

## **Vi kände oss hemma när vi kom till torpet. Engelsk text.**

Imagine being in a foreign country, nearly 5,000 miles from home, yet feeling as if you belong to the people and the place you are standing.

With certainty, I can say that was not the immediate experience of my great-grandfather Charles Carlson when he emigrated from Locknevi to Idaho Springs, Colorado. He had a reason to leave his pastoral life in Sweden's countryside, but my grandfather either did not know or did not think to share it with me. As a genealogist familiar with Swedish immigration to Colorado in the late 1800s, I imagine Charles sought independence, personal agency, and wealth. Instead, he found a Rocky Mountain mining town that was a bustling, multi-cultural, dog-eat-dog, rag-tag collection of dreamers looking to strike it rich while panning for nuggets of gold in frigid rivers and streams.

This past May 2023, nearly 150 years after Charles left Locknevi, his ancestors—my children, I, and my husband— stood in Locknevi with local historian and genealogist Jorgen Eriksson, and my heart hurt for my great-grandfather. I pondered why he left all his places and spaces in Sweden. I wondered if Charles ever felt truly at home in the locations I'd found him in living in the U.S. census records: wild, western Idaho Springs, the dry and dusty plains of eastern Colorado, or the bustling frontier town of Denver. Researching him, I knew he'd found a congregation of fellow Swedes at Zion Church in Idaho Springs, married a Swedish woman named Hedvig from Hasslösa, found work as a well-regarded carpenter, and raised a family of three robust and first-generation American boys. But did Charles ever feel at home in the United States? Did he spend his entire life missing his childhood home, parents and siblings, Sweden's bluest skies, Locknevi's grassy meadows, craggy hills, and the village people who spoke the same language and shared customs and social mores?

Built upon a framework of research, records, and historical references, genealogists have both the curiosity to ask those questions and full rein to contextualize stories of generations past. Those of us fascinated with genealogy understand the interest and emotions I experienced as Jorgen led my family of six to explore Charles' home and fields of his youth. Having Jorgan agree to be our researcher, guide, and interpreter was a priceless gift!

Months after my family's visit to Locknevi, I have an answer as to whether or not Charles eventually felt the peacefulness of home in Colorado. Yes, I believe he had. It's the only way to explain best how my family of six felt as we looked across the meadows and craggy hillsides full of highlights and shadows from the brightly shining Swedish sun. When we went inside the Svensson's old home, standing at my great-great-grandmother's stove, there was an overwhelming sense that we belonged to where we stood, connected to the local folks Jorgen brought with us as we toured. We felt at home.

To me, that means that Charles' life in Colorado must have been rich with details and elements from his life in Sweden. A feeling of Swedishness, specifically from Locknevi, survived through the generations, so much so that his great-granddaughter (me) and his great-great-grandchildren felt a sense of familiarity and family with Locknevi. What an incredible skill and blessing genealogists like Jorgen provide for those looking to reconnect with their roots. We sincerely thank him and your organization for featuring his work with my family.

**Anna Walker**