

The Letters of Georg Edvard [and Ebba] Bergwall 1858 - 1881

Georg Edward Bergwall (1806-1873) immigrated from Sweden to Wisconsin in 1842. He settled in New Upsala, a small colony of Swedes west of Milwaukee. Before he left Sweden, Georg had been married and widowed. He had a 6-year-old son Johan Edward who he left in the care of his brother and sister in Gothenburg. (Johan remained in Sweden and became a physician there.) Before Georg emigrated, he worked as a Confiscations-Inspector and Treasurer at the Royal Customs Service in Gothenburg. He left Sweden about nine months before he was officially summoned to explain the whereabouts of funds missing from his Customs Service accounts. Apparently, Georg had to “get out of Dodge quick.” Ironically Bergwall would—in America, the land of second chances and self-redemption—go on to become his county’s Treasurer.

Georg arrived at New Upsala on the same day as another Swede, Bengt Petterson. Bengt eventually brought his wife Charlotta and his children—including daughter Ebba—to New Upsala from Sweden. Ebba (1828-1884) would become Georg’s third wife. (Georg’s second marriage [entered into at New Upsala] ended with no children and after only 5 months when that wife passed away.)

In the decade after their arrival at New Upsala, Georg and Ebba purchased land and began farming. However, Georg seriously injured his leg felling a tree and never fully recovered. This precipitated his decision to run for a county office. As noted above, he became County Treasurer.

In 1858 Georg began to write letters to Sweden. We have twelve to his brother Anton and one to his sister-in-law’s husband, all of which address various topics including his experiences establishing himself in Wisconsin and American politics. He also asks for news from Sweden. After Georg’s death, Ebba wrote three letters. All these were preserved through the efforts of Georg and Anton’s descendants.

After describing the economic vagaries of farming, Georg’s early letters, ask Anton for “something for me in a money way” and express a *cri de Coeur* from having had to “tear the bonds that held...” him to the son he left in Sweden and “to my beloved fatherland.” But letters that follow proudly report on his growing family (six children and Ebba’s daughter from her first marriage which ended when her husband died before this daughter was born) and upon members of Ebba’s family. He describes his integration with and service to his local community. The letters also report on national news, slavery, the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, intrigues in Mexico and Georg’s involvement in the Temperance Movement.

Ebba’s letters tell Anton how she adjusted to the loss of her husband and the untimely death of her oldest son, and of her move to Milwaukee.

Contents:

- Excerpts from the letters by theme
 - The Bergwalls Valued and Served Public Education in Wisconsin
 - A Family's Black Sheep writes to its Golden Son
 - The U.S. Civil War and its Aftermath
- History of George and Ebba Descendants Obtaining the Letters from Anton's Family

Errata:

- Booklet Cover
 - The booklet title—*LETTERS OF GEORG EDVARD BERGWALL 1858-1881*—fails to acknowledge Ebba Bergwall's authorship of three of the letters.
 - The maps
 - Malmo is located on the southwest coast of Sweden, not on the southeast coast.
 - Those traveling to Wisconsin from Sweden would travel west or to the left, not right and to the east.
- Dedication Page
 - Georg was not a customs officer in the Netherland. This error seems to have resulted from the booklet editors coming upon a ship's manifest with a different Bergwall in it.
 - Georg arrived in Wisconsin (and New Upsala) in late June in the year 1842, not late 1843. (See page 283 & 284 Vol I *A Pioneer* and footnote 7 for chapter 18.)
- Booklet Organization
 - Letters 8 and 9 (March 15, 1866 & January 10, 1867) in the printed booklet are out of sequence. They follow Letter 12 (February 14, 1871). This problem is corrected in the digital copies in this webpage.