

GUS' AND AUGUSTA'S AMAZING VOYAGES

My maternal grandparents, Gustaf Adolf Gustafson and Augusta Josephina Eriksdotter, were born and raised in Sweden. They planned to marry, but decided to immigrate to America, "the land of opportunities."

In 1869, Gus, at age 25, and his two brothers came to the United States and began to work on the railroad. Gus left his railroad job when they got to Mercer County, Illinois and started working on a farm there. His two brothers continued with the railroad as far as Red Oak, Iowa where they also became farmers. There are still Gustafson relatives in Red Oak and I plan to go to a reunion there in June.

After a year on the railroad and in farming, Gus had saved money to send to Sweden for Augusta's transportation. She made the trip alone, knowing no English, crossing the ocean, then traveling by train from New York to Chicago, to Mercer County. It's quite amazing to think that this was a period of time when only 37 states had been admitted to the Union, and the 38th, Colorado, was not admitted until 1876.

Late in the summer of 1870, Gus was shocking oats (this may require a footnote, as oats are no longer "shocked," they are "combined," which may require another footnote for my own dear city children) when a man came to the field and reported that a strange lady, who did not speak English, got off the train in the village that morning. She was walking around saying, "Gus, Gus." On hearing this, Gus ran across the field, jumping fences, and found her easily on the one main street.

Gus and Augusta were married and started their new life on a small farm. In 1873, they helped organize and were charter members of the Swedish Lutheran Church in Aledo, Illinois. Gus served as a deacon in that church for 34 years.

In 1900, Gus bought a farm near Aledo. Court house records show that he paid \$9,400.00 for 160 acres. Thirty years later my parents moved there. I grew up on that farm, but that will be another story.

by Ina Corinne (Johnson) Aplington

