

**3. HUMAN PLUS HISTORY**

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*П. Олауссон (Карлстад, Швеция)***ИСТОРИЯ И СЕМЕЙНЫЕ ВОСПОМИНАНИЯ С ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ РОДИНЫ. ШВЕДСКИЕ КУЗНЕЦЫ НА УРАЛЕ 1800-х гг.**

**Аннотация** В статье рассматривается миграция шведских металлургов в конце 1800-х годов в Тирлян в южной части Уральских гор и повседневная жизнь шведской колонии. Процесс миграции изучается на материале рассказов и сохранившихся артефактов в России и Швеции. Этот эпизод шведской и российской истории представлен в статье с помощью современных исследований, касающихся проблем представления культурного наследия в музеях и исторической науке. Автор дает подробный ответ на вопрос, кем и по каким причинам обсуждается данный факт в истории шведской эмиграции и модернизации российского металлургического сектора; рассматривает практику использования шведского опыта в организации производства на Урале и оценивает ее влияние на историю промышленных предприятий России. В статье рассказывается о музеях, где хранится память и опыт шведских кузнецов; выявляются причины сохранения этих ценностей для будущих поколений. По мнению автора, знания о том, что произошло на самом деле, имеют и в дальнейшем будут иметь огромную ценность. Кроме того, в статье описывается и анализируется содержание двух архивных коллекций в Швеции, касающихся уральской миграции и жизни в обществах по производству железа в конце 1800-х и начале 1900-х годов. Эти коллекции были созданы членами шведской колонии, которые вернулись на родину с большим количеством документов, фотографий и других интересных предметов, накопившихся за время миграции. Коллекции можно рассматривать как часть непрерывного процесса рассказывания историй на личном и семейном уровне, даже тогда, когда воспоминания на местах – как в России, так и в Швеции – не сохраняются.

**Ключевые слова** миграция, местное культурное наследие, Швеция, Урал, семейные истории, металлургия, музеи наследия, архивы.

*P. Olausson (Karlstad, Sweden)***HISTORY AND FAMILY MEMORIES IN A LOCAL SETTING. SWEDISH IRON SMITH'S IN THE URALS OF THE 1800s**

**Abstract.** The article deals with the migration during the late part of the 1800s of Swedish iron workers to Tirlyan in the southern part of the Ural Mountains and the everyday life of the Swedish colony, this process seen in the light of the story telling and the preserved artefacts in Russia and Sweden. The way this “detail” in the history of Swedish emigration and the modernization of the Russian iron industry sector has been presented, by whom and for what reasons, is discussed in the article, by help of modern research concerning cultural heritage presentation challenges for museums and researchers in the world of today.

**Keywords:** Migration, local cultural heritage, Sweden, Ural, family histories, metallurgy, heritage museums, archives.

**Introduction**

In 1876, the Russian engineer Aleks Hasselblatt went to Sweden in order to recruit black smiths to the Pashkov iron industries in the Ural area. It was part of the developing plans for the Russian iron production system, in order to enhance both greater iron and steel quantities and better quality of the products. This was at a time when Russia saw the possibilities to prosper by large scale industrialization, with a vast upcoming market of their own but also with the global market in sight. New systems of communication made it easier to travel and for heavy products to be transported long distance over the borders. In the 1870s, many people in the industrial sector all over the world saw a bright future ahead of them while others suffered from a broader international competition. Russia was on its way and so was not least the distant United States of America. In Sweden, the old structure with many smaller iron plants cracked when confronted with new ways of producing iron and steel – bringing up the need for the development of larger production units. When Hasselblatt arrived in the area of Bergslagen – the heartland of iron production in the middle of Sweden since medieval times –, he had many interested workers listening to his proposals to join the Ural pro-

jects. Two of the more experienced blacksmiths joined him for Russia. In the following years, more than twenty other iron workers followed, some few of them together with their wives or other family members. They all came to Tirlyan in the southern part of the Ural area and started their new life at the factories there.

### ***The Swedish colony of Tirlyan***

This was the starting point for the small but over time slowly growing Swedish settlement in the Urals. The smiths and their families formed part of a dynamic society in the mountain area. The often very young Swedish smiths and smelters got the reputation of being specialists in their field, since they had experienced production techniques back in Sweden that through them were introduced in this part of Russia. The iron workers were normally contracted for a period of three years. Many stayed on for a longer period and, in some cases, for life. Some of them married women from the neighborhood and, finally, also became Russian citizens. The probably last of the first contingent of Swedish immigrants to Tirlyan died there in 1943. His descendants – the Larssons – formed new generations at the place, as did the families of Adamson and Stremer. They all became Russians in language, faith and culture, but in many cases still remembered their Swedish origin.

The migration of the Swedes forms a foot note in the history of the growing Russian iron industrial sector; skilled labor was introduced from many countries during the expanding years and many Russians learned the new metallurgical specialities from them. In Swedish migration history, the emigration towards Russia and the Urals is also just a detail, seen in the light of the overwhelming amount of people who, in the last part of the 1800s, instead went over the Atlantic to USA. This said, the Swedes of Tirlyan still formed a colony with a flavor of it's own.

### ***Historical memory in a national, local and personal setting***

In this article, I will discuss the Swedish Tirlyan case in the light of historical memory. What have people in Tirlyan and in Sweden remembered about the migration and about the colony, over the years and in our time? What functions have the historical memory played at an official or communal level, compared with the traditions handed down in certain families that were involved in the history of the colony? I will say something about the situation in Tirlyan area based upon the ethnological field research by K.A. Novichkova and by my own impressions from a visit to the Urals in 2010. My focus will though be on the memories from the Russian experience that are preserved in the official archives of Sweden as well as within families at the local and personal level in the community of Degerfors.

History is an ongoing process of transforming the daily events of life into a narrative that is possible to tell – and to grasp for listeners and viewers in an audience. Every moment in people's lives can be useful bricks in the construction of immaterial "monuments" of collective memory. These experiences can form different stories about the same localities and time periods - stories change over time, in the process of communication between story tellers and listeners. The transformation of perspectives can be explained in the light of the situation when the stories are told. The functions of collective memory changes over time and some of the stories disappear over the generations, while other events have become more of interest for people to talk about, and therefore bring on the coming generations. In Swedish history, the rise of the welfare state from the 1930s and onwards is still a main theme and easy for many people to relate to – people live in houses built during this period and have their family stories related to reforms and inventions that have made life easier for many. The family car, the child benefit system, the prolonged vacation, the dish washer, the introduction of the TV set are all such daily life experiences that are part of the collective narrative of a changing, consumer focused life style. Many people still work in industries, but the stories about progress in production and the efforts of the rising working class that have made that possible are not in public demand in the way it once were. The same goes for the history of the Swedish mass emigration a long time ago, from the middle of the 1800s and until about 1930. In a time of immigration into Sweden with people from many countries in the Third world, the old history has lost it's preference. Stories are born from the life changing experiences for many people – but stories also die when other's, more relevant for a new age, take their place. History is a process of ongoing change of themes and perspectives.

### ***The loss of contact between Sweden and the Ural***

From the 1870s and up until the time of World War I and the following civil war in Russian, the Swedish families in Tirlyan kept in contact with their kin and their friends back in Sweden. From time to time, people also visited each other and therefore had first hand knowledge about every day life both in Tirlyan and in Degerfors. This contact got to an end with the war and with the new political situation in the evolving

Soviet Union. When the Swedish pastor Wilhelm Sarwe wrote his three volume book about his long life as Lutheran priest and missionary in Russia, it was like a summary over a world lost out of sight for most Swedes.<sup>1</sup> In his book, Sarwe tells a lot about the Tirlyan colony, which he himself joined already in 1882, but he also writes about many other parts of Russia, in many cases with some connection to Swedes in the vast diaspora. In one of the photos in the book, members from the large Adamson family in Tirlyan are on display outside their house. The photo was taken during Sarwe's visit in 1919 and can be interpreted as a form of good bye photo towards people back home in Sweden that they are never to see again. For a long time, Russia had been an important labor market for Swedes. From the 1920s, this period was over. Our two countries chose different paths towards the future.

### ***Contacts renewed***

In the new era of the 1990s, the story of the Swedes once again became of some public interest in Tirlyan. Photos of the old blacksmiths were found in people's cupboards and put up at the local museum beside memorabilia from the Great Patriotic War and other parts of the local and national history. Through local enthusiasts, such as the energetic teacher Boris Ogloblin, the story of the Swedish "experts" in the iron factories of the Ural area was once more being told publicly. In Sweden, it took until 1999 that the history of the colony was reintroduced to a larger audience, this time through a TV documentary made by Per Enerud, at the time working in Russia for the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation. From that time on, new personal contacts have, from time to time, been established between individuals and organizations in Tirlyan and in Degerfors. These contacts have also been broadened and brought up to the official communal level – thereby including the community of Beloretsk - and introduced to the academic sphere of historical research. From 2010, historians and others working at Karlstad University (in the region of Värmland, where Degerfors is situated) also have cooperated with colleagues at Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University; the major result has been the production of the book *Iron Links. Essays about Swedish Migrants to the Urals from the Beginning of the 1700s to the Late 1800s* (published in 2015).

### ***History remembered in Tirlyan***

In one of the articles in *Iron Links*, Associate Professor Olesya Starodubova relates the already mentioned ethnological documentation of the Swedish descendants in Tirlyan, made by K. A. Novichkova in 2012 [2]. Even if there were several examples of people who had kept or retaken their Swedish surnames in one form or another (Larsson, Adamsson, Stremer), there were nobody in Tirlyan of 2012 who still had any personal knowledge about the Swedish language. Some people could tell the stories of their own family some generations back in time, but they had their eventual information about the geography of Degerfors – the iron factory community where their ancestors in most cases emigrated from – from the renewed contact through Swedish visiting delegations up till 2010, and not through any remaining family traditions. In her article, Starodubova concludes that the Russification of the Swedes in the Urals was a natural process due to "simple environmental factors". The interviewed Swedish descendants had in most cases – 81 % - never left Tirlyan or the Beloretsk district during their lifetime and therefore stayed pretty isolated. They had not been in any contact with Swedish relatives for generations and they had in both work and marriages mixed with other Russian families.

My own impressions concerning the Ural local history memory culture comes from the visit to Tirlyan, Beloretsk and Magnitogorsk that I, together with a larger group of Swedish colleagues, made in 2010. It was a travel experience that brought us not only 3 000 kilometers eastwards into an for us so far unknown area but also, in some aspects, a long way back in time. We could recognize the main structures of nowadays Tirlyan from the photos in the Swedish archives a hundred years and more back in time. I recall not only the great hospitality and friendship that we were met with but also the great interest that people showed about their Swedish ancestry and concerning their Swedish links. Even so, most people we met lacked detailed knowledge about their own family history. Language barriers have always been one of the major obstacles in contacts, making it difficult to really connect on a personal level between people who are kin in Sweden and Russia.

### ***History remembered in Degerfors***

As I already have mentioned, the knowledge about the Tirlyan colony slowly evaporated in Sweden from the 1920s and onwards. The Sarwe books, published in 1927-1929, turned out as a major success, but they described only the past and did not lead up to any renewed contact between people in Degerfors and the Urals. After the return to Sweden, Wilhelm Sarwe and his family became distinguished members of the Degerfors community. His wife Emma died 1929 and Wilhelm in 1948. An elaborated stone monument was

placed at the family grave with a text that recalled the work that the couple had done for the Christian mission and for the Red Cross. For people with some knowledge about the family and of Wilhelm Sarwe as a person, the short text is linked with the decades of work in Russia. There is, though, nothing in the grave monument that distinctly mentions the Russian experience or the Degerfors link to the Ural emigration. There is really nothing else in the squares or streets of the community that points at the Ural migration process. This said, there is still one remarkable house left from the emigration process in itself, a house that nowadays serves as the headquarters for the Local Historical Society (Degerfors Hembygdsförening) in Degerfors. It is called Smältarbynningen (Smelter's House) and housed many of the emigrating young smelter's at the time when they left for Tirlyan in the 1870s. Today, the Local Historical Society collects photos, historical documents and traditions about the society in their archives. They have also arranged some exhibits concerning the Ural emigration over the years. People with this special interest in the history of the community are well aware of the Russian migration and can give an overview of what happened. There are also keen local genealogists that have been digging into the family stories of one and each of the emigrating black smiths. But if you speak with people out in the streets, you must have a day of luck to find anyone who have heard about this exotic part of the history of Degerfors.

### *The Sarwe archive*

The Swedish commemoration of the Tirlyan-Degerfors story at an official level may be weak, but the knowledge about what really happened have grown through contacts during the last about twenty years. In Sweden, the documentation made by Wilhelm Sarwe and his family has been a main source for research. The story told in Sarwe's own book about the scouting journey of engineer Hasselblatt and of the smiths and smelters that joined him has become canonical. Sarwe could work with an archive of his own which nowadays is available at the National Archive (Riksarkivet) in Stockholm. It is a gold mine to knowledge about the migration process and about everyday life within the Swedish colony of Tirlyan. You find a lot of photos of the neighborhood and of individuals but also quite a lot of documents about births, marriages and deaths, about associations that the Swedes organized (such as the one for temperance in the beginning of the 1880s) and about houses and industries in Tirlyan, and in Beloretsk. Sarwe had an interest also in other people that he met and he had quite a lot of contact with the at this time semi-nomadic Bashkir people in the Urals, not least during his time at the mission station at Taschbolatova. There are more than 30 volumes in the Sarwe archive in Stockholm. We made good use of some of the documentation for our mutual research project that resulted in the Iron Links volume, but there are so much more to dig in here.

### *August Larsson – a blacksmith and amateur painter*

Some of the blacksmith's stayed on in Russia while others returned home after a shorter or longer period of time. They all lived in a world of migration and among the Swedish Tirlyan smiths, about one third made another long journey and settled at last in the US. One of the smith's that returned to his home in the rural parts south of Degerfors was August Larsson, who will be the head character in the concluding part of this text.

August Larsson was born in 1853 and was 25 years of age when he joined the group that settled for the Ural's. He was raised at a farm but learned the trade of metallurgy and after some years became supervisor within the Swedish group of smith's and smelters. His first wife died in Beloretsk Savod in 1891 and her grave was a focal point of remembrance for August, documented both in photos and in a painting of his hand. August Larsson had an interest in and talent for drawing and brought with him sketchbooks, photos and a lot of items from Russia when he returned with his family in the 1890s. August settled down as a farmer and died in 1928. The things from Russia was preserved in a wooden chest at the farm by the family. In 2021, his descendant Gunilla Svensson have handed all material over to the regional archive in the province of Värmland for future preservation.

Through the eyes of August Larsson, we get a good view into the life of the Tirlyan area in the late 1800s. He was no great painter, but he was an amateur with an interest in documenting people and places in the for him new Russian surroundings. He made most of his drawings at the spot, but he must have made his large scale paintings back in Sweden, after photos and what he recalled in his memory; they are simply so big that it must have been impossible to transport them safely back home over such a great distance. One of the best paintings show Tirlyan in a panorama view, with many details like the church, the main factory and a lot of houses, surrounded by the wild but romantic landscape. Another painting shows the interior of the family home in Tirlyan, a third one his wife's grave – “the Swedish grave” (Svenska graven).

August Larsson shows great interest in the mountainous landscape and have depicted parts of it in sev-

eral of his sketches. There are some pictures showing the ferry at the Sakmara river and horses that swim over the rapid streams. Another one has the title “The Wild Strawberry Mountain” (Smultronberget).

There are also some pictures, both sketches and photos, from places away from Tirlyan – several of them from Beloretsk, one from a church at Samovka. August Larsson has also depicted visits at some Bashkir encampment and Bashkir people on a hunting tour. All together, there are a couple of hundred photos and pictures in this family collection. Some of them are family pictures from his time in Sweden, but the Russian years are well represented. August Larsson had many strong memories from his time as a young man in Tirlyan, memories that he also did what he could in order to pass the story over to his athelings. The historical memory has been very well kept that way. In 2008, Augusts descendant Gunilla Svensson had the opportunity to travel to Tirlyan and see for herself the place that she had heard so much about from people in the older generation.

### ***Museums and story telling in a time of migration***

History matters – but it plays different roles for different people. One of the reasons why we keep museums is to remind people of collective experiences, that in some way or another has contributed to the society of today. Museum collections can be built with specific agendas, in order to tell The Head Story of society as a contribution to preservation of the dominating structure. They can also, and instead, focus on the different perspectives and on the many conflicts that each society has lived through over the years – conflicts and traumas that still might be a living reality of today. Museums of the latter sort can develop into arenas for discussion about life today and tomorrow, based on the facts from history. These aspects are thoroughly looked into in the anthology *Museums in a time of migration* [3], that was published in 2017. The authors discuss different ways of presenting history for today’s audiences. Migration play a major role in the world of today, not least in Sweden, where about one fifth of the population has their origin in another country. They are, of course, potential visitors to any museum dealing with history and cultural heritage. To get them interested, you need to meet them through their own experiences in life. In her article in the anthology, Bernadette Lynch says the following about the challenge and opportunity for a modern museum to reach out towards this large group of people: *Museums are great bastions of the multicultural dream of social inclusion. But the faults of social inclusion lie not in those who are included, but in ourselves . in the misperceptions of an educated mobile, and generally well-off urban citizenry (must like the staff of most museums)* [3].

When telling a story about the past, you always chose what to put forward and what to forget. There is a lot to think about when you work with our cultural heritage as historians, as museum curators, as authors, as local story tellers – or as parents and grandparents. What you say matters for people who listen, and who might be the ones that bring the stories along to the next generation of children. Great opportunities, great challenges!

### ***Conclusion – and a story to be continued***

There is no museum in Degerfors about the migration and the memories from the Ural emigration are kept not by the local society, but by some of the descendants from the smith’s and smelter’s that were there – and by the Local Historical Society. Also in Tirlyan, the memories are kept by local people with some personal link to this period, and to the group of people that were in focus. It is of great importance that the memory is linked to memorabilia, as photos and items that you actually can see and touch. That is the way that the August Larsson athelings have kept the history brightly living and that is the way that Boris Ogloblin and others in Tirlyan work in order to make people remember this detail in the Head Stories of migration and of the iron factoring process, that changed the Urals for ever. Maybe can the drawings and paintings from the hand of August Larsson also contribute to the view of the Ural’s in the Russian society of today?

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