For the Future:
The Swedish Pavilion at the Panama
Pacific International Exposition of 1915

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The planning, building, and running of the Swedish Pavilion at the Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915 was one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of Swedes in California. One can look back to 1894 for the roots of this project. Early that year there was a moderate-sized Midwinter Exposition in San Francisco. That event, with its small but plucky Swedish exhibit and Sweden Day, was a catalyst for the formation of the Swedish American Patriotic League, an organization that was later to play a key role in the development of the Pavilion. It was built in a period, roughly from the end of the European political upheavals of 1848 to World War II, that was a high-water mark in the international vogue for World's Fairs and diverse expositions. Across the developed world, there was a rapid succession of inventions and technological developments that included the airplane, the automobile, motion pictures, electric light, the telephone, the gramophone, and the radio. Countries came together in friendly emulation to show off these new developments, expand commerce, and view each other's cultural landmarks. A pretext seems to have been essential to have a World's Fair, and so there were many more or less compelling commemorations: the one hundredth anniversaries of the American and the French Revolutions, the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's

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discovery of America, the hundredth anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase, etc. Part of this vogue for expositions was also the spirit of the times, a spirit of unalloyed optimism, a faith in constant progress through inventions and technology, and a belief in the boundless possibilities for human advancement.¹

In this atmosphere of can-do optimism the American government took over from France the project of digging the Panama Canal in 1904. It was not surprising, then, that a visionary businessman in San Francisco, Reuben Hale, saw this herculean enterprise as a golden opportunity to host a World’s Fair and promote the City by the Bay. The canal was indeed a historic development that would open up a whole new trade route between East and West. It would be of inestimable benefit to the West Coast, facilitating commerce and travel between it and the eastern states, Europe, Africa, and South America.

Nature, however, has a way of showing its ultimate power, and in 1906 San Francisco was laid waste by the Great Earthquake and fire. The city’s spirit and its people surprised the world by rebuilding in record time and better than before. As a result, when, in October 1909, President Taft announced that the Panama Canal would be opened by 1 January 1915, there was an immediate jockeying for position as several cities vied to become the host of the commemorative fair. Local investors as well as the city of San Francisco and the state of California collected huge sums to fund the enterprise, but the competition, mainly with New Orleans, was stiff. Nevertheless, on 31 January 1911 Congress voted to give the fair to San Francisco, and on 15 February 1911 President Taft signed the bill.

It is remarkable that less than a month afterwards, on 13 March 1911, the Swedish American Patriotic League of San Francisco had formed a committee to work toward Swedish participation in the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition.² This speedy action was a measure of how well organized, well led, and cohesive this community was. From the beginning this committee succeeded because it represented all segments of the Swedish-American community, including businessmen and professionals, women, working people, and all the Swedish-American churches. In June 1911 the then Swedish Ambassador to the United States, Count Albert Ehrenswärd, visited
San Francisco and met with a delegation of the committee's leaders. They urged the ambassador to convince the Swedish government to participate officially in the exposition. They offered to raise $25,000 toward the costs of a Swedish Pavilion, provided that it contain a social hall, a high priority for the Swedish Americans. From its first meeting the committee tried to gain broad-based support from Swedes all over America. They printed up thousands of stamps and membership cards to be sold to raise money and sent out delegates to meet with groups across America and elicit support.

The interest in the fair among the various ethnic groups of San Francisco (Italians, French, Russians, Japanese, Swedes, etc.) was high. This was a reflection of the special role ethnic identity played in the American immigrant communities. Very different from their relatively homogeneous homelands, in America ethnic groups existed in constant contradistinction with other groups. In the hurly burly of American urban life, each wanted to elbow itself to the front of the line. One curious manifestation of this ethnic competitiveness was the great popularity of organized tugs of war, considered to be a recognized sport on a par with baseball, hockey, and football, but somehow highlighting the king-of-the-mountain aspect of sport. Inter-ethnic tugs of war were widely reported on in the newspapers of the period. For example the Swedish newspaper of San Francisco, Vestkusten, described a tug of war meet thusly in its 25 June 1913 edition:

In the big international bout between tug of war teams from different nationalities here a team of well-known Swedes won. . . . The other participants represented Denmark, Italy, America, Canada, Ireland, Austria, and England. The victory of the Swedes was all the more remarkable as they were comparatively light in weight but otherwise they certainly showed stamina and teamwork which together with steady leadership from the Captain, August Sjögren, brought them victory. The first match was on Tuesday, and the Swedes beat the Austrians in eight minutes; on Wednesday the Swedes beat the Americans in twenty-six minutes; last Thursday, when the final meet took place, the Swedes beat the Irish in
thirty-four minutes to the enormous joy of the spectators. Four thousand people witnessed the great test of strength, and the Irish, who were sure of winning, were deeply disappointed. Besides the first prize the Swedes were awarded the West Coast Championship.

Such tugs of war made an unlikely pairing with dances, the other popular social event at the time, and we can read ads in Vestkusten for public tugs of war followed by a ball! Another common arena for inter-ethnic competition was the uniformed drill team, which was also to play a featured role in the World's Fair's festivities.

In this atmosphere of ethnic competitiveness, a grand and impressive World's Fair pavilion from their home country was a way to increase the prestige, visibility, and distinctiveness of an ethnic group. For the Swedes of the San Francisco Bay Area, the Swedish Pavilion at the Panama Pacific International Exposition gave them an opportunity to show a different face than the widespread stereotype of Swedes in America. The Bay Area Swedes were largely urban people who did not at all see themselves in the Carl Oskars and Christinas of Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa. They were predominantly urban tradesmen, businessmen, working people, and professionals. They were generally somewhat later immigrants who had often already been acclimated to the American language and conditions by stays further east. In particular, they benefited from the unique "energy and enterprising spirit which always characterized the American West."

The Swedish government was not particularly eager to take part in this project, as there seemed to be too many World's Fairs and their commercial benefit appeared to be waning. However, the Swedish publicity machine in San Francisco was powerful and insistent, and in November 1912 the announcement came that Sweden would participate. It was the first European country to make this commitment. John Hammar, the head of the Swedish Export Agency, happened to be traveling in the United States in fall 1912. San Francisco Swedish Consul William Matson, owner of the important Matson Lines shipping company and a prime mover in the efforts to have Sweden participate officially in the World's Fair, sent an urgent cable to the Swedish foreign minister requesting in the strongest terms that
he instruct Hammar to select the "best site available!" Hammar was then formally empowered by the Swedish government to pick a site for the Pavilion.

On November 12 the ceremony took place at the Fair Grounds in what is known today as the Marina District. In a pattern that was to be repeated each time there was a Swedish celebration during these years, a procession of brightly decorated automobiles formed up at the Swedish American Hall in the Scandinavian neighborhood out on Market Street and paraded downtown. At the Fairmont Hotel on Nob Hill the line of cars stretched two blocks. A luncheon with speeches was held, and then the cortege went down California Street to Van Ness Avenue and on to the chosen site on the grounds of the Presidio Army Base. As at all of these ceremonies, there was a band, a choir, soloists, and many speakers. The high point was when two regiments of soldiers from the Presidio marched by, saluting the Swedish flag, a moment of great pride and excitement for the large crowd of assembled Swedes.

The various ceremonies were captured on film which will be sent back to Sweden. Before they are sent off the Swedes here in town, however, will have a chance to see these motion pictures [rörliga bilder]—see themselves in all their glory!—at the showing which will be given next Saturday in the Swedish Building and which no one should miss attending, for it will be the first important local Swedish event to be shown in this way, and we Swedes out here cannot imagine a better greeting to Sweden.
Back in Sweden it was felt that, instead of being a commercial opportunity, the Swedish participation would be a gesture of reconciliation between the homeland Swedes and the “lost sheep” of the emigration. There was a new realization that raising the prestige of Swedish Americans through a successful participation in the World’s Fair would be good for Sweden’s position in the world. Previously, some in Sweden had tried to portray the emigrants as deserters and starving malingerers to discourage emigration. Now they saw that reciprocal bonds of affection and respect would be useful for both sides.

The San Francisco Swedes mounted fund-raising and publicity efforts around the country and even in Sweden. A special issue of Vestkusten (27 March 1913) was sent to all members of the Swedish Riksdag. In Sweden, nevertheless, interest in the fair was still lukewarm. The conclusive factor, however, was that the Swedish Americans wanted it so earnestly. For the first time, the Swedish government would participate officially in a cooperative enterprise with Swedish Americans. This deference to the latter took the concrete form of a large area designated for social activities in the Swedish Pavilion, the first priority, from the beginning, of the San Francisco Committee. It also is an indication of what, to people almost a century later, seems like an inordinate predilection at that time for social occasions, balls, banquets, luncheons, literary evenings, theatrics followed by dancing, concerts followed by receptions, and such. The archives are full of photos of dressed-up Swedish Americans indefatigably attending various parties.

After considerable debate, the Swedish Riksdag voted on 15 May 1913 to appropriate 600,000 crowns for the Pavilion. A committee was set up in Sweden on 18 July 1913 with, as its honorary chairman, Crown Prince Gustav Adolf, the future Gustav VI Adolf. The prince had led the successful 1912 Olympic Games held in Stockholm and clearly was experienced in this sort of big international project. Despite the urging of Consul William Matson in favor of John Hammar, former Lieutenant Richard Bernström was selected as commissioner general of the Swedish Pavilion. He was the son of John Bernström, the president of the important firm de Laval Separator, which later became Alfa Laval, one of Sweden’s great industrial
Bernström was born in 1875 and had served in the Swedish military before entering the firm on whose board of directors he served as well as becoming chief operating officer. He was married in 1901 and had three children. Because of conflict with his powerful, opinionated, and strong-willed father and serious health problems, he left Separator in September 1912. After a stay in a nursing home and travel abroad, he returned to Sweden in June 1913 and was appointed commissioner general of the Pavilion in July, a sign that his reputation and family connections were still intact.

The committee set to work in Sweden in the summer of 1913 and chose the noted architect Ferdinand Boberg to design the Pavilion. Boberg had designed the Swedish pavilions for the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 and fairs in Milan and Malmö as well as the main Stockholm Post Office. The plans that he drew up called for a large building 180 feet square with 30,000 square feet of space. It was a decidedly National Romantic mix of Swedish country church and manor house linked by an Italianate loggia that was perhaps a reminiscence of the Stockholm City Hall that was being built at this time. The Pavilion's tower, 100 feet high, offered one of the best views of the fair. The Swedish Americans got their social area, which included several large and beautifully appointed rooms for men and women and a multipurpose hall for banquets, lectures, and highly successful film showings.

With little advance notice, Bernström arrived as a virtual un-
known in San Francisco on 13 October 1913. Immediately, he took charge and proved to be decisive, effective, energetic, and ingratiating. He changed the site that had previously been chosen for the Pavilion to one that was more centrally located, appointed a local architect to oversee the construction, and let the contract for building the Pavilion. Sweden was the first among the foreign countries to break ground. The ceremony took place on 9 May 1914 and was described in vivid detail in the pages of Vestkusten on 14 May:

You would have been proud if you had seen the long row of 100 decorated automobiles which participated. You could see the Swedish flag everywhere from the time of the parade's beginning at the Swedish headquarters, during the ride down Market St., around Union Square, out Van Ness Ave. and Lombard St. to the exposition where around 4,000 Swedish Americans were assembled. You couldn't but receive a fine impression of the participants' high character and appearance and many complimentary comments were heard about the good character that our citizens of Swedish background represent.

The exposition's vice president, R. B. Hale, welcomed Sweden as the first foreign nation to break ground for its exhibit building. Consul William Matson stepped forward and, surrounded by general jubilation, took the first shovel full of dirt for the foundation on which our Swedish house will be built and from which we expect so much joy next year. The shovel with which this ceremony was carried out was richly ornamented with solid engraved silver donated by our compatriot the jeweler George Larson who brought it to the site in a handsomely decorated automobile. Miss Lurline Matson, the charming daughter of the Swedish Consul, stepped forward then and raised the Swedish flag while the band played "Du Gamla du Fria."

Enthusiasm? You bet! If the excitement was great when the blue and yellow flag unfurled in the bright sunshine it was nothing compared to what was to come. . . . Architect August Nordin who is going to be in charge of the building's...
construction gave the sign for the first piling to be driven into the ground with the help of a mighty steam hammer. This was the signal for an outbreak of jubilation whose like we have seldom heard. A daily newspaper said that this enormous outburst of joy could be compared with the shouts of the Vikings as they came to land and conquered foreign countries. But the spontaneous, completely overwhelming joy that burst from the throats of thousands of loyal Swedish Americans was much more peaceful than in Viking times. People stood up on their chairs and benches, they waved their hats and their handkerchiefs in wild delight. And through the clear sun-drenched air cut the high-pitched scream of whistles accompanied by the heavy thudding of the steam hammer whose echo rolled out over the area in the beautiful summer day and resounded far away among the hills that encircle the many splendored Golden Gate.

As the Swedish Pavilion was being built during the summer and fall of 1914, the First World War was breaking out in Europe. In late summer 1914 it seemed that the whole enterprise might have to be scrapped. In particular, the shipment of voluminous and costly exhibits through submarine- and mine-infested seas seemed an impossible task. However, the Swedes in San Francisco and the Swedish Pavilion commissioner, Richard Bernström, were tenacious, and the project went ahead. Because of the war, though, shipping and insurance costs rose precipitously, and cuts had to be made. It was decided that the exhibit of Swedish art would have to go. There was an outcry from San Francisco, and the Swedish Foreign Minister, Knut Wallenberg, who had recently been elected an honorary member of the Swedish Art Academy, made a personal contribution of fifty thousand crowns to cover the shipping and insurance expenses of the Swedish art exhibit. Much effort was expended on the interior decoration of the Pavilion and the art exhibit at the Palace of Fine Arts so that a suitably handsome setting would be created. Two ships arrived safely with their cargoes from Sweden in December 1914. The exhibits were set up, and the Swedish Pavilion was among the first to be ready for visitors.
The Panama Pacific International Exposition opened on 20 February 1915, and the grand opening of the Swedish Pavilion took place two weeks later on March 2. Here is the richly evocative description of that day from the pages of Vestkusten:

What a joyous day it was. Already early the stars and stripes and the blue and yellow waved from the Swedish building on Market St. and as noon approached one after another the autos arrived richly decorated with the Swedish and American flags. At precisely 1:30 the long row of decorated cars set in motion. This parade route went down Market St. and turned in at Post St. and continued up Post St. to Van Ness to the Scott St. entrance to the Exposition. Here the great parade was organized which counted about 5,000 participants and so the enormous and highly impressive parade started marching to the Swedish Pavilion. . . . It was an unforgettable sight that all will keep in their memory, when the silk flags snapped in the breeze and Sweden's Commissioner General stepped up to the lectern saluted by the parading troops and the military orchestra playing "Ur Svenska Hjärtans Djup." A powerful wave of enthusiasm spread through the huge crowds and a rumbling storm of applause hailed the beautiful pageant and there was certainly no one who in that grandiose moment did not feel the indescribable joy of having the privilege of being Swedish. The spontaneous jubilation rose to the very skies and suddenly over the great crowd our bold aviator Lincoln Beechey appeared several thousand
feet up in the blue sky and scattered small silk Swedish flags over the crowd.\textsuperscript{10}

The Swedish Exhibit was divided into two parts. The industrial and social displays were shown at the Pavilion, and the Swedish art exhibit occupied nine rooms in the Palace of Fine Arts, the beloved building, still standing, designed by Berkeley architect Bernard Maybeck. This exhibit, under the experienced direction of Art Commissioner Anselm Schultzberg, was widely reported on in the Swedish-American and "American" press.\textsuperscript{11} The well-known Swedish-American painter Birger Sandzén visited the exposition in late July 1915 and wrote an article about it for the October 1915 issue of Ungdomsvännen (The friend of youth), a monthly in Swedish published by the Augustana Book Concern of Rock Island, Illinois.

The exhibit of Swedish art was one of the most praised, and it garnered many medals and prizes. Nevertheless, some of Sweden's greatest artists had chosen not to participate. Even though the art works were fully insured, some great artists like Anders Zorn, Richard Bergh, Karl Nordström, Prince Eugen, and others were worried that their paintings might be destroyed by hostile cannons, torpedoes, or floating mines. Still, a representative group of first-rate artists did send works to San Francisco, most notably Bruno Liljefors, Carl Larsson, Gustav Fjaestad, and John Bauer. In general, Sandzén had little sympathy for large "official" exhibits, and this one was no exception. He thought that much of the art was unoriginal, lifeless, and hopelessly academic. But there were, he felt, many fine works of art that outweighed the mediocre. First in his estimation was Bruno Liljefors, whose grand tableaux of untrammeled nature showed its most noble creations, swans, geese, gulls, and sea hawks. "You are transported in a heartbeat to granite cliffs, cold salt waves and fresh sea breezes, and you long for the real outdoors life and the infinite joy it brings."\textsuperscript{12}

For Sandzén, who loved nothing better than his home, family, studio, and garden, the paintings of Carl Larsson were sure to elicit his admiration. He admired Larsson's many-sided talents: watercolors, huge frescoes, oil paintings, and etchings. In San Francisco, watercolors of home life at the Larssons' were exhibited, and about
them Sandzén wrote, “Larsson attains a unique decorative effect in his drawings while he masters the expressiveness of the line to a greater degree than any contemporary artist.” Another well-known and richly decorative artist in the Swedish exhibit was Gustav Fjaestad, who had many works in the show, including oil paintings, tapestries, and even furniture. Sandzén found Fjaestad’s tapestry-like technique in the oil paintings clever in a few cases, but felt that it became repetitive and tired when applied to too many motifs. A lesser known artist that Sandzén and other critics praised was Anna Boberg, wife of the Swedish Pavilion’s architect. She had attracted notice especially for her handsome landscape paintings of the Lofoten Islands in Norway. As a colorist himself, Sandzén greatly admired her use of color, and he wrote that “without any exaggeration one can affirm that not a single one of the Swedish artists exhibiting here can boast of a so powerful and at the same time sensitive use of color as she.” Nevertheless, Anna Boberg did not even get an Honorable Mention. Because she was a woman? John Bauer, the fascinating and totally original illustrator of fairy tales, was also represented and received high praise.

The rest of Sweden's exhibit was in the Swedish Pavilion building. Instead of displaying their wares scattered in the Exposition’s Machinery Hall and other relevant buildings, the Swedes decided to gather their exhibits in their own building. Because of this they were excluded from the competition for medals, but many countries felt that the deck was stacked against them, as the majority of the medal juries was made up of Americans. The Pavilion offered displays of Swedish railroads, sports, social progress, homes and health care for workers, banking, telephones, forest industry, paper, sugar, matches, hydroelectric power, steel, etc.

The Swedish-American side, to the left as one entered the building and designed for public assemblies, banquets, lectures, receptions, film showings, etc., was conceived to give the impression of a beautifully decorated, tasteful upper-class Swedish home. These spaces were used to show the products of the Swedish art glass, pottery, and porcelain industries. Firms including Uppsala Ekeby, Gustavsberg, Kosta, and Rörstrand were represented. Handsome examples of Swedish crafts, hand-woven carpets, embroidery, tapestries, lace, furniture, and folk costumes were also on display.
The latter were particularly noteworthy. During the nineteenth century, under the influence of the eminent Swedish ethnologist Artur Hazelius, life-sized mannequins with exquisitely sculpted heads and hands were made wearing finely crafted Swedish provincial costumes. These displays of mannequins, often arranged in scenes from real life like a genre painting, were sent to the various world's fairs so popular during that century. For the 1915 Swedish Pavilion, sixteen half-life-sized dolls were made in Stockholm by a company called Bikupan (beehive). They were displayed in the large assembly hall on the Swedish-American side of the Pavilion and became one of its most admired exhibits. Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst purchased the costumed dolls, and, appropriately, they are in the collection of the Anthropology Museum that bears her name on the campus of the University of California Berkeley. They are the most substantial remainder of the Swedish Pavilion still in the San Francisco Bay area.\(^6\)

The assembly hall was also frequently used for banquets and for showings of motion pictures every Wednesday and Saturday. The Panama Pacific International Exposition was the first world's fair at which movies played an important role. The hall held 250 seats, and documentary films were shown of Skåne, Östergötland's fields of grain, Norrland's forests and lakes, manor houses and iron works, factories and workshops, schools, colleges and teaching, sports, ski and skating races, regattas, and so on. One film that must have seemed incongruous in San Francisco was the lengthy opus of the Swedish Society for Combating Emigration. Over eleven thousand meters of film were sent, and, according to Bernström, the hall was consistently filled "till trängsel" (to overflowing).

Every nation and state that participated in the Exposition had its
own day, a time for special events and celebrations. Right from the beginning, the Swedish World’s Fair Committee of San Francisco focused on this event. Sweden Day became, in fact, a period of ten days, as there was a convention of the United Swedish Singers of the Pacific Coast in conjunction with Sweden Day. Together with other events, festivities, and celebrations, Sweden Day became a cornucopia filled with concerts, balls, banquets, parades, speeches, picnics, and excursions. Midsummer Day, 24 June, was the focal point and culmination of all the excitement.

Although Vestkusten was certainly the prime Swedish publicity organ for the Swedish Pavilion, newspapers from Sweden had their own correspondents. Other Swedish-American newspapers were also represented. Hemlandet from Chicago had a special correspondent based in San Francisco for the whole year of the Exposition who wrote under the signature FLM. His voluminous, well-researched, and well-written articles are an important source for the history of the Swedes in Northern California. Here is his description of the Sweden Day Parade, published in the 1 July 1915 Hemlandet:

First, as usual, a band, then the distinguished representatives and the board of the Swedish exposition committee whose splendid appearance in their formal clothes was remarked upon—then the Ladies’ Auxiliary, the Swedish Patriotic League more than justified its name—both in its clothing, bearing and large numbers—Next came the United Swedish Singers of the Pacific Coast whose public performances have made them so popular that they were greeted by the spectators packed on the sidewalks with applause and hurrahs. This was the first division of the parade.

The second division was made up of various organizations in San Francisco and Oakland. All were very numerous and marched smartly like well-drilled soldiers. Banners and flags waved here and there in front of each association. The male as well as the female associations wore Swedish colors, not to mention the large number of both sexes who wore national costumes.

The third division took the crowd of spectators by storm.
Through the efforts of the Swedish women's association and a lot of work there were several hundred children, one troop clad in red and white with some in blue with silver stars on their heads. This group formed the American flag. The second group of children was clad in blue and yellow forming the Swedish flag.

The 4th division was made up mostly of the Vasa Order and without being partisan it can be said that this was the most impressive division in the whole parade—like every other division it was preceded by a band. Then the Fylgia Lodge's splendid flag was carried by one of the Lodge's athletes wearing the national costume of Dalarna accompanied by two girls likewise in national costume. Then came the well-known Fylgia drill team which in their handsome uniforms elicited shouts and applause from the spectators. But then came the big surprise. Right after the drill team came a women's drill team with corresponding uniforms, white as snow with blue piping and gold braid on the lapels, collars and caps. Now total jubilation broke out, since nothing like this had ever been seen before out here. This was the women's team's first public appearance and it had been organized, uniformed and drilled especially for Sweden's great day. The Vasa Lodges from Oakland and Richmond had their own even larger teams dressed in white and the Swedish colors and all elicited admiration and delight.

The festival program was held on the Band Concourse. On the platform the places of honor were reserved for the representative of the King of Sweden, the Swedish Exposition Committee, the Swedish commissioners, etc. On either side of the platform were groups of children—forming on one side the flag of Sweden and on the other side the American.

The high point of the grandiose program was the reading of greetings from Swedish King Gustav V by Count Claes Bonde, sent especially from the Swedish Embassy in Washington for this event. The greetings were the culmination of the act of reconciliation between the Swedish Americans and the home country. They read:
"King Gustav V:

"With special satisfaction I take this opportunity to send my cordial greeting to the Swedes in San Francisco as well as all those assembled to celebrate Sweden's Day.

"The lively interest that the Swedes in America and especially the colony in San Francisco have shown so that Sweden would be worthily represented at the meeting of the nations in that city to celebrate the completion of the perhaps most grandiose project that the world has ever seen, has given me great pleasure.

"I am strongly convinced that the Swedish exhibit will contribute greatly to increase the respect and affection for the name of Sweden in the great American republic and therefore be of real service not least for those of Sweden's sons and daughters who have made a new home there.

"With a warm wish that all who hear my greeting may richly enjoy success in their enterprises I want to express the strong hope that this gathering around the colors of Sweden will strengthen the Swedish Americans' feeling of solidarity with and love for the old homeland so that this love will survive and like a precious inheritance be carried over to the coming generations."

Like the fireworks rockets that they so resembled, world's fairs burst splendidly on the horizon but then disappeared after an all too brief existence. One wonders, then, at the legacy of the Panama Pacific International Exposition and especially of its Swedish Pavilion. As for the former, there have been a surprising number of contemporary exhibits and publications that show a continuing interest in the Fair. The Palace of Fine Arts is still one of San Francisco's treasures, and the Palace of the Legion of Honor, which recreated the Pavilion of France in permanent stone, is an important San Francisco museum. The Civic Auditorium, built for the Exposition, still hosts frequent concerts and other events. There are many sculptures, paintings, and building fragments from the Exposition scattered across the Bay Area. As regards the Swedish Pavilion, there was talk of moving it and maintaining it as a permanent Swedish exhibit or adapting it
for use by another Swedish group or church. This is what happened to the Ferdinand Boberg Swedish Pavilion at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair, which was moved to the Bethany College campus in Lindsborg, Kansas, where it still stands. But no one with the requisite resources came forward, and the building was sold for a paltry 410 dollars, one percent of what it had cost to build. It was taken apart and used for its lumber. The large, heavy name plaque, “Sweden,” from the building is, however, still preserved in San Francisco. The Pavilion’s most durable legacy is intangible, the continued lively activities in the Swedish-American Hall on outer Market Street, where the Pavilion committee met, where its records were kept and are stored, and in front of which the parades of decorated automobiles were formed. It is still the center for Swedish life in San Francisco that it was then.

One of the most notable exhibits in the Pavilion that clearly had some lasting importance was the room of the Swedish iron industry, which was described as follows in Vestkusten:

You feel the weakness of language when you stand at the entry of the iron industry’s room. . . . With its dim blue illumination this room is designed to give the illusion of a mine. In this room what gives its overwhelming character is the block of iron ore from Kiruna which crowns the great display case in the middle. It weighs no less than seven and one half tons and contains 72% iron.

A ten-year-old boy in Stockholm, enthralled, may well have read the description of this room, widely reported on in the Swedish press. Forty years later he was called upon to design a meditation room and perhaps remembered the mystical effect of the spotlighted rough block of iron ore in the darkened space and designed his room with the same conception. This meditation room is at the United Nations...
in New York, and its designer was the Swedish secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld.

Another noteworthy legacy of the Swedish Pavilion is the medal designed by the eminent Swedish-American artist Carl Oscar Borg. Borg had been a successful artist in Paris but came home to San Francisco at the outbreak of the First World War. The medal was struck in the workshop of George Larson, a San Francisco jeweler who played a key role in the committee’s success. On the front of the medal can be seen the Swedish Pavilion with the Golden Gate, the Exposition’s Tower of Jewels, and the rising sun in the background. On the verso is the goddess of wisdom, Pallas, crowned with laurel wreaths containing allegorical images of Science and Labor. The thought-provoking inscription in Swedish, “Arbetet Ädlar” (labor ennobles), was called “tråffande” (pertinent, appropriate, pointed) in the local press. The inscription was likely an affirmation of America’s egalitarian society, where labor, not birth, conferred nobility. Thousands of the medals were sold, and they remain one of the pavilion’s most prized collectibles.19

There is, curiously, a somber chapter in the joyous success story of the Swedish Pavilion, a saga of anguish and failure, triumph and tragedy. The Swedish Commissioner, Richard Bernström, suffered throughout his adult life with bleeding ulcers that necessitated periodic stays in nursing homes. Nevertheless, because of his gift for leadership, he rose quickly in the company which his father led, de Laval Separator. There were, however, growing conflicts between father and son over differences in religious beliefs,
lifestyle, and values. These issues came to a head in late summer 1912. There was a vitriolic exchange of letters between the two about the sale of some shares in the company. Richard bitterly criticized the actions of an executive named Jansson, and Richard's father took Jansson's side and forced the son to write him a humiliating letter of apology. To give an idea of another reality behind the successes of Bernström in San Francisco consider the following from one of his letters to his father at this time:

I recognize very willingly that my share in the successes of the last ten years is small, and I want to disappear now from the company, so that after a time no one will remember that I was involved. Despite my propensity for a life of ease [one senses here an ironic reference to a criticism by the father] I have not left anything undone for the success of the company. But it's not enough and I am certainly aware that I have been found lacking in many areas. In this matter as well as in my repeated illnesses I feel that a man with Papa's view of life [John Bernström was a very pious Christian. It was common for Swedes to refer to their parents in the third person] will be able to see God's will, if for nothing else then for my punishment. And if this be so, it is clear to me that one reaps what one sows. If I am doing the wrong thing now I will suffer the consequences. . . . I hope to be a useful member of society and as such bring honor to my Father and Mother.

On another occasion, while a patient at a sanatorium in Ulricehamn, he wrote to his father, "These last weeks have been a time of crisis for me and I have suffered from not being able to sleep." And on 30 May 1913, while visiting Baden Baden, a well-known health spa in Germany, he wrote to his father, "I did not meet Papa's expectations. . . . My own interest in life is minimal. . . . I have no future plans. I feel better now than when I left Sweden, nevertheless I often feel poorly." He then told his father he was returning to Sweden shortly. His goal was still to separate himself completely from the company, so that people would forget he ever had been in-
volved. Being away from Sweden was a part of that strategy. He intended to go to America in the fall of 1913 to do a thorough audit of the American subsidiary of de Laval. There was no mention of the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in this lengthy letter.

With this background of depression, illness, and conflict, it is noteworthy that when Bernström arrived in San Francisco in October 1913 he immediately made a positive impression of decisiveness, effectiveness, and charm. Vestkusten often burst out in lengthy hymns of admiration for the Commissioner. For example, on 9 December 1915 the following appeared:

Since Christmas 1913 Richard Bernström has devoted the great part of his time to Sweden's participation in the World's Fair in San Francisco. . . . It is already clear to all of us out here that one of the chief reasons for Sweden's success in 1915 was Richard Bernström's lively interest in the cause, his fabulous energy and great capacity for work which never left any opportunity unexplored when it could promote Sweden. Richard Bernström is an enviable man in the personality he has been endowed with, together with the healthy and lively energy, that manly decisiveness and drive, with the warmly friendly good humor, the open straightforwardness and the natural, heartwarming lack of pretension in his relations with people.

One can see that Bernström took full advantage of the opportunity that so many immigrants enjoyed in America to remake themselves, to leave behind the old self and create a grand new one in America. When he stood on the main stage on the Band Concourse at the Exposition as featured speaker, addressing vast crowds of wildly applauding Swedish Americans, he may well have thought of the biblical phrase "the stone that the builders rejected." In recognition of his distinguished service, Bernström was made Commander of the Royal Order of Vasa by King Gustav V, a distinction that was sure to bring the long-hoped-for approval of his mother and father.

Bernström completed the work of the Pavilion, returned to Swe-
den in early 1916, and for the final meeting of the Swedish Committee in Stockholm on 29 October 1918 he prepared a report that was well written, complete, and sometimes minced no words about the rapaciousness of the administration of the Exposition. Bernström himself was not present, however, to hand over his report to Crown Prince Gustav Adolph and the committee. Instead, he sent a touching and eloquent handwritten cover letter, dated 28 October 1918, from Sofiahemmet, a sanatorium in Stockholm where he was again being treated for bleeding ulcers. Ten months later, San Francisco, where he had attained his greatest triumphs, was plunged into grief and shock when word arrived from Stockholm that Richard Bernström had died on 17 August 1919 at age 44.

Behind the Swedish Pavilion's plucky story of commitment, organization, work, and success lies the rollercoaster life of Richard Bernström, ending in a tragic early death, but after having found an unexpected niche in San Francisco, where he finally experienced joy, triumph, and honor.

The Swedish Pavilion was viewed by all who participated as a memorable success. A significant part of that success was due to the powerful support of Vestkusten's owner and editor, Alex Olsson. Not only in San Francisco but in the larger world of the Swedish-American press his prestige and his pen greatly contributed to the publicity and support that the enterprise received. Olsson was able to bring in from Washington state his friend Ernst Skarstedt, the greatest of the Swedish-American journalists, to help write the many articles needed to cover the exposition. These numerous articles, as well as those of Gustav Wickman and of the writer known as "FLM" from Hemlandet, constitute a landmark in Swedish-American journalism.

On the negative side must be counted the effects of the First World War on the size and attendance of the Exposition. Many of the groups from Sweden that still enhance the cultural life of Swedish America, including choirs, folk dance groups, gymnastic groups, etc., that would have come to perform were deterred by the war. Not just Sweden suffered from the disruption to shipping caused by the belligerents' naval blockades. Very few tourists from Europe made the dangerous crossing. Most of the European countries were at war and quite simply otherwise engaged. They could not give much if
any attention to a faraway international exposition. Grand events like the planned flotilla of warships from many nations that was to meet in Hampton Roads, Virginia, and convoy through the Panama Canal to San Francisco were also casualties of the war.

The most elemental of all human experiences is breathing in and breathing out. Just as life itself is structured by this pairing of activities, our personal lives are characterized by this sort of antithetical but complementary duality. Consider stimulus-response or need-fulfillment. In my studies of the Swedish Pavilion, I have detected a similar dualistic structure that helps one to understand more deeply what the many Swedish-American participants experienced. A quote from *Hemlandet* of 1 July 1915 perhaps says this well:

Sweden's day at the World's Fair, Midsummer Day June 24, was the greatest of all the nations' days at the exposition. All that had been prophesied came to pass. San Francisco's inhabitants and visitors from all over the world stand in awe and admiration at the show that the Swedish nation put on. The Swedish Pavilion with its numerous splendid objects certainly astonished everyone, but on Sweden's day the astonishment reached its height. Several thousand of our nation assembled at the set time...to form the parade that would march to the exposition. One can scarcely imagine any other parade in San Francisco eliciting such great admiration.

It is clear that, just like breathing out and breathing in, the words *visa* (to show) and *beundran* (admiration) give a dualistic structure to this passage and the narrative that follows. The Swedes in San Francisco, swamped, deluged, and inundated by the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture, now finally could stand "up on their chairs and benches," waving "their hats and their handkerchiefs in wild delight." This was their turn to shout, "Our time has come!" For once they could fully show what they were made of and from whence they came. For once they could win the admiration that they and their culture and their homeland deserved.

Because of the official nature of the Swedish Pavilion and the
almost transcendent aura of the World's Fair, the act of showing and the respondent act of admiration become uniquely operative and powerful. Instead of the expected proportionate relationship between the amplitude of the stimulus and the amplitude of the response, the stimulus plays the role of catalyst, causing a totally disproportionate release of energy. Just as the "showing" releases a far greater than expected degree of "admiration," the respect shown to Sweden by the salute of the American soldiers, the large crowds, and the pageantry results in a quite extraordinary, almost inexplicable level of enthusiasm among the Swedish Americans that astonished even the committee members.24 In a cable from John Hammar, who had officially recommended the site on 12 November 1912 to Foreign Minister Ehrenswärd, he reported, "Swedish American enthusiasm beyond comprehension." 25

Today in the Swedish-American Hall in San Francisco there is a cabinet built by a Swedish carpenter in late 1915. It contains the archives of the San Francisco Swedish Committee for the Panama Pacific International Exposition. After the close of the exposition the committee met on 7 December 1915. It is recorded in the minutes of this meeting that all the
records and correspondence relating to their now completed grand enterprise would be stored in this cabinet “for the future.” One has to admire the quiet eloquence and richness of meaning in those three words. This conscious and deliberate reference to the archive’s future life characterizes it as what in French is called “le travail de la mémoire”—the work that is done to keep alive the memory of the past. This work must have seemed quite natural to people whose forefathers had raised up rune stones to keep alive the memories of fallen heroes, long-ago battles, perilous journeys. All the efforts, passion, and work expended on the Pavilion were to keep alive the Swedish heritage in San Francisco “for the future.” As one reads of all the Swedish programs taking place in the Bay Area still listed today in the pages of Vestkusten, one must agree that the Swedish Pavilion of the Panama Pacific International Exposition has left a powerful legacy indeed.

ENDNOTES

1. Burton Benedict, The Anthropology of World’s Fairs (San Francisco, 1983), 60: “The Panama Pacific International Exposition epitomized a whole view of American society conceived in optimism. It was the last collective outburst of this sort of naïve unalloyed optimism.” There is a substantial literature on this exposition, which can be accessed by a Google search and an internet search of the catalogue of the San Francisco Public Library.

2. The minutes of the World’s Fair Committee of the Swedish American Patriotic League of California are in a private collection in San Francisco. The author is grateful for the opportunity to consult this resource. The history of this committee can be read in the Utställningsnummer (Exposition issue) of Vestkusten (24 June 1915) and in the committee’s Slutrapport (Final report), available at the Royal Library in Stockholm. All translations from the Swedish in this article are by the author. The best contemporary account of the history of the Swedish Pavilion in English is Frank Morton Todd, The Story of the Exposition 3 (New York, 1921): 300-308.

3. San Francisco Committee, Slutrapport (Final report), Royal Library, Stockholm, 10. See also an article by Ernst Skarstedt, the great booster of the West Coast, in Vestkusten, 7 February 1915: “He who has not seen the country west of the Rocky Mountains has not seen America. It is indeed true that the largest industrial areas, the largest cities, the largest populations, etc. belong to the eastern states. But that is only because the east coast was discovered first and
consequently the immigrants settled there and conquered the natural obstacles. If the west coast had been discovered first, without any doubt the now so heavily populated eastern states would still today be a sparsely populated wasteland, not at all comparable with the west coast states as they are today. The west coast is so infinitely richer in natural resources, forests, minerals, agricultural land, not to mention the infinitely superior climate.”

4. Richard Bernström, Slutrapport (Final report), 28 October 1918, Riksarkivet, Stockholm, U.10. See also Aftontidning, 6 August 1913, and Hemlandet, 11 February 1915.

5. Cable from Consul William Matson to Foreign Minister Ehrenswärd, 7 November 1912, Riksarkivet, Stockholm, UD 2360 A-B. All cables quoted in this article are in English in the original. Ehrenswärd answered Matson by cable on the same day: “Hammar authorized select Exposition site.” University of California Bancroft Library, Panama Pacific International Exposition Archive, Carton 50. Hammar came to San Francisco at the invitation of the administration of the Exposition, and all his expenses from New York to San Francisco and back were paid for by them (ibid., carton 138). He published a detailed narrative of this trip, Amerikafärd: Anteckningar från en Resa till Nordamerikas Förenta Stater September–December 1912, Stockholm 1913. Two copies of this text are in the P.P.I.E. archive of the Bancroft Library.

6. Vestkusten, 14 November 1912. In a letter from John Hammar on 29 March 1913 to W. T. Sesnon of the San Francisco Swedish Committee he says, “I got the film of the dedication of the Swedish ground. It was exceedingly good, and the very next day I showed it personally to His Majesty the King at the city club here in Stockholm and it made a tremendous success.” U.C. Berkeley, Bancroft Library, P.P.I.E. Archive, Carton 89, file 16. In his speech opening the Riksdag the king spoke in favor of funding the Swedish Pavilion; see San Francisco Examiner, 17 January 1913.

7. Vestkusten, 23 October 1913: “For the first time in Sweden’s history the Swedish government and the Swedish Parliament accorded official recognition to the express wishes of their faraway countrymen, happy that they had honored their old homeland in such a distinguished way.” Echoing official opinions in Sweden, Vestkusten says further: “The driving force behind Sweden’s decision to participate was not so much to develop its commercial relations and gain a greater market here, but rather, by participating, to foster affection for our old fatherland and keep it alive and fresh. Back home they wanted to give us out here a visible proof that we are not forgotten” (4 March 1915). John Hammar made a very positive impression in San Francisco. Consul William Matson wrote to Foreign Minister Ehrenswärd on 30 November 1912 that John Hammar “in the opinion expressed from all sides proved himself eminently qualified for the position of Swedish Commissioner General” (Riksarkivet, UD 2360 A-B). Matson
assured Ehrenswärd that having empowered Hammar to select a site "just at this
time gained great favor for Sweden." In the uncertain atmosphere created by the
impending war, the exposition's directors hoped that Sweden, the first European
nation to commit to participating, would persuade other countries to follow.
See also *Vestkusten, Utsättningsnummer* (Exposition issue), 12. Hammar func-
tioned in Stockholm as Commissioner of the Pavilion during the spring of 1913
and lobbied to be its permanent commissioner but was supplanted by Bernström
in July 1913.

8. In the biographic materials on Bernström that we have studied in the
family collection at Stockholms Stadsarkiv there is a gap from 12 September
1912 to 30 May 1913. Bernström's obituary, published in *Vestkusten* on 28
August 1919, notes that in early 1913 he "sailed around the world and visited
San Francisco, during which he visited the site of the exposition and on that
occasion pointed out that the place earmarked for the Swedish building was not
the best, and when he came back here as Commissioner General his first step was
to choose a more centrally located place for the Swedish Pavilion." In a letter
that Bernström wrote on 16 September 1913 to the director in chief of foreign
and domestic participation of the exposition we read, "I have personally formed
the same opinion [that the first site was unsuitable] during an inspection of the
exposition grounds which I visited early last February" (U.C Berkeley P.P.I.E.
Archive, carton 138). That Bernström paid a private visit to San Francisco in
February 1913 is, then, clearly established. Hopefully further research will cast
light on this period in his life. During his time in San Francisco Bernström
always used his only moderately impressive military rank of lieutenant as a title,
even though he had the right to use the much more impressive title of director,
since he had held that rank at Separator. It is a sign of how earnestly he wanted
to distance himself from his earlier role at the company. Bernström lived in a
time and social group for which titles were extremely important, and giving up
the title of director meant a large symbolic sacrifice, in addition to the very real
financial sacrifice he made to free himself from his father's tutelage. See
*Hemlandet*, 11 March 1915, for an independent but highly positive evaluation of Richard
Bernström.

9. The danger was not just to the exhibits. *Svenska Dagbladet* (24 February
1915) tells of the terrifying crossing that Bernström and Swedish Art Commis-
sioner Schultzberg endured: "Through hurricanes and minefields passengers sat
up on deck all night in winter clothes with suitcases packed, ready to hit the life
boats." The crossing took eighteen nerve-racking days.

10. Lincoln Beechey was a pioneer stunt aviator who thrilled visitors to the
exposition with his daring aerobatics and loop the loops. Tragically, he died in an
accident in front of thousands of spectators at the exposition on 14 March 1915.
See *Vestkusten*, 25 February and 18 March 1915. There is a plaque in his honor at the
Marina in San Francisco near the spot where his plane plunged into the sea.


13. Ibid., 294.


15. For detailed accounts of the displays in the Swedish Pavilion, see articles in Vestkusten, 13 May, 3 June, 10 June, 17 June, and 24 June 1915, and Hemlandet, 3 June 1915. See also Göteborgs Handelsblad, 17 July 1915. The coverage of the Swedish Pavilion in Vestkusten was obviously the most extensive, but Hemlandet in Chicago was not far behind and has the advantage of being somewhat more objective, even critical. See, for example, the following passage from Hemlandet, 15 April 1915:

It should be noted here that in the Swedish Pavilion nothing may be shown that is not directly from Sweden. There is not a chair, not a stick of furniture or the slightest object within the walls of the Swedish Pavilion that does not come directly from Sweden. . . . The Swedish Americans are thus shut out from showing any of their creations in the Swedish Pavilion. If a Swede, for example, painted a picture here in America it may not be shown in the Swedish Pavilion, however grand it might be. It must be painted by a Sweden Swede to have a place in the Swedish Pavilion. All this has caused a lot of Swedish [i.e., Swedish-American] items to be exhibited in other buildings. Some people have expressed not a little displeasure about this, for it is well known that our countrymen here in America aren't behind the ones back home when it comes to creating valuable things both in the fine arts and in practical areas. This dissatisfaction would not have arisen if the Swedish Americans had not been asked to financially support the construction of the Swedish Pavilion.

Dobkin, and Elizabeth Armstrong, A Catalog of Posters, Photographs, Paintings, etc. from San Francisco’s Panama Pacific International Exposition 1915 (Berkeley, 1983). I am indebted to Professor Emeritus Basil Guy of the University of California Berkeley for bringing this resource to my attention.

17. Richard Bernström, Slutrapport (Final report).
19. See Vestkusten, 5 December 1914 and 22 April 1915, and San Francisco Committee, Slutrapport (Final report), 31.
20. Bernström Family Collection, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.
22. See obituaries in Vestkusten, 21 and 28 August 1919, and Svenska Dagbladet, 19 August 1919. In an unpublished memoir by Richard’s cousin Sven we read the following, “That same Summer [1919] cousin Richard who had just turned forty-four died after long and terrible suffering. He had earlier been operated on for bleeding ulcers, and when they came back there was nothing the doctors could do.” I am grateful to Dr. Linda Clemedson-Sieker and Ms. Kerstin Bernström for helping me gain access to this document.

23. In Svenska Dagbladet, 2 February 1915, we read, “However glittering the opening festivities might have been, it will only be a shadow of what people had envisioned from the beginning.” See also Hmedlandet, 15 July 1915.

24. Regarding the enormous level of enthusiasm among the Swedish Americans, see Vestkusten, Utsählingsnummer (Exposition issue), 49; San Francisco Committee, Final Report, 10. Cable from William Matson to Foreign Minister Ehrenswärd, 12 November 1913: “Greatest enthusiasm enormous crowd including thousands Swedish American citizens . . . under California blue sky,” Riksarkivet, UD. 2360 A-B.

25. Riksarkivet, UD 2360 A-B.