

THE STORY OF
TWO FAMILIES
AND THEIR
TIMES



CHAPTER SIX:

THE WISCONSIN YEARS

The records I have been able to unearth show that the Nilsson and Kjällerström families lived in the Waukesha area from 1852 to 1857. As will be seen, the names are spelled in various ways: “Nilsson” and “Nilson” and finally “Nelson” for one side of the family. For the other side, the letter “ö” in Kjällerström, as I pointed out earlier, does not appear in the English language and the “Kj” combination of letters in both spelling and pronunciation, difficult even for Swedes to pronounce, is impossible for English-speaking folks to handle. Inevitably, the spelling would begin to change. And, especially in the case of “Kjällerström” the change would be significant. If there were any letters at all from Sweden, one has to wonder if they ever reached them in the new land. Little wonder that all contact with loved ones half way around the world was soon lost.

But before we look at those few pieces of evidence that they lived in this place, it would be good to take a longer look back at the history of southern Wisconsin.

Pre-European Southern Wisconsin

There is archaeological evidence that Native Americans – the Indians -- lived here as early as 800 B.C. They were known as the “Woodland People.” They developed agricultural methods



that included both crop rotation and composting. They lived in cone-shaped wigwams, but did most of their cooking and eating outdoors. A tribe known as the Hopewells emerged from the Woodland People as early as the first century A.D. Their trade network for their crops and fine pottery stretched across most of the continent. They built huge earth mounds shaped in the form of animals and reptiles. The larger ones were burial places for important leaders of the tribe and contained food, jewelry and weapons. One mound, shaped like a turtle, had a body that was 56 feet long, a tail that stretched out another 250 feet and was about 6 feet tall. By 1200

A.D. the Mississippian and Oneonta tribes arrived. They grew crops, including corn and beans.

The most prominent tribe in the area in the 1850s when the Nilsons and Kjällerströms arrived was the Potawatomi. They grew large fields of corn, beans and squash. They were also known for their medicinal herbs. They wore deerskin clothing. These things all changed, however, when the newcomers arrived.

The First Europeans

The first Europeans -- initially the French and then the English -- arrived in the early 1600s, about the time Mikael Kjällerström in Sweden was fighting for King Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years War. They were fur traders. Ongoing conflict between the French and English festered until it erupted in the French and Indian War, 1754-1763. Because the French treated them more humanely, the Indians favored and supported the French. The French had no interest in taking over Indian lands. They only wanted to trade with them.

Once the United States achieved its independence, however, everything changed for the Native Americans. The aggressive Americans wanted to take their lands. Treaties followed, unleashing a flood of eastern American and European immigrants. A way of life that had been in place for centuries vanished in a couple of decades.

In 1836 Wisconsin became a territory of the U.S. This brought a huge influx of newcomers via the Great Lakes steam boats and the railroads. In 1851 the first rail line was completed between Milwaukee -- by 1850 a city of about 115,000 -- and Waukesha. Only 20 miles in length, it was called "The Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad." It rumbled along at 25 miles per hour. By 1857 it was extended to Prairie du Chien on the western edge of Wisconsin Territory at the Mississippi River.

During this time -- the 1840s and 1850s -- almost all of the sacred burial mounds described above were destroyed by European settlers as they claimed the land for growing crops. Did the Nilsons and Kjällerströms join in the desecration of these sacred grounds? We can only wonder. It's hard to believe they would have knowingly done so. Yet, this has been the pattern of settlement in all parts of the world -- little regard for the people and the customs of those already living in a place.

Life in Waukesha County

In spite of grandiose descriptions of what the area was like, including one observer's assessment that the soil was "rich and deep," the early settlers soon learned that they would have to wrestle tillable soil from the wilderness. Southern Wisconsin was covered with hazel brush and small shrubs with some oak trees scattered here and there.

In her book "Wisconsin" Bettina Ling describes their struggles:

Settlers from other parts of the U.S., as well as from Europe, came to Wisconsin, including people from Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland. These new settlers were interested in buying land to create cities or to begin farming. Farmers grew oats and wheat. By the 1840s wheat had

become the principal crop. Early settlers, mostly farmers, had a hard life. They made most of the things they needed to live, such as soap, candles, clothing, and shoes. They grew the food they ate and they had to clear the woods to build small wooden cabins. Everyone in the family worked, including the children. Pioneer life could be very lonely because the nearest neighbors and towns were miles away. Winters, especially, were long and hard. Snowstorms could leave huge snow piles that stranded a family inside their cabin for weeks.

To improve terrible traveling conditions, plank roads were built in the area in the 1840s. Oak boards were laid side by side across the road. One such road was 51 miles long. During a heavy rain some planks would float away. Toll gates to pay for the road were spaced every few miles along the road to collect one cent for a wagon and one cent for an animal. The main plank road is



now highway 16. Lead miners were especially eager to have roads built so they could bring their ore to the port at Milwaukee, from which it was shipped to markets in the East.

Carving out a claim was not easy. There was much competition for good land. To clear land, poorer farmers would borrow an ox from a neighbor in exchange for labor. Often a barn was built before a home was erected. At times livestock

shared living quarters with the family because livestock was so valuable. Everything was used. A cabin door might be removed to serve as a table when guests came for a meal.

Another characteristic of the area was the “Indian ladders” that were found everywhere in the woods. The Indians would use them to climb trees to collect honey, which they mixed with wild rice and corn. The Europeans also used the honey, found in abundance.

Disease was a constant threat. In the summer of 1854, a year after the Kjöllersströms arrived, there was an outbreak of cholera that took the lives of several people in the Pine Lake area.

While some thought the area to be beautiful, not everyone was of that opinion. Nils Brandt, who came as a pastor in the 1850s, wrote in his journal:

I had seen ugly places in Iowa where the prairie fires had destroyed everything. But it seemed to me I had never seen an uglier spot in America than this; nothing but swamps and mud. ‘Is it here that I must live?’ I thought to myself.

(Brandt later moved to a parish in Decorah, Iowa, and still later became professor of religion and music at Luther College.)

A humorous reference to the constant battle against fleas is this poem from that period:

*You nasty flea, I can't tell why
 You made these lumps upon my thigh;
 If I could catch you here, my lad,
 I should feel so very, very glad.
 The other night it did the same
 Unto my wife and made her lame;
 To cure us both I now must try
 Or else we will surely mortify;
 I've caught it now here in the bed,
 And now the nasty thing is dead.*

In the 1840s most of the Scandinavians were concentrated in Delafield township in the northwest corner of the County. One reference says that “*in the northwest the Scandinavians cultivate the hop-vine with enthusiasm.*” The village was first called “Johnson’s Mill”, then changed by the Norwegians to “Newberg” (“New Town”) and finally, in July of 1858 to “Stone Bank.” In about 1854 the Hotel Stone Bank was built. It served as a stopping place for travelers from Milwaukee to Madison. The building still stands and today is called Meat’n Place, a favorite eatery in the Waukesha area.

The Village of Waukesha

On a visit to the Waukesha County Historical Center in the summer of 2003 I learned a good deal about the history of the area. The first European settlers came to Waukesha -- then known as “Prairieville” -- in 1834. The town was incorporated in 1852, the year the Nilssons arrived and one year before the Kjöllersströms came to the area. The population of the town was 2,200. There was a sawmill, a flour mill, two foundries, a railroad car factory, a machine shop, a boot and shoe shop, two breweries, nine blacksmith shops, two paint stores, a copper shop, a carriage and wagon factory, two tailors, two clothing stores, three saddle and harness shops, two cabinet shops, two tin and sheet iron factories, two jewelry stores, three stationery and book stores, three hardware stores, five dry goods stores, seven groceries, three hotels, two livery stables, one medical doctor, one portrait painter, one dentist, seven lawyers, 12 ministers, eight churches (none Lutheran), a court house and jail, Carroll College, a women’s seminary, one bank, two printing presses, one “literary” paper, and two newspapers.

With Milwaukee’s current reputation as “The Beer Capitol of the World,” it’s hard to believe that the temperance movement was so strong at the time. This was especially the case in the Waukesha area in the 1840s. The county had the first temperance society in Wisconsin. In the village of Prairieville, where pledges not to imbibe were taken, only two men out of 160 refused to sign.

In 1849 the issue of suffrage was on the local ballot. By a vote of 964 in favor and 122 against it was agreed to extend the right to vote to colored people. The anti-slavery movement, under the leadership of Lyman Goodnow, was so strong that Waukesha County became known throughout the nation as a “stinking abolitionist hole” by those who favored slavery.

Another interesting historical tidbit from the time is a story about some prominent local people who were accused of being associated with a gang of horse thieves. Though no proof was ever

established, it led to much suspicion and political bickering.

The first school for children opened in the fall of 1837. The school year was organized around farming. Classes were held in winter and summer with none in spring and fall so that the children could help in the fields. Teaching was by rote, with students repeating what the teacher said. Spelling bees were popular. Arithmetic, because of its practical value on the farm, was the most popular subject. A pot-bellied stove served not only to give warmth, but also to thaw frozen lunch pails and warm frozen toes. Schools also served as community meeting places where citizens could gather for political debates and dances. It was assumed that teachers would help farmers figure out percentages, interest rates, square footage, and more.

When I read about the pioneer schools I sometimes think about my grandparents -- Hedda (Hattie) Nilsson & John Kjällström. They would have been in a one-room grade school during the Waukesha years. John was three years older. The two families left for Minnesota in 1857, when Hattie was 10 and John 13. Was there already a little spark between them? Those interests begin to stir in a young boy's heart at that age. Was John already dreaming that she might one day be his bride? I'm also sobered to realize that when he finished the sixth or seventh grade in 1855 or 1856 it would be the end of John's formal schooling for the rest of his life.

The Earliest Swedes in the Waukesha Area and the Role of Gustav Unonius

In order to understand why the Nilssons and Kjällströms came to the Waukesha area, it's helpful to explore why the first Swedes came there a decade earlier

As we noted above in passing, a small group of immigrants from Uppsala, Sweden had come to the United States in 1841 under the leadership of a young idealist named Gustaf Unonius. He was an office clerk in Uppsala when he began to dream about emigrating to the United States. He was born in 1810 (a year after Magnus Kjällström and two years before Johan Nilson). As I mentioned earlier, Unonius, his 20-year-old bride, their maid and two other young males formed a small group. Before he left Sweden he wrote:

Freedom and independence beckon in the distance -- America what prevents me from going to this land of promise? I am young, the faithful heart of a loving mate is mine.

As I mentioned, Unonius seems to have had no particular destination in mind. But when they reached Milwaukee, a city of only 2,000 in 1841, they heard glowing reports of the area and decided to disembark. With the help of a guide they reached Pine Lake, twenty miles to the west and in what eventually became Waukesha County. Unonius wrote later,

Finally we arrived at the shores of the loveliest little lake we had seen. Indians call it Chenequa or Pine Lake, since pine, which otherwise do not grow in this part of Wisconsin, grow here.

They staked a 200 acre claim on the east side of Pine Lake. Norwegians were already settled on the west side of the lake. Unonius knew they were on the edge of the wilderness when he wrote,

“...to the north stretched a deep and unknown forest where only Indians were known to roam and know the way.” Within ten years the Indians in the area would be all but gone because of the rapid influx of settlers.

Almost as soon as they got settled, Unonius began to write letters to Sweden that were published in the Uppsala newspaper *Aftonbladet* as well as in newspapers in Denmark. They attracted considerable attention. Other Swedes soon began to sail for America with Pine Lake as their destination. They have been described as “a most unusual group of Swedes.”

There was no pastor in the area at the time, either for the Norwegians or the Swedes. Unonius was a Lutheran lay person in Sweden. He cared about the spiritual welfare of the Scandinavians in the community. So he enrolled at Nashota House Seminary in nearby Delafield township. Established in 1847 as the result of work by student missionaries from another Episcopal school - General Seminary in New York City. Nashota is the oldest Episcopal Seminary in the Midwest. The Seminary sent out missionaries on foot and on horseback to minister to the pioneers in the area. Unonius was the first graduate of the Seminary and was ordained by the Episcopal Church.

Before their own Lutheran pastors arrived, Unonius was asked by local Norwegian Lutherans to conduct services for them. Some of these groups actually formed Episcopal congregations, though they retained their Lutheran identity at the same time. They believed that the differences between their two denominations were so minor that it made no difference.

Before church buildings were constructed, members met in homes. The conditions were not always conducive to good worship. Unonius described them this way:

As a rule I was invited to dinner in the home where the Sunday service was conducted. The hosts were anxious to treat me to the best they had in the house, and not infrequently, the meal was being prepared while the service was going on. ... it was unavoidable that the odors from the pots and pans, the rattling of the kettles on the stove, the hissing of some pot that was boiling over... too insistently called our attention to our physical needs just when the soul ought to have been engaged with spiritual matters. The informality of the service and the home like surroundings gave occasion for many intimate unpopular presentations which were in themselves quite effective but which are too often lacking in the public and ceremonial church functions. As long as the Scandinavians were without a church building the natural undisciplined manner in which men... were inclined to approach sacred things appeared most offensive, and the bonds were loosed which had been designed to keep them within the limits of ordinary propriety.

The Swedish Colony Diminishes

The Swedish colony failed after a few years, mainly because very few of the people in the original party had had experience in working the land. Another factor was that not all of the Norwegians and Swedes got along very well. In his memoirs Unonius wrote:

A little Scandinavia grew up around Pine Lake. On the east side lived the Swedes, on the west the Norwegians. The barrier was either too little or too great and

served only to bring misunderstanding between the two peoples. Only a few Swedish families remained permanently at Pine Lake. The sunset called and most of the Swedes answered it.

As for Unonius, he moved on to Chicago in 1853, the year after the Nilssons arrived in Pine Lake and the same year the Kjällströms came. According to Everett Arden in his book “Augustana Heritage”, Unonius established a congregation in Chicago and also served as vice counsel of Norway and Sweden. From there he traveled to all parts of the Middle West for almost twenty years, trying to convince Swedes

to join the Episcopal Church, claiming that the Episcopal Church in America represented the best elements of the Lutheran Church in Sweden without suffering from its faults and defects. (p. 23)

By that time pastors from both Norway and Sweden had arrived. Though some of the people remained with the Episcopal Church, most became members of Lutheran congregations.

Why Did the Nilssons and Kjällströms Come to Pine Lake?

Given the fact that the experiment led by Unonius in the Pine Lake area of Waukesha was already failing, we have to wonder why the Nilssons first and then the Kjällströms came there. Was it the letters of Unonius in Swedish newspapers that attracted them? Was there someone in the colony urging them to come? Did they come, not knowing that the colony was already dispersing to other places? And did the Kjällströms come to the area because the Nilssons had contacted them and urged them to come? We will probably never know.



This house, built in 1856, is typical of settlers' homes in the Waukesha area.

Evidence the Nilssons (Nelsons) and Kjällströms (Chilstroms) Lived in the Pine Lake/Waukesha Area

I first got a clue that the Nilssons and Kjällströms had actually lived in Wisconsin from an anniversary book published by Lebanon Lutheran Church, New London, MN – where both

families eventually settled. It said that the Nilssons came to the New London area north of Willmar, MN in 1857 from Waukesha, Wisconsin. The Kjöllersströms followed in 1861, though, in their case, it involved a stop at Morristown, Minnesota for several years..

Roger Johnson, a local historian, helped me piece together most of what follows. Though he could find no reference to the Nilssons and Kjöllersströms in land records, Johnson speculates that they lived in the St. John's parish in the Stone Bank area.

But how do we know for certain that they lived there? Is there anything in civil or church records to show it?

Civic Records -- Finding a Needle in a Haystack

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I had an opportunity to visit the Waukesha County Historical Center in August, 2003. I searched first for the Kjöllersströms, assuming that this uncommon name would be easier to locate than the much more common name Nilsson or Nilson. I found nothing at first. I had almost given up when the director gave me a book that listed applications for citizenship. Those applications, or "Declarations" as they were called, were the first step in becoming an American citizen. The applicant would have to wait for at least two years before filing a formal "*Petition*" for citizenship.

By now I suspected that the name might be spelled with a "K", an "S", or a "C". When I looked under the "C"s I felt I had struck gold. There I found the following:

Declaration of Intention to Become a Citizen of the United States

*State of Wisconsin,
No. 2099
Circuit Court, Waukesha County*

The document reads: "*On this
6 day of October A.D. 1855
I Mauley Chyolestem, an alien,
being a free white person, do
hereby declare on oath that I was
born in Sweden, on or about the
year one thousand eight hundred*

and 9 that I emigrated to the United States and landed at the port of New York on or about the month of July A.D. 1853, that it is bona fide my intention to become a CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and to renounce forever all fealty, allegiance and fidelity to any and every foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever, and particularly to Oscar King of Sweden and Norway whereof I am now a subject.

*Subscribed and sworn to before me
This 6 day of Oct 1853.*

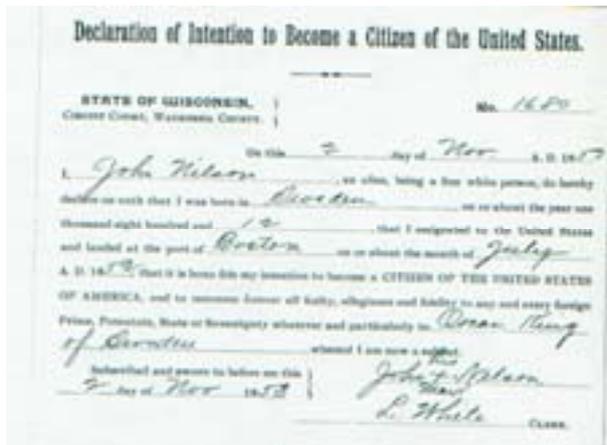
Mauley Chjolerstrom (s)
Sam H. Barstow (s)

It's clear that the signature for "Mauley Chjolerstrom" is written by Barstow, not Kjöllersström. Was Magnus illiterate? Since he entered the names of the family in the Bible, it seems that he should have been able to sign his own name. And, as I learned on the visit to Öreryd in 2007, his signature in the bell tower of the church shows that he was clearly able to do so.

What I have to assume from this is that he pronounced his name with a heavy Swedish accent and the clerk wrote it down as he heard it. It's also interesting that Barstow ends the name with "stem" in the body of the application, but "strom" at the end. To add to the confusion, on an overall list the clerk kept of all applicants the name is spelled: "Maulus Chjolerstrom." Because the year of his birth and arrival in the United States match what we know about him, there is no doubt in my mind that the applicant is my great grandfather, Magnus Kjöllersström.

How did the Kjöllersströms live during these years? What was their home like? What kind of work did Magnus do? Did he farm? Or work at one of the factories? Or at the limestone quarry? Did Stina and the daughters work at the Hotel Stone Bank as maids -- the same building that today houses the Meat 'n Place restaurant? What about my grandfather John, a young boy at the time? Did he work on the family farm? Or in one of the shops? We simply do not know and probably never will.

As for the Nilssons, there also is evidence of their residence in the Waukesha area from both civil and church records. Though there were other "John Nilsons" in the area at the time, I found a



"Declaration of Intention to Become a Citizen of the United States" for a John Nilson, dated November 2, 1853."

Again, there is no doubt in my mind that this is my great grandfather, John Nelson, since the document indicates that he was born in Sweden in 1812 and arrived in Boston in July, 1852.

There are several interesting things to note in John Nilson's "Declaration". First, that the name is spelled "John Nilson" in the body of

the application, but "John Nelson" on the signature line at the bottom. Even more interesting is that there is a "+" mark on the signature line. Next to it is a note from the clerk, a Mr. "L. White", that reads: "his mark." It's clear from this that the clerk has signed for Nelson because Nelson was unable to do so himself. We would have to conclude, I think, that John Nelson was illiterate. (This will be corroborated later in the Minnesota part of the story when I will write about letters, written in Swedish, that John Nelson had another man write for him.)

The Churches -- a Complex Story

There were four Lutheran congregations in the area: Pine Lake, St. John's at Stone Bank, St. Olaf's at Toland in the town of Ashippun, and St. Luke's at Rock River. According to Roger Johnson, a local historian, Unonius, the Episcopal priest, helped start Pine Lake and St. Olaf's congregations. Both congregations were Episcopal at first, even though the members were mostly Lutherans who had come from Norway. The only thing that remains of the Pine Lake congregation is the cemetery, located on Highway C between Stone Bank and Nashotah.

This is what Roger Johnson says about the tangled history of these churches:

Gradually the Norwegians began to be dissatisfied with the Episcopalian doctrine and wanted to get back to Norwegian Lutheran doctrine, etc. At about this time, Norway began to finally send Norwegian ministers to the area, for example, Diedrichson and Nels Brandt. Splits began to form in both the Pine Lake and St. Olaf's congregations. Some wanted to go totally Lutheran, and some wanted to stick with the Episcopalian ministry. In the case of Pine Lake, the split resulted in the Lutheran segment keeping the church records and the Episcopalian segment keeping the church building which was located in what is now called Holy Innocents Cemetery."

(I include this interesting historical note because I find it amusing that the current debate in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America about our relationship with the Episcopal Church appears to be nothing new among Lutherans!)

Adding to the difficulty in understanding the history of these congregations are several factors: only minimal records were kept, they were first served by Unonius, an Episcopalian, and relations between the Norwegians and Swedes were not always very good. For example, when the Church of Sweden sent a pastor by the name of Bockman to serve the Swedes, Unonius thought he might also serve the Norwegians. But after only one Sunday with them, Unonius wrote:

... the Norwegians asked me never again to send the Swedish minister to them. For he had conducted a service, or rather preached a sermon, which had caused much offense and had given rise to great disturbances. According to him there was not in the entire congregation a single person except himself who was on the way to heaven. All the rest were lost. The sermon had been delivered in the coarsest language and caused sparks to fly about the ears of his hearers. Some of the congregation left the room, others burst out in loud laughter, others again in convulsive howling.

On another occasion Unonius writes in his memoirs about being called to preside at a Norwegian funeral.

... his fellow countrymen gathered in full force at the house of mourning. In the middle of the floor... they had placed a couple of benches on which the coffin was resting. On a table near it were glasses and a jug of whiskey. The pagan custom of

'gravely' (funeral drinking) had to be maintained even here, although financial condition did not permit the display and entertainment which in the home country... were believed essential for a 'respectable funeral.' Of all our imported customs, none surprised the Americans more or was more disapproved of than the barbaric custom of feasting around a coffin. Perhaps that habit more than anything else caused the Norwegian mountaineers... to be known as the 'Norwegian Indians.' According to Norwegian custom I announced a hymn to be sung before the body was borne out. The host... led the singing of the hymn; but after one verse had been sung there was a pause, and to my unbounded astonishment a glassful of whiskey was handed me with these words, 'It is a custom in Norway that on such occasions a dram is drunk between the first and second verse.' and before I was able to overcome my surprise... the bottle was making its rounds through the room, each holding the hymnal with one hand and grasping the whiskey glass with the other. Other Norwegians told me afterward that they had never heard of such a custom in their native land; if it really existed, it must be limited to the parish... where these funeral guests hailed from.

Though Unonius was severely criticized by the heads of the churches in Norway and Sweden for ministering to their Lutheran flock in America, he justified his pastoral care of these sheep:

Who can fault me if as a minister I communicated, at their own request, to those who were of another church, who wanted to remain members of the Norwegian Lutheran church, and who were scattered like sheep in the wilderness? Were those who were longing for a public service and wanted to hear the Word of God proclaimed to be told to wait for some Swedish or Norwegian clergyman to arrive? Were dying men, who longed once more to have the Lord's Supper... to be told to send for a servant of God ordained in Sweden or Norway when such a person either was not available or lived at a great distance? Or ought I on all such occasions to have presented all the doctrinal points on which the two churches might be said to differ?

In contrast to Bockman, the first Swedish Lutheran pastor of whom he was very critical, Unonius had only the highest regard for the first Norwegian Lutheran pastors who came to the area -- Clausen and Dietrichson. And of the majority of Norwegians, Unonius wrote:

I shall never forget the cordiality and kindness I always found there among the Norwegian countryfolk who through their honesty and piety as well as through the friendship they showed me, gained my respect and love.

Church Records for the Nilson (Nelson) and Kjöllström (Chilstrom) Families

By the time the Nilsons and Kjöllströms arrived some of the Lutherans who had belonged to Episcopal congregations had reorganized as Lutheran congregations.

In the baptismal records for Pine Lake there is an entry for "Anne Lovise," child of Johan Nilson and his wife Christine Håkansdotter. It indicates that she was born December 24, 1853 and

baptized on March 12, 1854. Her sponsors included Peter Gasmann, the son of a very prominent Norwegian family that had arrived in the Waukesha area in 1843. Peter was one of 14 children. His parents and all of his siblings joined the Episcopal church but he remained a Lutheran.

The other sources are confirmation records. The three congregations -- St. John's, St. Olaf's and St. Luke's -- had all of the confirmation students together in a single class during the years 1854-1857. Roger Johnson says that St. John's and St. Olaf's were Episcopal congregations during these years, while St. Luke's was Lutheran. The Episcopal minister kept a separate set of records for members of his denomination and the Lutheran minister kept them for Lutherans. The records show that "Anna Catharina Skollerstrom" was confirmed in 1854. "Lovisa Frederikka Skollerstrom" was confirmed in 1857. (Now we get still another spelling of the Kjöllersström name!) Anna and Lovisa are in the Lutheran records. There is no doubt that these are the daughters of Magnus and Katrina Kjöllersström (Chilstrom).

Again, we can ask, but not answer, the same questions we asked about the Kjöllersströms: How did the Nilsons live? Who delivered Anna Louisa? What kind of work did Nilson and Kjöllersström do? Since Gasman, the Norwegian, was a godfather to Anna Louisa, did Nilson work for him? What was their home like? Did the children work -- maybe at a shop or for a farmer? Were the Nilsons and Kjöllersströms together often for social occasions?



A sketch of the village of Waukesha, WI as it appeared in 1857, the year the Chilstroms (Kjöllersströms) and Nilsons (Nilssons

) departed for Minnesota.

On to Minnesota

As I noted earlier, the Nilsons (Nilssons) and Chilstroms (Kjöllersströms) left for Minnesota in 1857, but, as we will see later, with different destinations in mind. Given the completion of the rail line from Milwaukee on Lake Michigan to Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River in 1857, we might assume that the families traveled by this new rail line across southern Wisconsin to

Prairie du Chien and then by Mississippi river boat to St. Paul. But we cannot be certain. Some sources suggest that only the more prosperous could travel by rail. The poorer folks made their tedious way by ox cart. If that's true, it may well be that both families went by ox cart.

The families that departed Waukesha in 1857 are quite different from the ones that boarded the ship in Sweden. Now John Nelson (Nilsson) is 45, Christina 46, Gustaf is 13, Hattie 10, Mathilda 7 and little Lovisa, born in Wisconsin, is 4. And as for the Chilstroms (Kjöllerströms), Magnus is now 47, Katrina 46, Inga (as we will discover later) has already left home, Anna is 19, Louisa is 17, my grandfather, John is 13, Svenning is 10 and Charles, the youngest, is 6.

Again, my imagination takes over. Did the two families leave on the same day and travel together to Minnesota? Was there already a budding attraction between John Kjöllerström (Chilstrom) and Hedda (Hattie) Nilson (Nelson)? I wonder....