

Friends of Migrants is a non-profit association which strives

- to build contacts among descendants of emigrants in Sweden and other countries, especially the United States
- to create a network of researchers in the fields of genealogy and emigration in the province of Hälsingland and other parts of Sweden
- to support the activities of the *House of Migrants* through a variety of activities
- to facilitate the complementation of information sources by researchers at the *House of Migrants*

Membership fees

Individual Membership	\$15
Family Membership (the whole household)	\$25
Membership for Associations and Organizations	\$40

Membership fee can be paid by sending bills in an envelope with names and address noted. Then you get a confirmation receipt back. Otherwise by using the Swiftaddress — **Handsess SE66 6000 0000 0002 6941 1518**

If you have any, please provide your e-mail address to facilitate contacts.

Interim Board 2006 *Friends of Migrants*

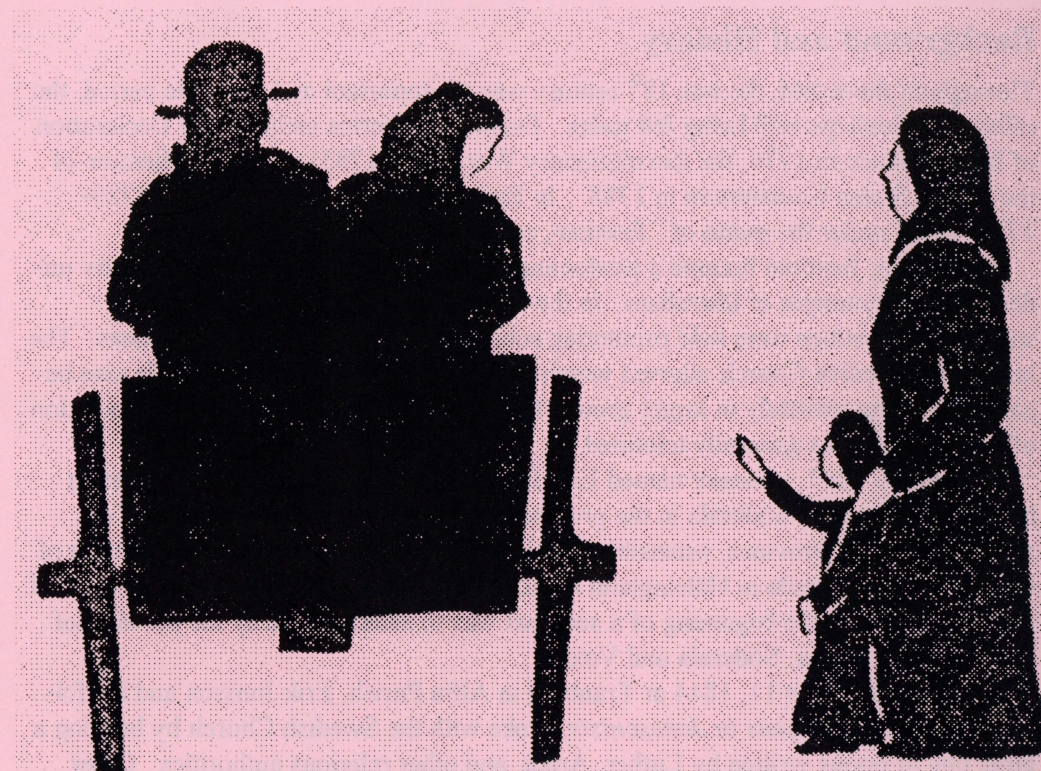
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Friends of Migrants

An association in Sweden

The mass emigration from Sweden to US started in 1846. Alfta parish in Hälsingland was one of the most important area and has now been a district for migration research. An association to support that is founded and invite you to be a member.

Background and History

Throughout the world, the late 18th century was an important and dramatic period, the effects of which are still being felt today. Events in America included the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Revolutionary War (1776-1783) and the ratification of the United States Constitution in 1788. In Europe, the French Revolution (1789-1799) raged under the motto of "freedom, equality and brotherhood".

In Sweden, freedom became a predominant theme during the following century under its Latin synonym of liberalism. In the 1830s and 1840s, news-papers were started and meetings were held promoting sobriety as well as new religious ideas. The law of the Swedish Church allowed worship within the household, but people also began assembling privately in larger groups for religious services. Although in violation of the law, this was generally tolerated.

In January 1843, a farmer named Erik Jansson participated in one such meeting held in the village of Söderala in the province of Hälsingland. He came from Torstuna in Uppland province, ostensibly to sell wheat flour but with the real intention of finding out how people in Hälsingland related to the Bible, the Church, and their belief in God. This was the beginning of a sect that was to affect primarily the parishes of Alfta, Delsbo, Forsa, Söderala and Voxna.

On Tuesday, June 11, 1844 at Tranberg in Alfta Parish, Erik Jansson and his followers, the *Erik-Jansists* or *Janssonists*, broke with the Swedish Church by burning a large pile of books written by Luther, Arndt, and other religious authorities. Other book burnings followed, and the split between Jansson's followers and those who opposed his teachings grew deeper. Jansson was jailed several times and was tried in court, but was never convicted of a crime. However, realizing that he risked deportation because of his religious activities, he decided to flee the country rather than fight a losing battle.

The "Land of Freedom", the United States of America, with its endless fertile prairies welcoming new settlers, was well known in Sweden. In 1846, ten ships carrying about 850 Janssonists left for America from Gävle, Stockholm and Oslo, and at least three other with some few people. During the next four years, another 500 followers made the trip. The emigrants founded Bishop Hill, Illinois, the most important U.S. settlement linked to early Swedish immigration.

In 1944, some residents of Alfta wished to memorialize the centennial of the first book burning. A granite rock on the site in Tranberg was inscribed with the words

"The Book Fire, June 11, 1844". However, there were many who did not wish to be reminded of what happened in the 1840s, much less celebrate it.

Fifty years later, a new group of residents of the Alfta area had become interested in the Janssonist emigration and its importance for the Province of Hälsingland. In 1994, the group planned and carried out the 150th Emigration Anniversary Memorial Week, with Swedish Americans related to Bishop Hill invited as honorary guests. The group adopted the name *The Igniting Spark* to commemorate the role which the Janssonists had played by being the first major Swedish group to emigrate to the U.S., soon to be followed by over a million more Swedes. "Book Burning Day" in 1994 was a Saturday, and hundreds of people assembled in brilliant summer weather at the Tranberg memorial rock. Among the guests was Mrs. Gladys Peterson, close to 88 years old, whose grandmother had been one of the 1846 emigrants, a daughter of the famous Peter Wickblom of Bishop Hill.

During preparations for this celebration, government authorities had agreed to finance the services of an administrative assistant for *The Igniting Spark* group. With the support of local authorities, this person was now hired to create a database of the emigrants, based on information available in Church records. A research group was formed with government assistance, and began by recording Alfta Parish emigrants, then those from the rest of the county and onward. After a modest start-up in borrowed space, the group moved twice and now has its offices at the *House of Migrants* in the beautiful buildings of the traditional Ol-Anders Farm.

After several years of activity, including the preparation for and participation in the official 150th Anniversary celebrations of the emigrants' arrival in Illinois, which took place in Bishop Hill in September 1996, *The Igniting Spark* working group felt that its work was done. The group decided to start a support club for the *House of Migrants* to assist its activities through membership and volunteer work and to reach out to those interested in migration issues.

In early 2004 a few migration activists assembled to discuss forming an association called *Friends of Migrants*. An Interim Board was formed, including auditors and a Nominating Committee. The Interim Board prepared proposals concerning the name, bylaws, membership fees and other conditions for the proposed association. At a Constituent Meeting in April 21, 2005 it was decided.

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