

Axel Joel Hedman
1885 - 1971

Axel was born July 13, 1885 in Stockholm to Anders Nicholas Hedman and Johanna Severin Hedman. He was the youngest child, with two older brothers. I don't know much about Axel's childhood, at least until he was 12 years old. When he was 12, his father died. His mother removed "to the country", and he was left with his uncle and aunt, with whom he stayed until he was of age. He was the ward of the Bishop of Stockholm, and he had to go to him whenever he needed new clothes or other items.

One story I remember about going to the bishop for money, was about a clock that the then 16 or 17 year old wanted to buy. Axel had seen the clock in a store and had to have it. It is about 3 feet long and a foot and half wide, with all kinds of carvings and woodwork. Well the bishop had to see this clock before he was going to give the young man any money for it. When he saw it, he decided that Axel knew a bargain when he saw it and gave him the money. Axel had this clock in his home until the day he died, and I now have had it with me since then, in the many homes I have lived in.

Axel was trained as a master cabinet maker. From what I can gather, he had plenty of work in Stockholm. After he had finished his schooling and was working, he became interested in the folk dancing at Skansen. I guess it was at about this time that he acquired the Nyklharpa that he took with him to the United States. He enjoyed music of all kinds, but was really not a performer of any distinction. He was an opera lover and frequently went to the Stockholm Opera.

As Axel grew older he hated the winters in Sweden. In 1911 or 1912, he went to the United States on a visit. He liked the weather and the area so well that he returned in 1913 to stay permanently. He brought with him his clock, a walnut chiffonier that had been made especially for him, a desk, a games table and of course, his tools. And his nykleharpar. When he entered the US, the custom's person misread his name and so Hedman became Heaman for the rest of his life.

He settled in Brooklyn, New York in what was then the Swedish part of the county. He worked for a cabinet maker and went around to many businesses building or repairing woodwork, furniture, etc. In fact, one of the places he was sent to was the Manhattan hotel where Enrico Caruso lived during his performances at the Metropolitan Opera. Axel was privileged to hear Caruso warming up for the evening's performance - a rare treat many of us would have liked to experience.

Axel was a dapper young man. He enjoyed buying good clothes, he loved jewelry - he had quite a collection of stick pins - he always had the latest fashion in headgear - especially so, because he was bald at a young age. When he had been in Brooklyn for a couple of years, he decided to buy himself a Harley-Davidson motorcycle with a side car. He enjoyed riding out to Long Island with a friend in the side car. But one day, he had a bad accident (don't remember the details) and that was the end of his motorcycle

days.

In June of 1920 Axel married Rosa Lindblad in the Gustavus Adolphus Swedish Lutheran Church on 23rd Street in Manhattan. They went on a wedding trip to Sweden, fully intending to live there. I assume they had brought all their furnishings with them. By the time November arrived, Axel decided he still didn't like the weather - too cold - in Sweden and Rosa and he took the first liner back to the US of A.!

Rosa Lindblad was born in Sweden, but she came to the US as an infant with her parents to the US. Her father was an electrical engineer who studied at Uppsala University and he worked to build the electric turbines for the electric company of New York. Rosa was educated in Brooklyn and also at Barnard College in Manhattan.

Axel was always impressed by his wife's family. They were from the aristocratic class, while he was from the working class. They may have had the titles, but he always had the money! It bothered my grandmother, who was the grandchild of a baron, that this "laborer" had more money than she, and that she ended her life living with and off him and her daughter.

Rosa and Axel had only one child, Ruth, born in August of 1933.

Sometime in the 1925 OR 1926, Axel went to work for the Brunswick, Balke, Collender Company building bowling alleys. He remained with them until he retired in 1959. During WWII he also worked for the government, building army bases, installing bowling alleys at these bases, and also for the Simmons Electronic Company.

Rosa died in 1958, just after Ruth had married Ralph Brown in May, 1958. Axel went for one last trip to the "old country". There he visited his oldest brother with whom he had had very little contact over the years. He enjoyed being there on a visit, but the US was his home now.

Axel died in June 1971. Ruth and Ralph took his ashes to Stockholm and scattered them over the woods of Skansen.