she participated in an exacting class to train docents at the Barnes Foundation.

The couple had two children, Christos Antoniades and Helena Lehman.

At her Funeral Eucharist on May 28, 2025, held at the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion in Center City, Philadelphia, her daughter read a moving poem written by Tove Jansson, creator of the Moomin characters, in 1970, called "Moominvalley in November." It included these memorable words:

"The secret garden of autumn teaches us that endings are never truly final. They are the soil for new beginnings, the quiet turning of a page in the story of the world."

## Cynthia Forde in Print

One of our team of genealogists, Rev. Dr. Cynthia Forde, has written a new book (Sunday Offerings, Author House, 2025) worth reading for its valuable insights on “holy living,” a term she eloquently explains. She does this through her reflections on the story of Israel and the Christian narrative. One reviewer, the Rev. Dr. Javier Alanis, declares: “Her meditations and prayers offer us the love language of holy words to hear the call of transformation. Prepare to be transformed as you ponder the words that seduced the Prophets and gave us the Love of the Ages.”

## “Drive-By” New Sweden

On July 23, 2025, the New Jersey PBS affiliate, locally Channel 23, produced a special program on New Sweden as part of its regular “Drive-By History” series. The producers did an excellent job telling our story in a segment entitled “New Sweden, The Untold Chapter.” The host, Ken Magos, and SCS Historian, Kim-Eric Williams, provided an exciting 30-minute program. The segment also visited the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia, as well as our Swedish Farmstead in Tinicum, and viewers saw two additional New Jersey sites. To see this program, go to njpbs, Season 2025, Episode 4.

### Finnish Settlers’ Monument Project

*Donations Welcomed. More Info:*

<https://finlandiafoundation.org/donate/>

SPECIFY FUND (Finnish Settlers Monument 1938 Fund)

### CONSIDER BEQUEST

Please consider including The Swedish Colonial Society in your will or living trust by sharing this sample bequest language with your estate planning attorney: “I give and bequeath the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to The Swedish Colonial Society, 97 Wanamaker Avenue, Essington, PA 19029-1424 (Federal Tax ID 23-6251086).”

### FROM THE HISTORY GALLERY

**The Amandus Johnson Chairs.** (RIGHT) Our four mahogany design chairs, once owned by Amandus Johnson, the foremost New Sweden scholar, are 100 years old. They were in Johnson’s room at the Swedish Home for the Aged on Staten Island, New York, until it closed in 2008. They were then given to the Swedish Colonial Society. When they were refurbished and resorted in 2024, the original metal tag revealed that they had come from the famous Nordiska Kompaniet (NK) department store in Stockholm.

congregations in Wilmington/Christina, Delaware, and Philadelphia/Wicaco, Pennsylvania. We are grateful to Jill D’Andrea for acquiring this fascinating document from curator Leif Persson of the Swedish National Archives. It will now be accessible to scholars and researchers at our Archives.



**Springer’s 1693 Census.** This summer we received an electronic copy of the 1693 Census of the Swedes on the Delaware, hand-written by Carl C. Springer, listing all the Swedish families related to the

## NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

**THE SWEDISH COLONIAL SOCIETY** welcomes new members. No Swedish relative or ancestry is required – only an interest in colonial history.

### Contact our Registrar:

Theresa Brasko, *The Swedish Colonial Society*, 97 Wanamaker Avenue, Essington PA 19029-1424 or visit us online at: [www.ColonialSwedes.net](http://www.ColonialSwedes.net).

**The annual membership fee** for an individual is \$45. An annual family membership, which includes two adults and minor children, is \$52.50.

**Our Mission** is to preserve and promote the history, genealogy and culture of the New Sweden Colony in America

### Our Purposes are:

1. To collect, archive, and publish materials
2. To make colonial genealogical records broadly available
3. To acknowledge members’ proven descent from colonial forefathers
4. To encourage awareness and preservation of monuments at historic sites
5. To celebrate historic and cultural events and accomplishments relating to the Colonial Swedes and Finns in America



**Forefather Director, Beverly B. Walker**

## NEW FOREFATHER MEMBERS

Having been authenticated by the Forefather Program Director, **Kristofer Kirk Swanson**, of Chicago, Ill., has proven his descent from his Forefather, Olof Stille. The line continues through grandson, Jacob Stilley, and his wife, Rebecca Springer Stilley.

**Theresa Brasko - Registrar**

## NEW MEMBERSHIP NEW INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Judy Chelborg-Griffith  
Hershey PA 17033

David James Anderson  
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Tammy C. Davis  
Jacksonville, FL 32250

Linda Williams Haynes  
Anniston, AL 36207

Gina and Jack Kohn  
Williamstown, NJ 08094

## NEW LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Jerome Cloud  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

ABOVE IMAGE CREDIT (THE LAZARETTO): LAURA LUTHER

### SCHEDULING ARCHIVE VISITS

To make an appointment at the Archives, please email Kim-Eric Williams at [wkimeric@gmail.com](mailto:wkimeric@gmail.com).  
Regular Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. the first Saturday of each month. All research must take place at the Archives—no materials can be removed.



## SWEDISH COLONIAL SOCIETY PATRONS, OFFICERS, COUNCILLORS & HONORARY GOVERNORS

*As of April 17, 2025*

### SCS Patrons

**High Patron**  
His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf  
King of Sweden

**Deputy High Patron**  
Her Royal Highness  
Crown Princess Victoria

**Patron**  
His Excellency Urban C. Ahlin  
Ambassador of Sweden

**Associate Patron**  
Lauren Swartz  
Honorary Consul of Sweden

**Honorary Governors**  
John B. Tepe, Jr., Esq.  
Margaret Sooy (Sally) Bridwell, LNO  
Herbert R. Rambo, RNO  
The Rev. Dr. Kim-Eric Williams, LNO  
Ronald A. Hendrickson, Esq., RNO

**Governor**  
Joseph P. Mathews

**Deputy Governor**  
Beverly B. Walker

**Treasurer**  
To Be Appointed

**Registrar**  
Theresa Brasko

**Recording Secretary**  
Carol Ann Coates, RN

**Archivists**  
Ruth Nelson Rizzi  
The Rev. Dr. Kim-Eric  
Williams, LNO

**Chaplain**  
Rev. Michael Barnett

**Communications Director**  
Jill M. D'Andrea

**Farmstead Directors**  
Joseph P. Mathews  
John B. Tepe, Jr., Esq.

**Forefather Director & Events**  
Beverly B. Walker

**Genealogists**  
Ronald Beatty and  
The Rev. Dr. Cynthia Forde-Beatty

**Historian**  
The Rev. Dr. Kim-Eric  
Williams, LNO

**Journal Editor**  
Lawrence Backlund, PhD

**Membership Director**  
John B. Tepe, Jr., Esq.

**Tinicum Township Liaison**  
Wilhelm F. Moller  
**Webmaster**  
Candace Roberts

**Councillors**  
Kenneth Alexy  
Kristina Antoniadis, MD  
Britt M. Apell

Lawrence Backlund, Ph.D.  
The Rev. Michael Barnett

Ronald Beatty  
Jill M. D'Andrea  
Bill Eaton

The Rev. Dr. Cynthia  
Forde-Beatty

Amy Grant  
Ted Hallman, Ph.D.  
Leif Lundquist

William F. Moller  
Kenneth S. Peterson  
Sandra S. Pfaff, LNO

Ruth Nelson Rizzi  
Ingrid Rosenback  
Richard L. Steadham

Jeanette Woehr  
Richard Woehr



# THE SWEDISH COLONIAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

The Swedish Colonial Society  
The Lazaretto  
97 Wanamaker Avenue  
Essington PA 19029-1424  
[www.ColonialSwedes.net](http://www.ColonialSwedes.net)

## THE SWEDISH COLONIAL SOCIETY'S MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:  Single (\$45)  Family (\$52.50)  
 Organization (\$52.50)  Life Membership (\$600)

Applicant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



Mail application and check to:

**Registrar**  
**The Swedish Colonial Society**  
**The Lazaretto**  
**97 Wanamaker Avenue**  
**Essington, PA 19029**

Or mail application and make payment online using PayPal on our website [www.colonialswedes.org](http://www.colonialswedes.org)

Or make payment online and send the required information in the application form via email to [TerryBrasko@mindspring.com](mailto:TerryBrasko@mindspring.com)

Forefather Members are active members who can prove descent from a Swedish or Finnish colonist in the US prior to the Treaty of Paris, marking the end of the Revolutionary War in 1788. The one-time application fee for Forefather membership is \$60.00.

Is this the first time you are applying for membership?  Yes  No

Are you purchasing an Organization membership?  Yes  No



If yes, Organization name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Yes! This membership is a Gift.**

If this membership is a gift please indicate the gift recipient's contact information below. If this is NOT a gift membership, please leave the contact information below blank.

Applicant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_