



Kalmar Nyckel oil painting by Jacob Hägg³

Hans Mansson and Olof Persson Stille set out with 64 men and families for New Sweden in 1641 on the Kalmar Nyckel and Charitas.¹¹ They came to be part of this expedition in different ways.

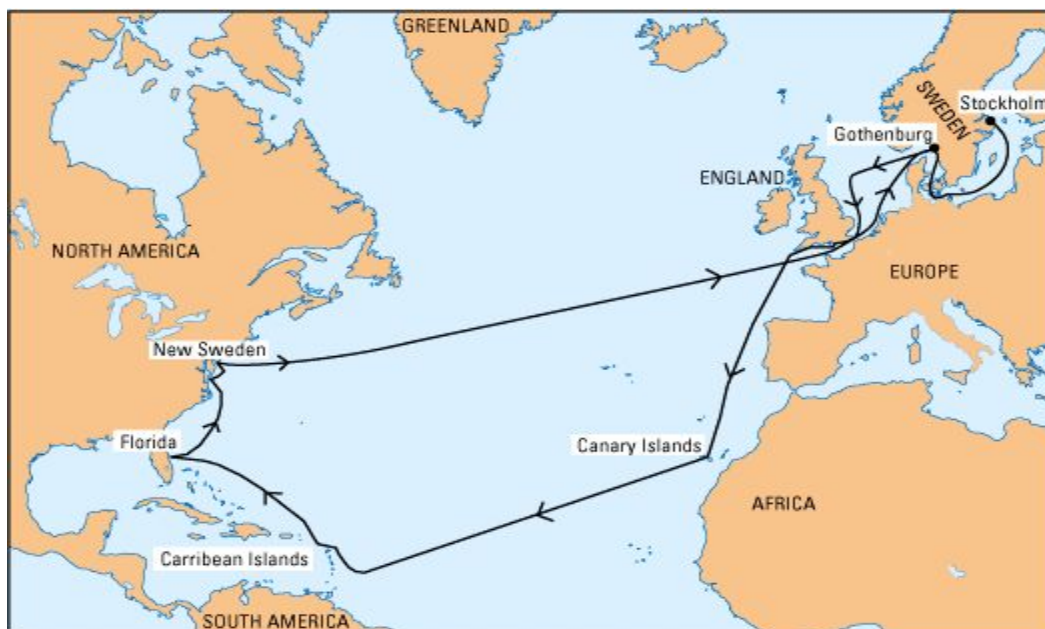
Sweden at the time of their lives was organized into Estates with the preservation of the distinctions between them fundamental to the harmony of society. The first Estate was the Nobility. The Estate of the Burghers was comprised of merchants and craftsmen. The Estate of the Clergy was composed of Bishops, administrative officers and parsons. The countryside was divided into dioceses and parishes which were governed in whole by the clergy under the watchful eye of the Crown but drew their strength from the last Estate, the Peasants who were those who either owned or were tenants on farms throughout Sweden. "About one-fifth of the peasantry were tenants of the nobility on land which was anciently noble."⁴ Each Estate was represented in the riksdag (the parliament). Each had privileges granted and responsibilities assigned only to their members. Soldiers were not members of any Estate though they may have been drawn from each of them. Infantry soldiers were drawn from a list each parson drew up naming those in his parish eligible to serve. The Nobility Estate was responsible for drafting and equipping members of the cavalry and noblemen were entitled to send substitutes to serve in their place if they chose not to serve. In reality "the majority of the troops had consisted of peasants and peasants' sons either serving as trooper in respect of their own farms, or carrying the musket and trailing the pike in the foot regiments."⁴ It was the responsibility of the Peasants to provide lodging for soldiers in times of war and peace. Both infantry and cavalry were paid yearly wages and provided with living quarters.⁴

Måns Persson, the father of Hans, became a corporal in the Västgöta cavalry regiment, and his assigned living quarters was in Hanaskede in Norra Wings parish. Hans was born there. After his father's death, Hans was drafted by the governor at Vings Kyrkebacke and later drafted in the spring by the Västgöta regiment under Hans Stake from Kinnekulle.⁵ Cavalry members, also known as Troopers or Riders, were military units numbering just around 8,000 Swedish and Finnish Troopers.⁴ Hans would be part of the German campaign 1638-1640.⁵ Upon returning from the war Hans learned of an desolate orchard at the Varnham Abbey and decided the apple and cherry trees there would make excellent wood for combs needed to groom horses. Before returning to Hanaskede he chopped

down 6 apple and 2 cherry trees and was caught doing so, arrested and put on trial in 1641. Because he was an agent of the Crown as a cavalryman and because he destroyed property of the Crown his crime was especially egregious. His sentence was to hang or go to New Sweden as an indentured laborer to help establish the colony.^{1,5}

Olof was born in Roslagen the son of Per Stille. Olaf was a member of the Peasant Estate owning land granted to his father and then him on Humlo Island. He lost his standing in a dispute with the reigning Noble family and after arrest and trial became a simple working class citizen of Sweden, a commoner in economic crisis due to the fine imposed after his transgression against the Crown. Though sentenced to death by sword for breaking a servant out of a castle dungeon, he had his sentence reduced to a fine of 100 daler silver money (the equivalent of 17 months pay for a Swedish soldier). Three years later, in economic ruin, he boarded the ship for a 6 month journey with his wife and two children, Ella and Anders, bound for New Sweden.²

Hans and Olaf arrived on November 7, 1641 at Fort Christina (now Wilmington, DE) on the Delaware River. Hans traveling in the Charitas as a prisoner. Olaf on the Kalmar Nyckel with his family.



Route from Sweden to New Sweden and return¹²

Joining those from previous expeditions the Swedes were the first white settlers to successfully colonize the Delaware Valley starting in 1638. New Sweden occupied one hundred and twenty miles of land on both banks of the Delaware, from just north of Trenton, New Jersey to as far south as Wilmington, Delaware.⁶



Swedish colonists landing on the Atlantic shores of Delaware during the 1600s. (Credit: North Wind Picture Archives/Alamy Stock Photo)³

Hans' and Olof's lives in the colony were very different at the outset. Hans was indentured and worked for 6 years as a laborer harvesting tobacco sent back to Sweden.^{7,8} After serving his 6 years sentence he was granted a patent⁹ giving him 1000 acres. Hans also resumed his military career as a Captain in the Swedish militia. Olof acquired land and established himself as a millwright and eventually gained the confidence of the Governor and in 1656, when the first Swedish court was organized under Dutch rule, Olof Stille was named the chief justice. He served for eight years.² Both men responded to the trials (literally and figuratively) they endured by establishing themselves as citizens that contributed to the founding of what became thriving communities along the Delaware River.

Hans married Ella, Olof's daughter, after her first husband died. They moved their family from Pennsylvania to New Jersey settling in Cinnaminson and raised their family. After Hans death the family decided upon a surname that combined Stille and Mans into what would become Steelman for the rest of time.

Refernces

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