

In the Fall of 1868, Life Was Bright for This Iowa Family

Roberta Anderson Smith, who now lives in Kenosha, Wis., recounts, in her father's words, the story of his arrival in Iowa 100 years ago. Her father was B. Frank Anderson, who observed his 100th birthday on Feb. 29, 1960, at the Iowa Lutheran Home in Madrid, shortly before his death.

My parents came from Sweden with a large group of immigrants in a sailing vessel in 1854. Usually, the trip across the Atlantic took two months, but adverse winds carried their ship as far south as the Equator, so the ship was 13 weeks on the water. My mother told me she suffered unmercifully in their homespun, woolen clothing as the days grew hotter and hotter. Food became scarce, and they were allotted only one quart of water per person per day.

Finally, they reached New York, where they took the newly-established train to Chicago. There they hired a wagon and team to haul their belongings and the children too young to walk the 160 miles to their destination, Galesburg, Illinois. The men and women, however, walked the greater part of the way.

Near Swedona, father bought 60 acres of land on which stood a one-cabin. There I was born Feb. 29, 1860. Six years later, this farm was sold, and we moved to Geneseo. My parents, however, began to look longingly toward the new lands opening up in central Iowa, where relatives from Sweden had already settled.

In 1868 we were a family of 10. Andrew, Hannah, Monts and Ingrid had come from Sweden. Ingrid died in the cholera epidemic as the family passed through Chicago, and was buried there, no one knows where. Henry, Lottie, a second Ingrid, Alfred and I were born in Illinois. As Hannah and Monts had work in Geneseo, it was agreed that they should remain there.

Andrew, 20, however, was made captain of our expedition. He had a good sense of direction, and was excellent handling horses, so was needed on this hazardous journey.

Departure Plans

Our preparations began long before our actual departure. Cheeses were made, and dozens of the thin circles of "knacka brod" the rye hardtack which had nourished the immigrants on their long sea voyage were baked, dried and stored in trunks. Molasses was made from our sugar cane. Corn was ground for mush and bread. Pork from the winter's slaughter was put down in brine to carry with us. Mother put salt and water on the stove to boil, then, when the solution held an egg, it was strong enough to preserve the pork for a year.

Father bought a second lumber wagon and a team of horses. These two, Frank and Ned, with our own grays, Tom and Pete, would pull the two wagons which father and Andrew made into prairie schooners. They fitted each wagon box with wooden hoops on which they spread canvas to protect our belongings and ourselves from the weather. They made steps at the front to reach the driver's seat, and another set at the back, for easy access to the "living quarters."

Cross Into Iowa On Steam Ferry

Early in April, we loaded our tools, the farm implements we could carry, trunks, stove and other belongings into our two schooners, big goodbye to our neighbors and started West.

The first day we crossed the Mississippi at Davenport on a steam ferry. At last we were in Iowa. That night we were very tired from excitement and travel.



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Before dark we crawled into the piles of straw in the schooners, which were to be our beds for the journey. But we could not sleep.

The horses tied to the back of the wagons disturbed us. In their restlessness in a strange setting, they sneezed and snorted before they lay down for the night.

Finally, horses, men, women and children were all asleep. The next day we ferried

across the Cedar river Rochester, then look the stagecoach route to Iowa City. Along the way were many log cabins, but also some fine frame and brick houses, attesting to the fact that eastern Iowa had been settled a good number of years before.

Iowa City was a thriving town with a railroad terminus and a stagecoach stop. The Old Stone Capitol on the banks of the Iowa river, we learned, was now a part of a university, and dominated the city square. Father stocked up on some necessities before we left, for he had heard that settlers and towns would be scarce from there on.

We crossed the river on a wooden bridge and found ourselves in a long line of schooners headed west. Two Swedish families, the Stenfeldts and Lindgrens, attached themselves to us. We got along fine with the Stenfeldts, but Lindgren was a troublemaker.

He had the best team of horses but got stuck more often than any of the other drivers.

Somewhere near what is now Story City, he drove into a pond at a place which looked better to him than the place Andrew had chosen to cross. Lindgren's team mired down so all hands had to help pull them out. Then to rescue the wagon, we hitched a long chain to the rear axle. Lindgren was told to hold on to the tongue so the wagon wouldn't tip, and we all pulled.

However, he let go of the tongue and the wagon went over in the water and mud. What a mess we had! It took three hours to again get on our way after helping our fellow traveler.

Andrew told Lindgren that the next time he didn't mind him he would thrash him, so Lindgren became obedient to him after' that.

We always had to hitch on a "lead team" when crossing bad places, so that when the wagon was in the mud, the 'lead team" was usually on firmer ground. Often, a horse would mire down, and then the men would have to wade into the water and help him up. Many times, the men were soaked through all day, but they didn't mind it. Their minds were on getting to their new homes farther West.

**Swollen River
No Bridge or Ferry**

After two weeks we reached the Des Moines river near Swede Bend, now Stratford. We had driven and walked through snow, rain, mud and more rain

so were not surprised to see river so swollen we could not cross it. There was no bridge or ferry, but West Dayton lay jus directly across.

We stayed in our wagons there for two weeks waiting for the water to go down.

Mother cooked as best she could on bonfires made from wet wood which would not burn easily, and we children became very restless sitting under canvas day after day. Finally, father and Andrew decided it ford be safe to ford the river. Andrew swam our best horse, rom, across, carrying a long rope tied to the wagon box.

Then, he hitched Tom to the rope and pulled the wagon box across like a boat. After that he tied the rope to the wagon gears and pulled that across. It took us half a day to get everything and ourselves across that river, but no one drowned in the swollen stream.

Safely across the river, we headed for Dayton, but on the way we found old neighbors from Illinois, the Stenstroms. It still rained and rained, and there was no house to be found, so we stayed in our schooners near these friends for 10 days. Mother baked some breads in Mrs. Stenstrom's oven, and oh! how good it tasted!

We children scrounged for firewood, and Henry and hunt I hunted duck and prairie chicken eggs. We caught some fish in nearby Lost Grove Lake, and dug fresh dandelion greens, welcome as a fresh vegetable. Meanwhile, father had gone on to Dayton. and finally returned with the news that he had rented a one-room log cabin just below Jim Richey Hill.

Early in June, the Stenfeldts and we moved into the little cabin. There, on June 12, sister Emma, was born. Mrs. Stenfeldt's took care of her and my mother. A month later. Mrs. Stenfeldt gave birth to a little girl. and my mother took care them. No doctor was available for either of the births.

In September. father took me with him on a 40-mile trip south to Swede Point where some relatives from Sweden had settled. It was a joyful reunion for them. As father liked the lay of the land there better than that around Dayton, he rented a one room log cabin which had been built by one of the first settlers.

In 1846, Mrs. Anna Dalander had led a party of 42 persons from Sweden and founded Swede Point, now called Madrid.

Upon our return to Dayton, we loaded our possessions into the schooners for our last move. As I knew the way, father sent Henry, who was 12, and me ahead, leading a horse, a cow and a calf.

By nightfall, the family had not caught up with us so we asked a farmer if we could sleep in his house.

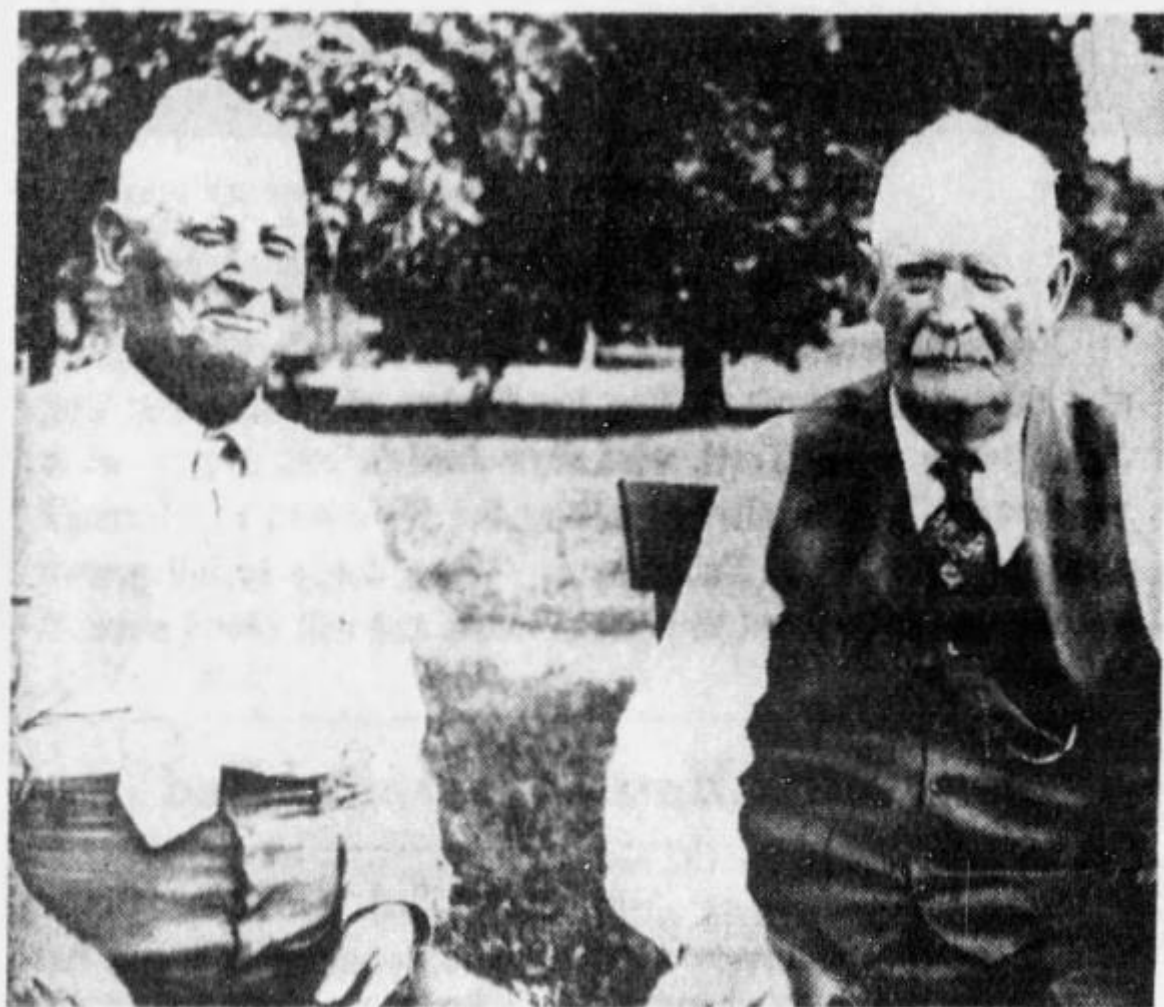
His wife let us sleep on the floor of the porch. The next day my father paid the woman 25 cents, in paper money, for the accommodation.

Our family lived very happily in that log cabin for two years, and my mother took in boarders. Father and Andrew found work while father looked around for another farm to buy.

Henry and I did odd jobs for Mrs. John Dalander, and others needing help. We younger children attended the Elk Rapids school nearby the few months it was in session.

Now, we had a home, a school, Swedish neighbors, a Lutheran church and prospects of buying a farm of our own.

Life was very bright in the new world for our family that fall of 1868.



B. Frank Anderson (left) with his brother Henry. Both now are dead.