

A Village Farmers View of Swedish History

Scandinavia history has been sorely neglected by researchers and historians in general. Sad enough, the few sources the Historians derive their understandings from The Cambridge Modern History or from History of Sweden by Svanstrom and Palmsierna, is all too short ...

Ingvar Andersson A History of Sweden 1955

The late Professor **Eli Heckscher** stated that:

" A small country had no right to demand its history be studied merely because it happened."

Being a half breed Swede, I am grateful and indebted to those who did record and write about Swedish History, for most of my family came from Sweden or were strongly influenced by these small farm villages of Swedish country folk !

For as you will discover the history of Sweden is " unusual and in some ways unique". Interestingly many developments seem behind western Europe. Settlement of Sweden was later 'on'. Christianity was slow in being accepted and established in Sweden. Yet the great devastating clashes between regnum [the kingdom: kings] and sacerdotium [the church: priests] were avoided. Unlike the mediaeval history of the West.

Sweden was also late, by Western standards, in becoming an unified country. Not until the mid-thirteenth century was there a true 'capital', later on in the mid-fourteenth century, a common law of the land was established and finally, Sweden became a political force by the mid 1700s.

And slower still was the drawn out emergence from the relatively primitive economic conditions of Sweden. Even late into the 16th century Sweden was content being a passive trader with foreign merchants.

The main economy was based on bartering and local trade, as found in France in the year 1000. Cash was used for a short term, but after fifty years a partial reversion was adopted back to the 'old ways'. Not until 1892 and 1901 were the last vicissitudes of the 'old-ways' replaced. Guilds too, finally gave way to the 'free-man' in the late 18th century.

Swedish history is found in the Swedish Peasants.

The central figure whose relationship with the natural environment and the nation's welfare depended upon was the Swedish village farmers.

This urban society of village farmers were predominately a society of large families found in a small-town atmosphere, rural; a fundamental constituent tradition of Swedish life.

The peasant Farmers ardently kept their local farm-village social and political freedoms. For at the end of the middle-ages the village-farmers were the largest class of free peasants even more so than Western Europe.

These village farmers also were more self-reliant individuals than any western European people. These farmers owned more land and were strong politically enough to play significant roles in the constitutional struggles of their day despite the Monarchy, Nobles and the Clergy.

Sweden never did endure a feudal system, for the royalty always kept their minds-eye aware of the village-farmer's unified power. For the village-farmers had a long tradition of respect for personal and political freedoms and for the rule of law. The local village governments had their councils in the democracy of the Ting. Eventually the Ting would prove be a stabilizing force against a power hungry monarchy.

Early Sweden

The best known arrival in to Sweden - Scandia - was the tribe[s] that settled in at Limhamn just west of Malmö and in the south-west corner of Skalderviken.

These first settlements were chaotic in nature, always a severe struggle for daily existence.

Eventually, these tribal-villagers learned about useful grains and how to take care of livestock, being mainly cattle and pigs. Due to a stable food supply and produce these traveling tribes settled down into stationary villages. This new culture was a great change in the conditions of living, which developed about 3000 B.C.

Agriculture was first introduced in areas that were originally Danish. Skåne, on the West coast, show signs of being some of the oldest sites. Later on, towns were founded in Västergötland, eventually spreading all over the land of Sweden.

Other arrivals were possibly from central Europe, people of an equestrian race having different ways of living. Skåne was the leading area of the time due the rich resources of flint.

Bronze Age [tools of copper alloys] helped the people to become skillful in casting weapons, ornaments and useful tools. [1500 - 500B.C.]

The Iron age was the next advancement in history of Sweden. Using animals and newer tools and stronger ploughs, agriculture was firmly established in the farm-villager's life.

500 - 600 A.D. saw Sweden grow richer from the plundering of the falling Roman Empire. About 500 A.D. also; Uppland, in Malaren region, became the new center of Sweden. This region turned into productive pastures, and close to the areas of wild animals used for skins, which was the most important export at this time.

In the sixth century Sweden had close contacts with the other countries due to the highly desired furs and precious metals.

The biggest tribes of the time were the Svear and Gotlanders.

Place-names like: Odensvi, Gudhem, Ulltuna and Stigtomta whose suffixes denotes home or property were used. This early procedure of using place-names would last for thousand of years, which was common in making up the 'Village naming'. This tradition of place naming would also help consolidate the families of the farming communities.

Swedish Vikings [800-1050]

During this Viking Era, the Scandinavia gradually separated: Norway, Denmark and Sweden into their provincial areas.

Sometimes the Swedish Vikings would join with the Danish and Norwegian Vikings on raids to the North Sea and Atlantic. The more adventurous Swedish Vikings though preferred to follow their own East expansions and existing trade relations. The increase in local power was due to consolidation of chieftains and the development of more effective local organizations.

Trading and plundering helped gather the main commodity: that of slaves. Furs, slaves, and many other commodities could be traded for silver, spices, and silk of the East.

The Slavic settlements of Russia were placed under control by the laws of the Rus [red hair Swedes], establishing order as the big towns were placed under the control of powerful representatives. [A.D. 750-860].

The Swedish Viking reached deep into the south counties and left a lasting impression. For instance, Ibn Fadhlán Arab writer: [paraphrased]

"I saw the 'Russians' [the Swedes] when they landed and encamped along the Volga. I never saw statelier men. Tall as palm trees, these men are ruddy-cheeked, with red hair. They carry a broad sword."

Also noted; 'they are brave and valiant men, never giving way to an enemy; which they plunder, vanquish and then take for slaves. These people are exceptionally un-clean in their habits.

Many conquered towns were key positions for trade and travel. The Viking boats were built to be easily moved over land from rivers to lakes, to inland water ways.

A Swedish dynasty was established and flourished in Hedeby of Denmark, the first half of the tenth century. But, due to the Danish Kingdom forming, the Hedeby colony ended in about the 930's.

The Danish and Norwegian chieftains would systematically plunder England and some Swedish Vikings took part in these western exploits. Swedish Vikings were among the first to colonize Iceland.

Eventually, over 100-200 years, the ties with the East became weaker. Even though a raid was made on the East about 1040, the Swedes lost most of their men. Russia had changed, for the smaller Swedish colonies gradually melted in with the large Russian population. Wealth acquired by the Viking raids and trades though did help to establish good roads, which supported improvements in agriculture causing the village communities to develop and become more stabilized.

In about the 11th century the country eventually became incorporated into a kingdom. The first Swedish monarch, whom we substantially know about, was King Olof Skotkonung, thanks to the Icelandic sagas. [995-1060]

Religion

Sweden was a pagan country. Even though their gods have unique names and unusual lives, they had some fundamental truths. The rite and cults of sun, thunder and fertility gods were fixed forms with an incipient mythology. Nordic god's names were affixed to the day of the week; belief in various elemental spirits and myths remained long in the minds of the Swedes.

Christianity was first brought to Sweden in 829 by the Frankish monk: Ansgar of the Carolingian Empire.

[Frankish dynasty of French, Germanic, Italian rulers; 751-987]

Ansgar hoped to convert the Swedes and comfort the slaves captured by the Vikings, many who were Christians. Ansgar and his companion eventually, after being plundered themselves, finally meet with King Bjorn of Birka. The people of Birka gladly received their religious message and made a donation of land and built a church, which lasted until 831.

The Uppsala temple was situated around Lake Malaren. This Temple of Uppsala was used by many Swedish chieftains, which helped to form the core of the pagan resistance. Paganism lasted the longest in Sweden for various reasons, even though King Olof Skotkonung became a Christian. Denmark, Russia and France sent many missionaries to Sweden. But, it was the Hamburg mission that did the most to organize Christian centers in Skara, Vastergotland and in Sigtuna [close to the Temple Uppsala].

Many more years would pass by bearing no fruit of conversion until the early 1100's. Sweden would gradually come under the new archbishop of Lund of Denmark, becoming a member of the Church of Rome.

Sweden developed and began to assume a newer position in the old world.

Family Life [1050]

Family feuds were many, violence and rage were among all levels of the social structure.

Pagan law dictated their lives; it was an honor to defend one's self or family, while murder was to be condemned.

The Ting [local assemblies] was central to the village-farmers.

This assembly of freemen, those who were allowed to bear arms, were under the direction of lagman [lawyers].

Laws were created as required by the harad [hundred]; a small district. Their code of conduct was simple; contempt of ostentation, moderation in all things except for their numerous wives, be hospitable and keep sacred the laws by which they were governed. Family loyalty was fierce and was revealed in the legal order of honor and of property. All religious matters were ascribed to the family.

Farming peasants became more common with names ending in: torp, croft, sater shieling and hult copse. Hundreds of churches were built. Farming communities became the economic unit and all agriculture operations were carried out in common.

The village farmer drew up laws to govern the life of farming as a community.

The earliest known code of laws was the Law of Vastergotland [~1210]. These provincial codes reveal the desire to live as required by the new Christian doctrine; 'to live in peace'.

A major point of the Law of Vastergotland was that the village-farmers determined who was to rule. "The Swedes may take a King, but may also depose him."

The King was not wholly known by all so the king had to visit the many regions of the village farmers. The Church of Rome was far from the daily life of the village farmer, but the local parishes and their ringing bells, were a real part of their lives.

The middle of the 13th century saw these loosely village farmers become a State with traditions, language and culture with a strong sense of unity.

The dynasty of the Folkungs Kings of Sweden. [1250]

The first king of this dynasty was King Valdemar until 1266, when he was overthrown by his younger brother the Duke Magnus Ladulas. King Magnus Ladulas ruled until 1290.

The government increased in power and in conjunction the Church also became more powerful, especially in the lives of the village-farmers. The Bishops were powerful lords having large armed retinues [attendants].

The taxation system was increased to meet the needs of the stronger centralized government. Laws were enacted to protect the king's peace. The Fralse [untaxed-nobles] who were mounted knights, grew into a powerful factor in the new government.

Then came the mighty mining districts, which had many German workers who received a 'recognized civil status'. Merchants and artisans grew in power and prestige. Stockholm, the city of the Royal Castle and many churches, became the capital of the kingdom.

Trade with the European markets flourished with butter, skins and furs, silver iron and copper as main exports. Coastal towns flourished by the increase in foreign trade. The Nobles built homes along the coast lines. New laws were passed and old laws were revised with slavery being abolished by 1335.

1290 Torgils Kuntsson leader of the Council was in opposition with the Church.

A short while later the Church noble men which over threw Torgils Kuntsson had him imprisoned and executed as an enemy of the Church. Many more intrigues followed that nearly split Sweden in half. But in December of 1317 the two leading feuding parties of Duke Eric and Duke Valdemar meet with King Birger, both parties were claiming separate halves of Sweden. The Dukes were invited by King Birger to the castle at Nykoping Sodermanland. After an honor banquet, the two Dukes were imprisoned, due to severe treatment, they eventually died. This treachery indirectly saved the Kingdom of Sweden from being divided up into small feudal parcels.

King Birger tried to conquer all of Sweden, but was stopped by the Swedish Nobility. King Birger died while in exile in Denmark.

Other claims on Sweden were avoided and in 1350 a landslag [law of the land] was adopted which was to apply across the whole of Sweden.

In addition, the Black Death scourged hit Sweden in 1348 - 1350 and again in 1710-1711 in Stockholm; 1/3 of the population would die from the 'plague'.

Saint Birgitta [1300-1373]

Saint Birgitta [a widow] formed several religious houses in Sweden and many in Europe. Saint Birgitta spent the later years of her life to establish and follow the divinely inspired work she received from Jesus Christ. He revealed Himself to Birgitta in order to inform her of the rules for the Order, which she was to found.

Saint Birgitta was eventually, after working and waiting for 20 years, to received Papal sanction for her Order, which would be part of the Augustinian Order, in the year of 1367 from Pope Urban V. In the Meantime work on the Vadstena Convent had been in progress as she was accomplishing her work in Rome. After finally visiting Jerusalem, she died in Rome and was buried, after being away for 25 years, in Vadstena, Sweden.

In 1391 Saint Birgitta would receive canonization after years of efforts by

Queen Margaret of Denmark and by the Nobles of Sweden.

The Great Union of Kalmar [1363-1434]

The Folkungs were overthrown by Albert of Mecklenburg and his German troops. He was also able to seize Skane from Denmark. German exploitation of the rest of Sweden was kept in restraint by the Swedish Council headed by Bo Jonsson Grip. But after Bo Jonsson Grip's death, in 1386, the threatening King Albert of Mecklenburg had

plans for revolutionary changes. Many Nobles and the country wanted to maintain the freedoms of the constitution.

In 1388 the Swedish Lords requested help from Queen Margaret of Denmark and Norway [she was the widow of King Hakon of Norway]. Queen Margaret and her troops defeated King Albert's army at Asle of Vastergotland in 1389. This victory recovered many lost castles and fiefdoms; and Sweden acclaimed their legal ruler.

Loyal Germans [Vitalians] in Stockholm massacred many fellow Swedish citizens [Kapplinge Murders] in the summer of 1392.

The Baltic Sea was made unsafe for navigation, but eventually Queen Margaret did achieve control over Stockholm in 1398 and Gotland in 1408. Bo Jonsson Grip's son Knut Bosson was in an independent position in Finland until 1399.

This new situation, of military union, left all three Scandinavian countries having the same Monarchy, Queen Margaret. The Scandinavian races were closely related to each other and had the same common enemy and struggles against German influences. Also some of the natural trade routes passed through coastal provinces belonging to Denmark. So if Queen Margaret were to establish her dynasty, she would need to find ways to meld these three countries together. Queen Margaret's only son Olof had died and the only possible heir was her great-nephew Eric of Pomerania. Eric was already heir to the Norwegian throne by 1388 and would be sustained by Sweden and Denmark eight years later. Queen Margaret's nephew, after many noble concession at the assembly of Nykoping in 1396, would be crowned King of the Scandinavian in the summer of 1397 in Kalmar, Sweden.

Queen Margaret ruled with great dignity and consideration of the peasants, those who died in the wars, she supported the Church, despite their distrust of her, and was able to create an efficient government. Queen Margaret unfortunately died in 1412 leaving her nephew as the sole monarch. Eric of Pomerania was far less popular, lacked charm and tact. With his sister, Philippa, sister of King Henry the Fifth of England, tried to keep political control over the Swedish Nobles. Since there were many more Danes and Germans who held high positions as fiefs and royal bailiffs the Swedes became less politically effective. The Churchmen were overshadowed by King Eric as he would interfere with the workings of the local churches.

Eventually through many internal strivings King Eric was over ridden and King Christopher enthroned. King Christopher ruled in peace until 1448 when he died.

New King 1448-1471

There were many men who could become king of Sweden, Eric of Pomerania, two brothers of the Oxenstierna family: Bengt and Nils Jonsson, which were powerful Uppland Regents, had proposed Bengt's son: Jons Bengtsson and Karl Knutsson.

Jons Bengtsson was elected Archbishop of Uppsala, and the populace favored Karl Knutsson, so Karl Knutsson was selected to be the next Swedish King. Karl ruled with unfavorable policies like King Eric and he was soon to be opposed by the church.

In 1457 the lords under Jons Bengtsson Archbishop of Uppsala and supported by the peasantry revolted against Karl Knutsson. This revolt failed, causing Jons Bengtsson Archbishop of Uppsala to flee to Danzig.

The 1460's saw Sweden embroiled in more noble disputations causing more chaos and confusion.

1464 Bishop Kettle Karlsson of Vasa and the surrounding peasants amazingly defeated the trained soldiers of King Christians at the Battle of Haraker in Vastmanland.

Karl Knutsson consolidated his monarchy through heavy taxes, choosing nobility from among his dearest friends, by his forceful propaganda and his heavy handed measures against the church. By 1466 the two most powerful houses, Erik Axelsson and that of Jons Bengtsson, separated. King Knutsson pressed for a strong national monarchy and his many wars against the Danish Kingdom fostered a strong anti-Danish feeling among the Swedish populace.

But again Sweden would take another turn. After the death of King Knutsson, the Oxenstiernas and their strong allies' were found in conflict with the Axelsson's lords and kinfolk.

King Knutsson had appointed Sten Sture to be executer of his will. Sten failed to be a faithful executer and ended up being in possession of many important castle-fiefs, enabling him to become a Regent.

The king of Denmark, King Christian saw the death of King Knutsson as a chance to regain his reign over Sweden. In the summer of 1471 the Danish Navy was anchored of Stockholm. Negotiations between the warring parties ended in an unstable truce.

King Christian contended for his 'right' to be the King of Sweden while loyal Swedish Nobles gathered up a stronger force. This was a precarious situation, in that many Swedes were to found on both sides of the issue, which lead to the Battle of Brunkeberg. A long bitter battle ensued, but eventually the highly coordinated Stures forces over came the divided Danish forces. Sten Sture then proceeded to take over the various castles of his domestic enemies.

Despite all of the local wars and disputations, the church became the largest land owner. The Bishops built castles, with the churches owning homesteads throughout the country, which were carefully and effectively governed.

The village farmers lived by handicrafts and local trading that were strictly regulated. Main surplus was that of butter, being about one-quarter of their trade. Their right to self governance was allowed and they kept meticulous court records. The village traditions were a stabilizing force in their unity, but retarded development of new technologies.

In contrast, the value of the farm products value declined, the soil was becoming weaker, taxes were oppressive and the many wars caused a shortage of labor - giving rise to forced labor among the landless villagers, while the Nobles and the Church gained more homesteads.

The Stures 1470- 1515

October 1471 the national Council revised municipal laws so that only native Swedish men were allowed to sit on local councils. Germans were completely excluded in contrast to being half as was allowed before. Yet the influence of German and Danish culture would still dominate the Swedish culture. The Swedish language would be changed from the early Latin and Greek words, were being influenced by phrases of Danish and Low German. The Pope gave permission to establish a University in Uppsala.

Shortly after King Christian's death the Scandinavians kingdoms looked forward to re-unification. The Halmstad Recess of 1483 was to provide for a Union constitution with far reaching guarantees. Swedes of Kalmar accepted the Halmstad Recess, but Sten Sture was seeking to establish a strong central government. The Russians had a different desire, that of taking over and annexing Novgorod, Sweden's main stronghold in Russia.

In the 1490's, King Hans of Denmark had alliances with Ivan III of Russia against Sweden. The Russians invaded Sweden in 1495 attacking Viborg. The commander of Viborg, Knut Posse, held out against the Russians and finally, after a long bitter battle, defeated the enemy.

With deceit and treachery, King Svante Nilsson became King of Sweden after the death of King Sten Sture. King Nilsson faced hard times, for Sweden was at constant war with Denmark. Sweden would find a needed source of wealth - silver - at Sala. Struggles with Denmark continued until King Svante's death in 1512.

By the appointment of Erik Trolle as Regent, a temporary truce with Denmark was established, since he had control of a large portions of Danish -controlled Scanian provinces. The son of Sten Sture, Sten Sture the younger seized the throne by political force.

Archbishop Gustav Trolle was elected to succeed Archbishop Jakob Ulfsson who had resigned his office. Returning to Sweden in 1515, Archbishop Gustav Trolle discovered that King Sture II was attempting to take the castle and fief of Staket. Staket was a strategic church land near by Lake Malaren, which was long held by the archbishops.

The Castle Staket was surrounded and besieged. This attack on the castle Staket ignited a civil war. The King took his cause to the Riksdag [Parliament] and an assembly was held in Arboga in 1517. The council of Arboga consisted of nobles, merchant, mine-owners and other commoners, sided with the King, which were summarily excommunicated by Archbishop Gustav Trolle.

The Council's verdict was that the castle Staket 'would be razed to the ground and that Archbishop Gustav Trolle was never again be acknowledged as Sweden's Archbishop'.

The siege, against the castle Staket, continued. The sacred relics were demolished, church property was taken, the Archbishop was imprisoned and his supporters were beheaded or broken on the wheel.

The Danish king took advantage of this situation by attacking Sweden. The battle outside of Stockholm was won by the Swedes, Archbishop Gustav Trolle was escorted to the Riksdag and all local bishops were in attendance at the capital for his trial.

King Christian attacked Sweden in 1518 and was repulsed. King Christian made a greater preparation to conquer Sweden. By establishing help from the Fuggers of Augsburg, which controlled most of Europe's copper mines, were interested in Sweden's copper mines. More money came from the indulgences sold to the Swede's and the Pope put Sweden under an interdict for the maltreatment of Archbishop Gustav Trolle.

So in 1520 King Christian acted as the executor of the interdict with help from mercenaries of Germany, France and Scotland.

The Swedish army lost and King Sture II died on a journey to Stockholm.

The church under the adamant requests of Archbishop Gustav Trolle wanted the church heretics to be punished. So King Christian who now reigned over Sweden had to determine the heretic's punishment. So according to execution records eighty-two were put to death, which included several bishops; their property was confiscated.

All the dead heretics bodies were dug up and burnt at the stake, for heresy.

King Christian took strong measures to legally suppress the belligerent peasants. More trials and executions took place Christmas and on New Year's, in Denmark.

King Gustav Eriksson Vasa 1523-1538

Christina Gyllenstierna was the widow of Sten Sture and she was imprisoned with her sons in Denmark. All of Christina's supporters and nobles were either dead or had fled to safer ground. The only nearest adult relative was her sister's son Gustav.

Gustav Eriksson Vasa, escaping the imprisonment of King Christian in 1519-1520, fled to Sweden, on his way to Dalarna. Gustav Eriksson Vasa would become one of Sweden's national heroes. [p.117]

The men of Dalarna appointed Gustav to be their commander. Soon the men of the Kopparberg mining district joined with Gustav and the rising was in full bloom.

Gustav gained the additional support of North central Sweden and the Sture privateers who were plundering the Danes. 1521 Stockholm was reached; the men of Nils Olofsson in Varmland and of Smalandres had also joined in. Bishop Hans Brask of Linkoping followed and soon thereafter Gustav was elected Regent of Sweden.

1523 King Christian was forced out and was denounced by the new Swedish Regent Gustav Eriksson Vasa, who unified Sweden under a strong ruler.

In 1523 a Riksdag met in Strangnas at Whitsuntide. Here the delegates elected Gustav Eriksson Vasa to be King of Sweden.

Alvsborg had been evacuated just before the election of King Vasa and in the summer Stockholm was freed and Kalmar castle was captured by Gustav Eriksson Vasa's German nobleman Berend von Melen.

King Vasa's first decade of rule was filled with much intrigue and disagreements. A major quarrel with his commander Berend von Melen retired to Germany and many of his soldiers he had left behind were executed.

By deceit, King Gustav Eriksson Vasa restored order in Dalarna, by capturing two dissidents; Peder Sunnanvader and Master Knut, which he executed. Despite the internal complaints of the local farmers of the lack of salt and rising conspiracies, King Vasa allowed the new Lutheranism to be espoused, established a new system of governmental centralization and the provisioning of loyal troops.

The Catholic Church at this time had about 22 per cent of the Swedish homesteads. Tax-farmers held 53 per cent while the nobles held only 6 percent. Tax farmers [Skattebonder] owned their farms and paid a public tax to the Crown. Crown Farmers [Kronobonder] rented their farms from the crown and did not own their farms.

The King Gustav Eriksson Vasa upset the bishops and the monasteries by forcing them to support the maintenance of local soldiers. The Nobles wanted crown farms and the King had no land to grant them, but the church was rich in homesteads. So in 1527 in another Riksdag held in Vasteras, the king and nobles enacted the Vasteras Recess.

[Suspension]

The Castles owned by Bishops were to be turned over to the Crown and in addition the King would determine how many soldiers the Bishops were to support. All surplus revenues were to be paid regularly to the king and all monasteries were to be given to the Nobles. Nobles were also allowed to reclaim their prior estate's that were given to the church years before.

The Catholic Church was powerless against this new law, which eventually brought about reductions in church property even affecting the local parishes.

The loose federations of families, parishes and provinces were to be replaced by a strong centralized government.

Lutheranism was supported by the Vasteras Riksdag in that the sermons were to be spoken in Swedish, sing Lutheran songs in the propagation of Lutheran doctrine and no one was to be 'forced to attend church'.

In 1529 the farmers of Smaland and Vastergotland led by lord Ture Jonsson Tre Rosor and Bishop Magnus of Skara rose against the King. The rising failed with some of the leaders being executed or leaving the country.

Soon afterwards the King required that that one bell in every church be given to the Royal Treasury. [exchequer] This bell-decree applied to all churches in towns, monasteries and country churches.

This ruthless disregard to the religious significance **bells** played in the lives of the people led to the BELL-Rebellion. The 'rebellion' was settled with fierce reprisals from King Gustav Eriksson Vasa and the men of Dalarna were condemned to death.

With the older upper middle class of Nobles gone or severely weakened, King Gustav Eriksson Vasa could now continue on his reorganization of Sweden.

By reforming the collection of taxes and revenues, King Vasa could direct how to use natural products more effectively. He supervised the work and trade of the Kingdom in the crown's levies of oxen, butter, grain and he was able to avoid local shortages and to alleviate famines where needed.

The King was able, due to his increase of power and control, to succeed in emancipating Sweden from Rome, which was accomplished in the 1530's, with the last Catholic Archbishop Johannes Magnus retiring to Rome.

Laurentius Petri was enthroned as the first Protestant Archbishop of Sweden, by the Reformers assembly of Uppsala in 1536.

1539-1540 saw many changes; a new Treasury was formed, new legal ideas taken from Roman laws were enacted and the King extended his power into all spheres of Swedish life. For instance, the Village-farmers of Öland were to have their hay in by St. Olaf's day, their corn picked by St. Bartholomew's day; all labor was regulated to prevent vagrancy and the King controlled internal and external trade and all of Sweden was to be considered the property of the King. By 1540 The King saw the church being less under his control so he reorganized putting it under total control of the State. All surplus church property and many scared vessels were taken over by the Crown.

This heavy handed control of the King caused Nils Dacke to organize a rebellion in war-like Smaland. The forces of Nils Dacke did gain a little influence in Skanninge of Ostergotland, but the combined royal forces severely defeated the rebels; establishing the control of the State over the provinces. The Kings of Denmark and Sweden, brothers-in-law, did sign a treaty in 1541 at Bromsebro.

King Gustav Eriksson Vasa died in 1560, leaving a country that was by two-thirds controlled by the State, the church schools in shambles.

1541 the Reformers translated the Bible into Swedish, which laid the foundation for the new Swedish language.

War with Denmark 1563

The sea ports and the Baltic Sea were needed by both countries for trade. The war became known as the Seven-Years war. This war set the seal of bitterness, savage destruction and bitter hatred between Denmark and Sweden, which would devastate both countries for forty years. Sweden wanted to expand her North Sea and Russian trade routes, but Denmark would win out. Sweden had to pay heavily for the destruction of Alvsborg.

Sweden again, against Ivan the Terrible, tried to take control of the Russian trade routes. From 1580 the Swedes failed to accomplish much in this endeavor and would eventually prove to be disastrous.

The King of Sweden did not trust the Nobles, eventually several beloved Nobles were executed causing a division in the Kingdom. The King's brother may have had a hand in his demise in 1577.

The Nobles emerged as the victors, who established new privileges: exemption from taxation, no conscription and no labor dues. The Nobles also were exempt from customs, tolls, gained the right to hold judgeships and the right to be judged by their peers. They became increasingly more powerful, educated and politically savvy claiming they had the right to share in the governing of the country with the Monarchy.

In 1571 the enactment of the Church Ordinance officially adopted Lutheranism.

1592

Rome was anxious to re-introduce Catholicism to Sweden. Poland had reverted back to Catholicism in the sixteenth century. A Lutheran assembly of three-hundred clergy was held in March of 1593 at Uppsala. The conclusion of the assembly was to allow any church into Sweden as long as they held no public meetings.

1600's saw the village farmers still the largest populace where 5 per cent were living in towns. The village farmer's life was rural, dominated by the weather and still using old farming techniques of the past. The farms were self sufficient, lacking only salt. Barely and rye the main crops with coarse dark bread, salted meat and fish their main diet. The mining towns would be better off due to the high prices paid for copper metal.

1618

Sweden in this time period would become a new nation. The government would be filled with lower classes. The Court of Appeal and the Treasury were modernized and expanded. University of Uppsala was set up for the training of governmental officers. The ecclesiastical took form by establishing schools, church functions expanded. The army was organized from Swedish nationals enrolled as needed of men of ages from fifteen to forty. This army of exceptional quality helped Sweden become a strong nation, but was a heavy burden on the local farm-villages.

1621; Sweden wanted the Baltic and Russian sea routes so she pressed on towards Poland where she defeated the feared Polish cavalry. The Polish cavalry was overwhelmed at Wallhof.

By 1629 Sweden settled with Poland ending up with Livonia, most of Prussia and received license dues of 30 per cent from Prussian ports.

This four year war placed a heavy burden upon the village-framers. 40,000 men were in the army, with heavy losses. At 'home' the yearly soldier taxes with the regular taxes were an exceptional burden.

The continuing wars brought about the idea of indirect taxation; of custom duties, internal tolls and dues on manufacturing and mining. These new taxes would provide a continuous source of money. Copper was kept high in cost by coining large amounts of

the metal. The iron-works were greatly improved leading the armament industry to be the first national large-scale industry. By 1631 France capitulated to Sweden with France giving subsidies to the Swedish King.

The **Battle of Breitenfeld** the 7th of September 1631 was a major battle of 'old ways' against the 'new' Swedish King's combination of: infantry, artillery, cavalry, musketeers and carefully trained firepower. Germany's General Tilly and his army were devastated after six-hours of combat. Again at Lutzen the two armies would meet with the Swedes suffering great losses and the King would be killed the 6 November 1632.

1632

Christina the only child of King Gustavus Adolphus was six year old. The Regency Council took over when the King died. The Nobles had been greatly enhanced over the past decades. Land in the village next to the manors were immune from taxation and conscription. The rest of the tenants paid half of the crown-tax and the village farmers paid the 'free-tax'. Most of the estates at this time had several homesteads which were in different parts of the country. The nobles also had most of the important government offices.

1643

The Swedish Council did not trust Denmark so in the summer of 1643 Sweden decided to attack Denmark from the South. Autumn of 1643 saw Sweden gain victory over Denmark ending an eighty-year struggle for the Baltic trade routes.

At this same time Queen Christina came of age [18] and assumed the throne.

'Her Majesty was not like a female [unusual character], but courageous and with a good understanding, so that if she escape corruption she will answer every hope.'

The council had great expectations of the new Queen. She had obtained the same education as would a male heir, for she was the first Swedish woman to receive a wholly academic education.

Queen Christina wanted the wars to end soon, which came in October 1648. For the Thirty Years War had brought the great burdens of conscription, which were heavy when the crops were poor and the lean years brought great distress.

1648

Peace

Taxation was heavy and in the face of the Noble's tax exemptions only increased the ire with the other social classes. Queen Christina had little ability to help the situation.

The tax situation of 'free' farmers were made worse, when the Nobility took control of some new farms, feeling that they had sole sovereignty over these new possessions. By the middle of the 1770's the Nobles had 72 per cent control over the homesteads.

The village farmers though had a legal, but limited right to self government. The local villages had more interest in common with the parish and these interests were dealt with in meetings conducted by the village alderman.

The Church in a vestry meeting [sockenstamma] was empowered to deal with unruly people in the parish. The village farmers were enabled to take his complaints to court as equals in their rights. The village farmer was also able to be represented at the Riksdag, which was unique at the time.

1650

The 1650 Riksdag held in July, faced a violent and yet a remarkable assembly which was to deal with several confusing situations.

Several years of poor harvest had the country side in turmoil. Peace allowed the underlying complaints of the four social classes to fester anew. The government's financial conditions were teetering on bankruptcy, while the extravagant gifts to the Nobles from the throne rustled the unprivileged farmers, which was a threat to the freedom of the village farmers. Then add to this boiling pot the disbanding of such a large army. With many officers and soldiers to be placed back into society was an enormous problem. The queen did her part in stirring the pot by highly approving the policy of conscription in order to: 'keep the peasants under submission'. Soon a local rising at Narke broke out, but the Queen soon quelled the rebellion when the leaders were captured.

Despite all the pomp and pageantry of the Queens courts in music and plays of festivities she had other intentions; to abdicate the throne! Queen Christina had secretly become a Catholic and due to the 1617 Örebro Statute, she could not occupy the throne. Queen Christina resigned at the Riksdag of 1654. Few knew she was a faithful Catholic and was soon to leave for Rome.

1654

King Charles X was a more capable administrator. In his first Riksdag he abolished the Allodial donations [property held in absolute ownership], secured reduction of necessary estates [lands restored to the crown], and added that one quarter of all Nobles estates were to be taxed.

The King's attention was drawn to Sweden's eastern frontier where Russia had acquired some of Poland's territory. Plans were in motion to go to war against Russia and Poland. In 1656 King Charles attacked Warsaw and after a fierce battle he gained a victory that was of no real consequence.

For in 1657 the 'old enemy' of Denmark saw an opportunity and joined with the Russian cause. So King Charles did what was a surprising event; he directly attacked Denmark.

1657

Denmark, supported by her allies, declared war on Sweden. The war ended unexpectedly though due to the sea froze over and many terrible winter storms. The Danes were delighted for the Swedish Navy was stopped and the army was cut off from the home land. But King Charles tested the ice and after careful preparations crossed the ice to the Island Funen and several other islands arriving at Zealand. Denmark capitulated with Sweden gaining the Scanian province and several island of Norway. Denmark was now encircled by Sweden and lost important sea ways to the Baltic. But by odd turn of fate, Holland joined in with Denmark to stop the Swedish encroachments and was successful in defeating the Swedish army. King Charles X was in 1660 to discuss the surrender terms, but within a few weeks died.

15 years

The next fifteen years saw more internal strife's and wars with Denmark. During the Battle of Lund in December of 1676 King Charles XI was able to turn back the Danes. King Charles XI turned his attestation to the financial problems of the country. In 1680 the King proceeded with the already adopted policy of Reduction: reclaiming the lands from counts, barons, large landowners and lands given as loans. This Reduction resulted in the crown being financial stable; the peasants freedoms maintained and the economic extravagance of the Nobles were diminished. More significantly, the Monarchy achieved absolute supremacy over Sweden. The common Council in 1682 was replaced by the King's Council and other offices were placed under strict control of the Crown.

The Noble's though were allowed to keep their manors by exchanging their outlaying homesteads, worked by the peasantry, for the required 'Reduction'.

The King and his many favored secretaries amassed large estates. In order to take care of these large land holdings a new statute called Tjanstehjonsstadga was issued, which forced landless poor to be employed by these landowners. This 'new' statute also deprived this lower class from taking any benefits of the Reduction.

The reaffirmed the housing of officers and soldiers by a permanent indela [assign] land and crown dues. Army officers were assigned farms to live on as part of their pay. Calvary troops were to receive tax from certain farms whose land owners were to maintain in stead of paying taxes.

The King was able to abolish conscription by maintaining 'professional-soldiers' in the villages and avoid adding new taxes due to the Baltic revenues.

1700 - 1710

Even though the 1690's had several bad harvests resulted in widespread famine and witchcraft was sweeping trough the villages, the King had stabilized the economy.

Sweden was producing fair amounts of corn and needed bar-iron that was excellent raw material for steel. Wood was used for the kilns, coal was to come later, so the woodlands of western Varmland had many district with kilns, which were to produce two important groups: the ironmaster and the iron-workers. The population expanded greatly as well as increase many trades and coastal cities, but the village farms were still the largest group.

February of 1700 Saxon troops attacked Livonia. Denmark attacked Holstein, but Sweden was able to force Denmark to surrender. Peter the Great of Russia attacked Sweden in the autumn of 1700 at Narva, a main Swedish stronghold.

Narva was held by 40,000 Russian troops the Swedish army was 10,000 strong.

King Charles XII decided to attack in the middle of the Russian line. The onrush of the Swedish army into the lines of the Russian army was aided by a violent snowstorm. The confusion and hand to hand combat split the Russian front in half.

The Russian troops surrendered after a few hours, for many of the Russian troops had drowned trying to flee across the Narva River. The Swedish Cavalry finished off the others as they were fleeing in open fields. The Russian army had been totally dismantled by the Swedish army and by happenstance Peter the Great had fled two days earlier.

The Russian prisoners which were set free, far outnumbered the Swedish army, only the Russian officers were kept as prisoners.

King Charles the XII now turned his attention and armies towards Poland. In 1701-1702 Sweden attacked and captured Kliszow and in the following year captured the fortress at Thorn along with the rest of the Saxony army.

Sweden was able to establish treaties with Poland in which trade with important towns were setup to be able to buy salt.

1706 Sweden defeated Augustus of Saxony forcing him to surrender. King Charles XII was busy preparing his next move as the Russians invaded eastern Poland. By 1707-8, King Charles XII set straight out to conquer Moscow. Peter the Great burned his cities and lands as the Swedish army advanced, despite the cost and destruction to the local peasants. The Battle at Poltava on the 27th of June 1709 ended the advancement of the Swedish army. Severe losses due to extremely bad weather aided the new Russian army.

Demoralized and tired the Swedish army of 15,000 surrendered to the Russian cavalry in 1710, with 7,000 men dead, 2,500 wounded and 300 officers dead or missing ending the Moscow advancement of King Charles the XII. King Charles the XII was killed by an assassin or a stray bullet in 1718.

1718

The Council once again took control of the government after the demise of King Charles the XII. The new-councils and secretaries of King Charles were dismissed.

Members of the Council demanded that new principles be implemented which were based on constitutional principles. The Riksdag Ordinance of 1723 the Riksdag became the most powerful element in the Swedish government.

From 1719 through 1721 Sweden signed many treaties relinquishing many sea ports to Russia and Denmark.

Internal changes came about by many compromises among the classes which were ratified in the Riksdag of 1723. The Nobles would retain their financial advantages, the

clergy would be allowed to own 'free' lands and the village farmers would be allowed to acquire ownership of his homestead.

Peace brought a general prosperity throughout Sweden with new metal industries and mining, but the main important industry, about 75 per cent, was still agriculture; mainly husbandry and cattle-breeding

Despite this 'new era of peace', agriculture was retarded by the old codes of farming, inefficient cultivation, and by strict State regulations. One State restriction was that the farms could not be subdivided. The Edict of 1726 enforced 'orthodoxy' and banned all other religions.

1730

Political parties came in to being with the Hats and the Caps. The Hats, mostly Nobles of the Estates, were aggressive and wanted a strong foreign national policy. These mercantilists took over the government and even had made alliances with France. The Hats favored France while the Caps favored England.

The Hats ruled from 1739 through 1765. Their first President was Karl Gyllenborg who was soon replaced with Carl Gustav Tessin. The twenty six years of Hat rule had many crises.

One main crisis was their desire to go to war with Russia, in part by the prompting of France. The preparations for war were utterly inadequate and the army was totally unprepared. The Swedes lost to the Russian army lead to the formal election of a Crown Prince Adolf Frederick of Denmark.

The Hats had the iron industry formed into a State monopoly in order to stabilize iron prices and save wood. Home production of goods increased, but were costly and of poor quality. The monetary system was confusing due to an over supply of paper money and the fall in the value of minted coins. Population increased and records were kept to track the growth in the population. Individual liberty changed and a unique Swedish constitution was developed.

1765

The Caps came to power at the Riksdag of 1765 by the support of the old Court Party. The press became more open by allowing any party to go to print as established by the Ordinance of 1766. Eventually, the lower class village farmers were to be supported by Alexander Kepplerus of Finland in wanting equal rights. Village farmers had no representation and were forced to labor by the large Estates.

King Gustav III came to power in a bloodless coup by capturing the Hat's leaders and then rightly presents himself to the Court. He stopped the political rivalries and made a court of all-men.

King Gustav III 1773

The new constitution was vague and contradictory. Another bad harvest brought serious conditions of a high mortality rate and bands of roaming, starving beggars. Distillation of grain was ceased to keep the grain for food. Grain trade restrictions were lifted and more imports of grain were increased. The next problem for King Gustav III was the monetary crisis.

1776 the old money was turned in and redeemed at a reduced rate. Abolishment of torture helped to show a more humanitarian attitude. King Gustav III reorganized the Swedish Navy and strengthened the army. Religious freed increased as the Jews were allowed to settle and hold services in certain towns.

Russia was repulsed by the Swedish Navy in July 1790, and they were by treaty never to interfere with Swedish domestic problems. Soon there after, the monetary system was plagued with valueless paper money. King Gustav III tried to stabilize the currency but failed. Many domestic enemies gathered and on the 16th of March 1792 these enemies lead by J.J. Anckarstrom, shot and killed King Gustav the III.

Wars of 1792

The new king of this time, 1796, was Gustav IV. Almost 90 % of Sweden's populace was still employed in agriculture. Serious changes had to be made for the great increases in demand for grains grew as the European populace increased in peace-time. One change to be implemented, in 1803-1807, was that of the Enskifte the right to consolidate small farms into larger ones. This change allowed for a more efficient production, but broke up the one-thousand-year-old tradition of Village Farming communities. The economy was troubled by the loss of good fishing on the west coast, more bad harvests, poor trade due the Napoleonic wars and money - coinage was in shambles. The Riksdag of 1800 accepted the idea of King Frederick to base the currency on the value of - silver - .

Sweden needed a stable foreign policy to allow for shipping and trading to grow. Sweden allied herself in 1800 with Denmark Prussia and Russia in a league of neutrality. England needed Swedish iron. So in retaliation England seized all ships associated with the Leagues of Neutrality that were in English ports. England threatened the Swedish fleet, so Sweden with Russia reformed their agreements and pacts, for England controlled the seas, to allowed Sweden to sell iron to England, which was about 45 % of Sweden's iron trade. The King tries to wage war against Russia hoping for English in order to establish stronger ties with England but failed miserably and was eventually deposed.

1809

The Riksdag was to write a new constitution under the direction of the Estates and with Napoleon's consent. The new constitution was rejected by the lower village farmers. Sweden lost to Russia and had to surrender 1/3 of her land. 1809 Sweden gained peace with Demark and in 1810 and came to terms with Napoleon. By 1812 Russia broke of her alignment Napoleon and aligned with Sweden. Sweden attacked Denmark and in January of 1814 won a peace treaty in Kiel. May of 1814 Norway established a

constitution. The Norwegian had to renounce the throne and Sweden would recognize the new Norwegian constitution. King Charles the III was elected King over both Norway and Sweden by the Riksdag of Sweden and by the Storting of Norway I August of 1815.

The potato became a popular crop because it could be used to make spirits and was a good wash for the hogs.

1818 the Middle Class

The right to be represented in a national assembly was a dream of the village farmer for several centuries. Sweden was the first to establish such a right for her people in her constitution of 1809. Changes, in and the development of the middle class, came from the rising generations of the miners, clergy merchants and ironmaster. Paper money was again restructured, along with some improvements in agriculture. Less and less farm land was available due to the process of 'enclosure' as the populace increased. The great increase in population was due to 'peace, vaccinations and potatoes'. The growing population saw less and opportunities for farming:

- crofters - torpare- tiller of a small portion of land peasant - proprietor
- backstuga - owned a cottage but had no land
- stature - an farm hand housed by the land owner / wages were in kind;

for there were few industries to work for.

The 1823 Riksdag started the notion of removing governmental controls from the iron industry and abolishing the guild system on crafts and trade, which was complete by 1846. The Riksdag of 1840-41 was a pivotal time where the middle class was able to exert a limited influence. The balance of power between the King and the Riksdag was shifted towards the Riksdag in that expenditures were under the Riksdag control.

King Charles-John died in the spring of 1844.

An important reform of this period was that of establishing an organized formal educational system as per the Ordinance of 1843. The Four Estates were developing more influence upon the government through the learned classes of the clergy, ironmasters and the free village farmers, being firmly established by the 1860's.

Temperance movements, to stem the heavy drinking among all social classes, were able to show the connection of drunkenness with poverty and criminality; was initiated in the 1830's by the Priest P. Wieselgren.

1840's United Scandinavia

The union of Denmark and Sweden has long been an intriguing idea and intellectually desirable, but has always been impossible to achieve. Denmark's war with Germany was over the lower portion of Denmark the Holstein - South Schleswig regions. Sweden offered 15,000 troops to fight Germany; but by 1848, the time when Denmark was attacked; Sweden disapproved of Denmark's actions and refused to send any more troops.

1853-4 The Crimean war broke out between Russia and the union of France and England. This opportunity helped to foster the union of Denmark, Norway and Sweden

into a league of Scandinavian Neutrals. The political union though fell apart since King Frederick VII rejected the proposal and King Oscar I became very ill. The Riksdag failed to carry on with the political proposal of a 'union'; so the dream of a Scandinavian Union was abandoned.

The Swedish Army was made up of two elements. The indelning-system: were the officers and cavalry lived on Crown-lands and received taxes in kind from the village farmers. The infantry held small farms which were provided by groups of 3-5 villages in order to avoid conscription.

The second element was that of the conscription system or bevaring. Training of the soldiers was sporadic and short and an individual could buy himself out or hire a substitute.

1850's

The industrial revolution of this period placed strong demands for more wood, iron and grains. European communities were increasing steadily. Much of the wood had come from Norway but at this time her natural resources were dwindling. Sweden had been very cautious in the use of the forest resources. Saw mills once were water driven, but soon gave way to the new steam engine. The steam engine allowed the saw mills to be closer to the forests. Sweden's iron mining and production greatly increased.

English inventions were replacing the old domestic systems. Modern transportation of steam ships and railroads [1860's] further increased the prosperity of this time. Cotton mills and looms, the woolen industry, larger steam engines and the new ways of farming, the electric telegraph, modern postal system, new banking system [1856], freedom of the press was expanded, equal rights of inheritance for men and women were established [1845], a relief system to help the poor was formed; greatly changed the life of a village farmer.

And to help stay the wide spread of drunkenness, an unpopular move, the Riksdag of 1853-54 enacted the prohibition of domestic distillation of 'spirits' [alcohol]. Corporal punishment of servants was forbidden. 1862 local governments adopted the new system of the Landsting, a county council, with a more humane penal codes. It was decreed that unmarried women would reach her majority at age 25. Religious freedom was introduced. Free-trade was allowed between villages and foreign countries being confirmed by treaty with France in 1865.

The most exciting change was yet to come. The middle class still did not have direct representation. The Riksdag of 1865 meet to see if they would abolish itself ! The King reluctantly accepted the change and the Nobles voted 361 to 294 in favor. Now for the first time in Swedish history the Middle class would have direct representation in the government. The New Riksdag was split into two-parts First Chamber and a Second chamber. Second chamber was for the land holding middle class who qualified by having an income of 800 crowns or the land had a value of 1,000 crowns.

1880

The Assessment of 1861 was for the village farmers. The enskitte system allowed the farmers to experiment with the new idea of 'rotating' crops and the hay from the meadow lands being replaced with specially grown fodder. Using fodder allowed for larger herds. Covered drainage ditches were implemented; lighter and more efficient ploughs were developed.

Politically the governmental system now had a new powerful estate; the Agrarian Party. Manufacturing substantially increased new items like malleable steels, nails, saw blades and files were new products. Swedish matches were in great demand. Many new companies were established in the 1870's, which also produced widespread problems.

Emigration to America in this period of time 1840's -1870's, left a void in the local towns needing their strength and energy.

Immigration

Swedes have left Sweden for many generations and for many reasons. Looking back to about 500 AD Swedes left for the shores on the land south of the Baltic Sea. Swedish Vikings traveled to the British islands and Iceland. More though pushed East ward to Russia and South ward to Arabic lands. Finland was highly populated with Swedes in the middle ages. Some moved to Poland, Italy and to Denmark for religious reasons. The 18th century saw many Swedes fought in the French army. The American Revolution had many Swedes help fight for colonial independence. A greater exodus of lower farmers left for Denmark at the beginning of the 19th century.

America would see the greatest influx of Swedes. The first came in 1638 and settled in an area of Wilmington Delaware. New Sweden - Nova Svecia - with fort Christina at its center had missions and traded with the Indians. 1645 to 1663 Johan Printz served as governor. This little settlement began to grow and develop until early on the near by Dutch settlements conquered them in 1655. Others came from Sweden to join them mostly of Finnish origins. Eventually the English dominated them even though they were mixed with the colonists the Swedish settlers spoke Swedish until 1800. Of these settlers two prominent men would be leaders in the new English colonies. John Hansen was president of the colonial congress 1780 and John Morton was a signatory of the Declaration of Independence.

Other Swedish farmers came to live in America; a country with fertile land with prospects for a better living. 1845, south-east Iowa would receive settlers from Kisa Ostergotland and others would found a colony Bishop's Hill in Indiana. Other states like Minnesota, Kansas and Nebraska would be populated by many more Swedes as they moved over the entire Midwest. Bad harvest in 1867-1868 and the agriculture crisis and the Homestead Law of 1862 greatly encouraged the great influx of Swedes. In the years of 1867 to 1886; 450,000 Swedes came to America. Some of the Swedes stayed in New York, but the majority moved westward. Many Swedes moved to and settled in Canada, mostly in Ontario. Denmark and Norway would receive about 32,000 Swedish settlers.

Causes for this great immigration are many. One being the over crowding of the Swedish country side due to large families and State land regulations. In America, Nine

to Ten million acres of land were placed under cultivation by the Swedes, more than all of the arable land of Sweden.

Other reasons were that the Swedes felt overly oppressed by the higher classes with too many restrictions and little hope of relief.

Curtis Larson