

NUGGETS of HISTORY

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LEVIN FAUST INDUSTRIALIST R. 1130 2 AV.
by Robert J. Lindvall

Such is the one-line entry used in the 1936 Rockford City Directory to describe Levin Faust. This Second Avenue address was no more than one block from the Seventh Street neighborhood to which he first came 49 years earlier and the same neighborhood which contained his work, his home, his social club, and his church.

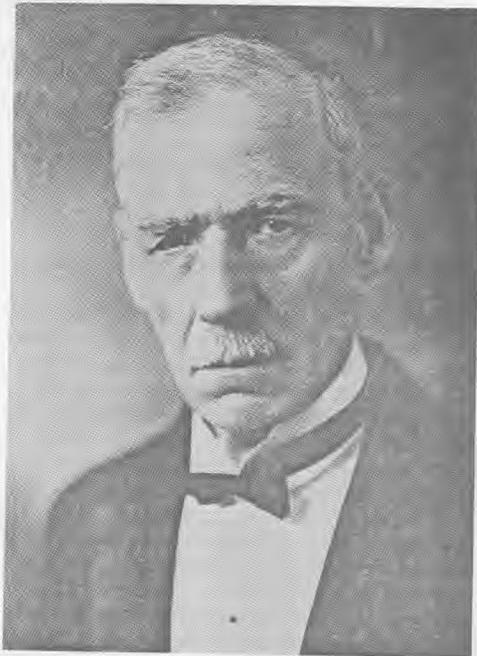
Levin Faust was born on February 16, 1863, in Falköping, Sweden. From 1883-1885 Faust worked as a mechanic at the Motala Machine Works in Motala, Sweden. The next two years were spent working in the Atlas Machine Works in Stockholm, Sweden, followed by his emigration to Rockford in 1887, at the age of 22. Tradition has it that the family name was Fast in Sweden, but in order to keep the same pronunciation in America, a "u" was added.

Machine shop work was Faust's line of employment in Rockford, and in June of 1887, shortly after his arrival, he began working for W. F. and John Barnes Company. While at Barnes, Faust, Frank W. Lindgren, J. Forsberg, and Gustave A. Dalin, all mechanics, began to work in their spare time on an engine and boiler which had been salvaged from an industrial fire. This start led to the formation of Mechanics Machine Company in 1890. Faust was chosen as the Secretary-Treasurer of the new venture and he would remain an officer with Mechanics until his death.

The beginning jobs for Mechanics were the ordinary job shop orders which the owners could drum up, but the inventive genius of the four mechanics allowed the firm to eventually specialize, first with Dalin's friction-driven drill press and later, in 1912, with the patented truck transmission which became the mainstay of the firm, along with the universal joint which Faust had patented. Mechanics Machine Company, later to be known as Mechanics Universal Joint, began in a small building on 13th Street and 18th Avenue. Moving in 1897 to the Water Power district (in the building which later was to become the Woodward Governor Company) for a short time, Mechanics soon moved back to 18th Avenue on the southeast side.

Another Rockford industry Faust was instrumental in establishing in Rockford was the fastener industry. Faust in 1904, with an invention which he had developed concerning the lock, started with several others the National Lock Company with \$5000 in capital. Besides the universal joint and the lock, Faust patented a door equalizer used by Skandia Furniture and a razor blade sharpener used by many Rockford firms in their manufacturing.

An attempt to list all the manufacturing concerns Levin Faust was involved in would be next to impossible, but a partial list can be made based upon a survey of the Rockford City Directories. In each of the firms Faust was either President, Vice President, Secretary, or Treasurer



Levin Faust

at some point in his fifty-one years in Rockford. The list would include: Mechanics Machine Company, Mechanics Foundry Company, National Engine Company, Rockford Tool Company, Cotta Gear, Rockford Drop Forge Company, Rockford Motor Truck, Eagle Claw Wrench Company, Rockford Gear Company, Rockford Drilling Machine Company, Elco Tool Corporation, Mechanics Tool Company, Elco Tool and Screw Company, Estwing Manufacturing Company, Rockford Steel Furniture Company, Karlson's Kloster Manufacturing Company, Rehnberg-Jacobson Manufacturing Company, National Lock Company and Sundstrand Tool Company.

The City Directories also provide information on the mobility of Faust in Rockford. The earlier addresses listed included: 305 Seventh, 406 S. 5th, 420 S. 5th, 222 7th, 818 Third Ave., and 610 6th. His longest sojourn was at 1127 5th Ave., where he was listed from about 1905-1924. From 1924-1936 the above-mentioned 1130 2nd Avenue was his listed address. In 1937 Faust was being cared for by his niece, Mrs. Bert Hassell, at 2000 Harlem Blvd., the home he was living in when he passed away.

Located also in his familiar Seventh Street area were his two main interests outside of work: Svea Soner Singing Society and Emmanuel Lutheran Church. Faust's attachment to work, club and church is shown by the following account in the 1933 MORNING STAR reporting his seventieth birthday activities:

"As is his custom, Mr. Faust spent yesterday afternoon



Levin Faust's Home at
1130 Second Avenue

in the club room of the Svea Soner Singing society. In the evening he was the guest at a dinner given in his honor at the Emmanuel Lutheran church parsonage by the Rev. and Mrs. E. C. Bloomquist.

"Mr. Faust walks every morning from his home at 1130 2nd Ave. to the Mechanics Universal Joint company on 18th Avenue where he has his office and yesterday was no exception. Usually he returns home on foot shortly after noon and then spends the afternoon at the Svea Soner club rooms reading, studying and in associating with fellow members of the singing society."

Other civic activities filled the life of this bachelor. Faust and others in 1909 organized the Rockford Park District with Faust being elected one of the first commissioners, a post he held until his death. 1911 saw Faust involved as an incorporator of the Swedish American Hospital Association. This group worked hard and faithfully to raise the money needed for the new hospital which was opened in 1918 at its Charles Street location. In 1930 during the depression Faust was the campaign chairman of the Rockford Community Fund which exceeded its goal by \$6000 when it raised \$201,695.

A final business venture for Faust (one which would carry his name) was the Midway Hotel Corporation. In 1929 Faust, Eric S. Ekstrom, and John Wester were the officers of the corporation which built the 2.7 million dollar Faust Hotel, with Faust as the majority investor. The hotel soon felt the results of the depression, culminating in financial disaster for the corporation and personally for Faust.

Not one to be maudlin about his fortunes, Faust became a spokesman for the nation's financial recovery, speaking out in favor of the social security plan and other movements for improvement of the workers' life. During the time of the National Recovery Act, Faust was the local enforcement board chairman in charge of investigation of violations of the President's re-employment agreements which preceded formal agreements. The seventieth birthday acc-



Svea Soner
Building

ount published in the thirties recalled Faust's work philosophy. Faust commented "Instead of charity we must give people work", this was the "divine right of every man to have work", and "without work a man's character deteriorates".

The last ambitious undertaking Faust attempted to complete was a work on "The History of the Swedes in Rockford" but death met Faust before it was finished. The work was to include 12 chapters, but only the first third was outlined. The work, which was a glowing tribute to Faust's good friend and business associate P. A. Peterson, was published in the Morning Star in 1938 after Faust's death.

Work and life came to an end for Levin Faust on November 18, 1937, after a long serious illness. The tribute from his pastor and other civic leaders came flowingly for this king of the Rockford Manufacturing industry, but the best tribute was a later memorial by his club. The Svea Soner Singing Society, in its 1940 diamond anniversary booklet, had the following tribute:

IN MEMORIAM
1863-1936

Levin Faust has a place in the history of the Svea Soner Singing Society as one of its most illustrious members, dearly loved and respected by the whole community. We as fellow club members knew him to be a kind, sympathetic and generous person, whose love for humanity and all that was beautiful in life with a natural inclination to seek companionship in song. He was particularly fond of male chorus singing, which made him a valued member of the second bass part in the Svea Soner Singing Society from 1892 to 1928. Even dates of important business meetings had to be changed, because nothing was ever permitted to interfere with his chorus rehearsals. We will ever have him in fond memory for his wise council, enthusiasm and material assistance, or ever forget his Christmas morning greetings of good will and fellowship among men. Possess-

ing a keen sense of humor, he had an inimitable way of reciting poems, telling stories and singing songs of old Sweden, though the serious side of life was never forgotten. Mr. Faust was a typification of a self-made man, who through self education rose to a high place among men, intellectually and industrially, being a vital force in organizing new industries for the city of Rockford which stand today as monuments to his business ability. His philosophy of life was deeply grounded in the Christian faith and his memory shall always be in the hearts of those who knew him.

MEMORIAL HALL
by Hazel M. Hyde
Research for Rockford Chapter DAR
(Written in 1976)

The National Register of Historic Places listed Memorial Hall, 211-215 North Main Street, Rockford, January 31, 1976. This designation, given during the Bicentennial Year of our Nation, has a practical aspect. This marking prevents a building from being torn down or significantly changed for a project in which federal funds are used. More importantly it makes Memorial Hall eligible for a restoration grant.

The book stamped in gold lettering "Memorial Hall Committee 1901-1903" is a strong and handsome rebound volume done in January of 1965. Winnebago County Memorial Association, which was organized and incorporated September 18, 1961, had as its purpose the preservation of the Memorial Hall of Rockford, Illinois.

The original minutes of the Building Committee of the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors, and a separate book of the War Dead from the Civil War and the Spanish-American War were preserved by Jeanette Mabel Edwards, who died in June 1963. She was a life-long member of the Daughters of the Union Army. Her father, David W. Evans, was a sergeant, Company L 8th Illinois Cavalry. The farm where the Evans family lived is included in part in Evans Subdivision by North Second Street and Harlem Road, Winnebago County, Illinois, according to Howard J. Nordvall, who was in 1965, Treasurer of Winnebago Memorial Association.

The book was presented by Charles Evans Edwards, deceased April 16, 1977, who in 1965 was the City Clerk of Loves Park, Illinois

Mrs. Edwards worked as secretary for the late J. B. Whitehead, who was secretary of the County Board Memorial Hall Committee. The minutes are in her handwriting but are signed by J. B. Whitehead.

Evans Edwards, son of Mrs. Edwards, found the books among his mother's possessions. The two volumes were turned over to Howard Nordvall to be the property of the Winnebago County Memorial Association. They have been kept in a safe in Memorial Hall.

Twenty-four committee meetings were held from December 12, 1901, to June 2, 1903. Minutes of all the meetings



Memorial Hall

are recorded in the book.

The late Herman G. Nelson wrote an article published in ROCKFORD MORNING STAR, December 17, 1964, which is a concise statement of the pertinent facts concerning Memorial Hall. Future researchers will find the Rockford newspapers preserved on microfilm and in the local history and genealogical records room of Rockford Public Library, in a well-catalogued series of folders called Rockfordiana.

Mrs. Robert J. Ahgren gave a mini-minute talk to Rockford Chapter DAR concerning the history of Memorial Hall, which combined a charming use of humor with sound facts. Unfortunately, her only copy was misplaced.

Mr. Clement Burns, custodian and curator of Memorial Hall for a period of time during the Bicentennial Year of 1976, is responsible for making available the original records of Memorial Hall for research

Bound into the volume is a handwritten copy of "The History of Memorial Hall" which appeared in a Winnebago County History issued November 1905 by S.J. Clarke Publishing Company. It states that as early as 1885 a resolution was introduced at a meeting of the board of supervisors providing an appropriation of \$25,000 for a Memorial Hall. It failed because of a question of the legality of the board appropriating money for the purpose. Henry Andrus obtained the passage of a bill drawn up by A.D. Early which permitted the board of supervisors to appropriate the money for a memorial after the voters of the county approved in a general election.

Petitions were circulated and voters approved in an election in November 1900. The vote was 6,021 "yes" and 2,757 "no". A committee was appointed soon after the election.

The low bid of \$35,324.00 was made in 1902 by W.H. Cook who was awarded the contract for building Memorial Hall. Bradley and Carpenter, architects, were responsible for drawing the plans and specifications. The last meeting of



Theodore Roosevelt in buggy at train depot

the County Board Memorial Hall Committee was held June 2, 1903, when the committee members visited the new Memorial Hall and accepted it. The structure is of Bedford stone.

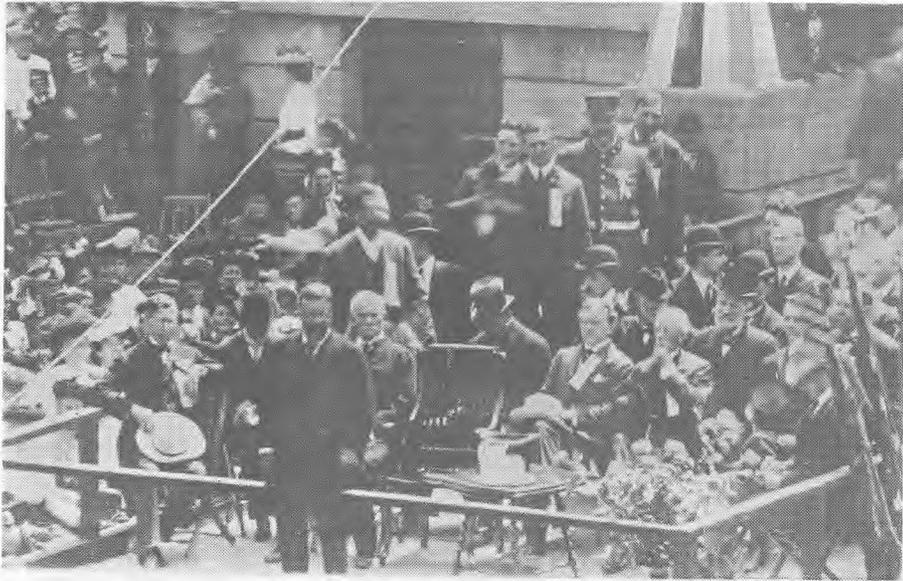
In the minute book it is recorded, August 9, 1902: "A committee from Nevius Post No. 1 G.A.R. consisting of Thomas G. Lawler, M.A. Norton, Geo. H. Manlove, and E.P. Thomas, then came into the committee meeting for the purpose of considering ways and means for securing a list of the soldiers furnished by Winnebago County in the wars of the country, also a list of the soldier dead buried in Winnebago County. After an informal discussion it was deemed wise to employ some one to prepare said lists, subject however to the approval of the board of supervisors. Mr. Geo. H. Manlove then offered to do this work at the rate of thirty-five cents per hour."

The rate per hour was later changed to thirty cents an hour. September 11, 1902, James (sic) G. Manlove submitted a bill for 151 hours time from August 11, 1902 to August 30, 1902, inclusive, in tabulating the soldiers names which also included sixty cents for postage. After a motion the chairman and secretary drew an order on the county clerk for \$45.90 payable to the order of James G. Manlove in payment for the work of compiling the soldiers list.

A committee of five including: J.B. Whitehead, Col. Thomas L. Lawler, Amasa Hutchins, Col. Arthur E. Fisher, and William Andrews, was named to draft a letter of invitation to President Theodore Roosevelt to be present at the dedication. This committee was authorized to outline the program for the day.

Walter Van Alstyne was chairman of the Memorial Hall Committee and J. B. Whitehead was secretary. Other members were A. J. Lovejay, D.B. Redington, and D.A. Nylander.

Rupert J. Stibb, 324 Vale Avenue, in an interview, March 27, 1977, recalls he went to see President Theodore Roosevelt. Mr. Stibb was born in 1893 and at his birthday, May 1977, age 84. He would have been about ten years of age when he saw the President. "It was an awful big thrill



I'll tell you that", Mr. Stibbs recalls. He remembers that the President stood by the entrance and made a speech when Memorial Hall was dedicated. Mr. Stibb was born and reared at 315 Kishwaukee Street, living there until he and Marjorie Flint were married. "There was no school and I felt good after a year of being cooped up. The school I attended was Adams School, later renamed Freeman School." The principal of Adams School at that time was Miss McPherson. When the pupils marched into the building in lines the principal stood at the head of the stairs with a ruler in her hand. "You had to behave yourself when I went to school", Mr. Stibb said. And referring back to seeing the President of the United States in Rockford he said, "It sure was a thrill for me." There were all-day exercises and crowds of people, about 20,000 visitors some people say. And remember, Rockford was much smaller in 1903 than it is now.

Mrs. John E. Dirksen (nee Gladys Beach), a long-time member of Rockford Chapter DAR, living at 128 Irving Avenue, has lived in the West End of Rockford all seventy-nine years of her life. She was born in 1898 on Quarry Street and was about five years of age when she saw Teddy Roosevelt in Rockford in 1903. There are several reasons why she remembered the dedication of Memorial Hall. Her parents were great supporters of Roosevelt and she saw his picture and heard the conversation.

Gladys saved a sack of popcorn which she intended to give to Teddy Roosevelt. She was very disappointed when she wasn't allowed to take it to him. Also she remembered the big crowd and she couldn't see over people's heads. She thought her father lifted her in his arms to get a look at the great man.

Another incident occurred which made a strong impression. Gladys had two sisters, Lillian who was thirteen years older and Jenny who was eleven years older and a brother Ray who was six and a half years older. Lillian would sometimes faint in a large crowd and she fainted that day causing some confusion for a few minutes.

Mrs. Dirksen said her recollections of other happenings were a bit hazy, but she felt sure there was a parade. She recalls, "We had a parade in those days for everything." Life was dull and any special occasion was exciting. "My parents thought President Teddy Roosevelt was wonderful and he was. Farmers all came to town for these events."

One other thing Mrs. Dirksen mentioned was that Marie Sheehe was a loyal supporter of Memorial Hall when it was about to be torn down and she with others was influential in saving the historic building.

Mr. Dorin Branstetter, who celebrated his 97th birthday in April 1977, was quoted in the ROCKFORD MORNING STAR, April 19, 1977, as saying, "I rode on the train from Winnebago to Freeport with Teddy Roosevelt. I heard he was going to be on the train, so I got on the train. Teddy was a wonderful man. Just like his picture." In a conversation with Mr. Branstetter, April 19, he assured me that he shook hands with President Theodore Roosevelt. Again he expressed his admiration for Teddy Roosevelt.

In the ROCKFORD MORNING STAR, March 25, 1977, it stated: "Researchers believe Memorial Hall is the first war memorial building in the nation dedicated to veterans of all wars, instead of a specific conflict.

The article points out that in 1903 when Roosevelt came to Rockford to dedicate the hall, it was a major undertaking for the president to travel so far.

The hall was formerly used as a center for many social events of Rockford including weddings, dances, parties, and even funerals. Beside veteran groups who use the hall, in recent years it has been the meeting place for Rockford Historical Society, Rockford Chapter DAR, which has been making a concentrated study of local historical places, held a catered dinner meeting in Memorial Hall, October 15 1977. Later for a period of time, use of the building was restricted because of some needed repairs. If major restoration is approved, federal funds can pay up to half of the cost.

CLARENCE DARROW, ARTHUR PERSON, AND ALICE BEALE PARSONS
by Robert J. Lindvall

141 REDS SEIZED HERE FACE DEPORTATION; such was the headline in one of Rockford's newspapers in January, 1920, which was to serve as the start of a drama which would last for the next four months in the city and involve several

ROCKFORD ARTS AND SCIENCE HISTORY IN THE MAKING

by Galey Day

(continued from last issue)

prominent city residents and bring to Rockford a nationally known attorney.

Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in January of 1920 orchestrated a series of "raids" on immigrants and aliens who were supposedly "Reds". Raids were conducted in Rockford under the direction of agent Ward Thompson, which led to the arrest of many aliens. Connected with these raids was the arrest of citizens of Rockford under the Illinois Sedition Law.

During the period after World War I Rockford had an active group of Socialists. In 1919 some of them formed a local group of the Communist Labor Party. The day after the raid on the aliens, Thompson arrested twelve citizens and took them to the office of William Johnson, the Winnebago County State's Attorney, who quizzed the twelve on their involvement in the Communist Labor Party and the party's platform. The twelve arrested were: Dr. Olaf Olson, the leader of the group who had his medical office in the Lundberg Building on Seventh Street; Mrs. Alice Beale Parsons, a resident of high bridge road, R.R. #3; Ed-Alderman of the sixth ward Oscar Wahlstrom, 921 Eighth Avenue Court, a molder at Rockford Malleable Iron Works; William Steinertorf, 1357 Rural Street, a laborer; Evan Tedosoff, 1712 Kishwaukee Street; Alfred Nelson, 822 Lincoln Avenue; Arthur Person, 1324 Third Avenue, a finisher at Illinois Cabinet Company; Arthur's wife, Mrs. Christine Person, 1324 Third Avenue; Peter Anderson; Karl Lind, 618 Seventh Street; Emil Peterson; and William Romanski, a cabinet maker at Rockford Peerless Furniture Company.

The answers Johnson received from his questioning varied from the well-thought-out debate on government and change of government by University of Chicago graduate Mrs. Parsons to the discussion with Wahlstrom who felt that any change called for in the Communist Labor Party's platform was to come about through the use of the ballot.

The terms used to describe this group which was arrested were "Parlor Socialists" or "socialists de-luxe" which led Thompson to comment in the newspapers that "the radicals of Mrs. Parsons' type are a greater menace to the government than a score of uneducated Russian aliens. I do not believe that she is sincere" said Mr. Thompson, "though her testimony in the state's attorney's office last night would convey that impression. She is a type of wealthy fanatic centering in parlor socialistic circles altogether too numerous in our colleges and universities."

January 16, 1920, the grand jury brought back indictments against the twelve. The charges were two in number against each of the twelve. First was "that each unlawfully did become a member of a certain society, to-wit: Communist labor party, the object of which said society is to advocate the reformation of the United States of America by violence and other unlawful means". The other indictment dealt with the selling and publishing of materials which advocated the same objective.

(continued in next issue)

"Perhaps we in Rockford would have been more satisfied with something realistic, less transcendent. Art, however, always has a way of pushing us past our conscious desires. This is a radical structure in a conservative city. It is the meeting of extremes. It is the union of opposites. We are to be humbled by the forethought of those who were able to 'see'."

Neil Thackaberry, the former head of the theater arts department at Rockford College, served as master of ceremonies at the dedication and expressed these thoughts: "This sculpture is the kind of food for the spirit which a community must have if it is to be more than a place to work, eat and sleep. It is the kind of civic endeavor that can change the quality of life."

Sculpture, particularly public sculpture, is especially capable of enriching a city's life because it, perhaps more than any of the other arts, is an international medium capable of affecting anyone who makes the effort to participate in the artist's statement. Placed here in the heart of our community, Symbol has the potential to become the gemstone of our downtown's rebirth. It will be a visible reminder of the contributions of all the arts to the vitality of life in our city centre; theatre, music, dance and fine arts have long made this area their headquarters and have been in the vanguard of the revitalization efforts. I believe that in the years ahead this sculpture will not merely become a tolerated part of the cityscape, but that it will be embraced as a manifestation of our community's energy and drive and spirit.

Alexander Liberman, whom Bill Day, the project engineer, describes as a "gentle gentleman", was truly delightful for sculpture committee members to work with. He is a true Renaissance man because not only is his sculpture found in important galleries such as the Tate in London, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and outside the new wing of the National Gallery in Washington, he paints, is a well-known photographer, has authored several books and is employed as the Editorial Director of Conte-Nast publication which produces Vogue, House and Garden and many other magazines. The day of the dedication a youngster asked Mr. Liberman how he felt when someone didn't like his work, and he replied, "Well, naturally I don't like it but it's better than having them not notice it!"

Barbara Rose, one of the foremost art historians, teachers, authors, and critics in the country, was so excited by the pictures of the sculpture under construction, that she made a quick trip to Rockford the day before the dedication so she could see it. She pronounced it his finest work and wants to put it on the cover of a book she is writing about Mr. Liberman. Time Magazine has called Liberman one of the 3 artists in the country best suited to do large

outdoor sculpture, and Rockford is fortunate to have one of his largest and finest quality pieces on display.

KARLSKOGA, SWEDEN, HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEEDS INFORMATION

The following letter has been received from the Karlskoga Local Historical Society, Karlskoga, Sweden:

In the local Historical Society of Karlskoga we are doing research on the emigration from our area to America. About 5000 people have emigrated from here to the other side of the Atlantic, and we are anxious to know more about them. Where did they settle, what led them just there, what did they do for a living over there, how did they adapt themselves to their new conditions, when did they pass away, where are descendants to be found? If you or your ancestors came from Karlskoga, please contact us.

To write the history of the emigration to America is the most important aim of our research. But we also hope our project will help to maintain the ties between kinsmen on both sides of the Atlantic. We will always be ready to give any assistance to people who come here to see their ancestors' home area.

Our address is: Hembygdsarkivet, Biblioteket, S-691 00 Karlskoga, Sweden.

Kjell Nordqvist,
Documentary leader of
Karlskoga Local Historical Society

COMING NEXT ISSUE: RELATIVES FROM SWEDEN By Robert H. Borden, Editor

In previous issues I have urged members to do research into their family backgrounds and write articles about their families which we could print in NUGGETS OF HISTORY.

The story of my own investigation of my ancestors and how it culminated in a visit by my second cousin, Kajsa Jonnson of Vänersborg, Sweden, and her niece, Cecilia Boström of Mörlunda, will be published in our next issue. It is hoped that it might cause others to do the same.

It is also hoped that any readers of Swedish origin whose ancestors came from the area around Karlskoga, in northeastern Värmland, will write to Mr. Kjell Nordqvist of that city. The historical society of Karlskoga has undertaken a very interesting and important project, and it is hoped that other cities of Europe might do likewise.

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