

# FINAL REPORT - WISCONSIN RAMBO APPLE PROJECT

## Bev Wenzel - Annual Meeting - 10/11/08

We may not have a farm or special house at Old World Wisconsin to honor Swedish immigrants, but we do now have two Swedish Rambo Apple Trees....

Many of you are aware of our Rambo Apple Project, but for those of you who are not, let me briefly review it. ...

In March of 2006, the Swedish-American newspaper, NORDSTJERNAN, carried an article about the planting of Rambo Apple Trees as part of a project with Sweden. Why couldn't we plant those trees here? The idea of tree planting at Old World Wisconsin was presented to our Board and they agreed this would be a very appropriate tribute to the Swedish immigrants who came to Wisconsin. And, it would also give us a Swedish awareness at Old World Wisconsin.

As I researched the project, I learned some history.

On the second voyage of the Kalmar Nyckel ship to the colony of New Sweden in 1639, a young man from Gothenburg, Sweden signed on. Peter Gunnarsson was his name and he brought seeds from his favorite apple tree with him.

One of the first things he did on arrival was to change his name from the patronymic form of Gunnarson. He chose the name Rambo for himself which means "Raven's nest" or "Raven's home". There was a small mountain near his former home in Sweden called Ramberget or Raven's Mountain and the name reminded him of home.

Peter Gunnarsson Rambo became a prosperous farmer and a prominent member of colony government. He married Brita Matsdotter, a Finnish girl, and enjoyed family and success in the new country.

The apple seeds he brought were planted and the apples became known by the name Rambo. Johnny Appleseed is said to have claimed the Rambo apple seed his favorite for planting in his travels and in propogating for his nurseries.

The Rambo apple also attained movie fame when the wife of author David Morrell brought home a bag of Rambos. Morrell was looking for a strong name for his latest character and Rambo sounded perfect.

Back in Sweden, however, the severe winter of 1709-10 wiped out this apple species. Nearly 300 years later descendants of Peter Gunnarsson Rambo, along with representatives from Sweden and the U.S. embarked on the Rambo Apple Friendship Project as a "living memorial honoring all Swedish American immigration". The Friendship Project has reintroduced Rambo apple trees to Sweden with plantings in Stockolm, Uppsala, Gothenburg and at the Emigrant Institute in Varmland.

The story of this Project in the Nordstjernan was the start of our Wisconsin Rambo Apple Project. When we contacted Marcia Carmichael, historic gardener at Old World Wisconsin, she was very enthusiastic and supportive. She tracked down the proper trees and chose the orchard of the Finnish Ketola farm as a location because Brita Mattsdotter Rambo was of Finnish birth.

The "Rambo Twins"... our tribute to Swedish immigrants in Wisconsin... were just under 4 ft. tall when planted this Spring and by August, they were over 6 ft. tall. Now, they are reported to be 8' tall.

Old World Wisconsin plans to highlight the Rambo story on the walls of the Visitor's Center and a plaque of dedication by the Swedish American Historical Society of Wisconsin to all Swedish immigrants settling in the State of Wisconsin will be included.

Pictures and further information ....on the table. Any questions.