UMRA Family History Interest Group

Family Letters

Lynn C. Anderson & Craig Swan
University of Minnesota Retirees Association

April 28, 2021 10:00-11:00 am
Binders of letters, emails, memorabilia
Organized by people and dates, documents in plastic sleeves
Comprehensive collection by people and date

THE STORY ABOUT
ANNA AND AXEL
1888-1954
Original letters in Swedish from and to my great grandparents, Anna and Axel Hedman
In one binder a map was included showing the various family homesteads in Sweden
Original Swedish letter with US post office receipt (keep these interesting artifacts).
Original context for letters provided in Swedish and then translated into English
Pictures included in the books of letters. Also included a note from my great-grandmother on the envelope that the letter took 12 days to arrive.
Translations of letters into English along with images of parts of the original letters.
More focused binder of letters and pictures from a trip my great aunt and uncle took back to Sweden in 1938.
Letters in Swedish from and to relatives in Sweden, yet to be translated. Fun to have stamps. Note German censorship on letter on the far right.
Context for and letters my great uncle received from his girlfriend during their 40+ year relationship. They could not marry since he was Lutheran and she was Jewish.
A letter my Dad wrote to his uncle when Dad was 7 years old and his letters from his service in WWII.
Simple binder of postcards I sent to my parents (secured in plastic sleeves).
Emails are the letters of today, often with pictures. These are in binders in plastic sleeves.
Cards and poems organized by sender in binders (plastic sleeves).

Mom,
I love you so very much and hope you know that I don't need for it to be Mother's Day to tell you, I LOVE YOU! Thank you for always being there for me.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

Love, Stephanie

Poems

Mom, your music brings marvelous memories to me. It sings out about your childhood. It is the most beautiful thing on earth!

Glory, Glory
Mine eyes have heard the music you bring Glory, Glory, Hallelujah.

Your voice is singing on!

Your voice sings out from all the others is rides on a wind of toons, but the only thing I wish is mom, mom & deep singing!

Your Piano

Your Piano rings out like your voice it tells me your feelings your askhons but most of all mom it reminds me of you!
Summary thoughts

• Decide how to divide up and organize your letters, postcards, emails, memorabilia: by person, dates, events/travels, other?
• Use plastic sleeves (archival if you wish/can) and binders or make copies and print books.
• Include stamps, envelopes, etc. if interesting and if there is space;-)
• Include photos, maps, context.
• Work with relatives or others to get translations of letters not written in English.
• Enjoy re-reading the documents as you go.
Ancestral Cottage
Scotland
Dear Craig,

I'm sending you a picture of a little Irish cottage that Aunt Vic takes tells me was the home of former Swan descendants. She asked me about it after Mother died and my sister and I were going through our family's house and trying to find the proper resting places for former Swan and Roberts memorabilia.

I'll ask Aunt Vic to tell you about this picture. She says that you are the one most interested in Swan history. It's sort of amazing that I happened to have saved it. I thought it was cute and because it was framed, figured that it was something more than a little picture that Mother and Dad might have picked up on a trip to Ireland. I'm happy to learn of your interest in your family background. The Swans were and are quite a group. It is your branch of that family which is so ably carrying on what was so well started.

If you are ever in the Seattle area, I hope you will give us a chance to meet you and your family. We see your parents occasionally and therefore know a little about you. But it would be so nice to really get to know you. I don't really know what you'd call my relationship to you. Is it first cousin—once removed? Sounds pretty remote but I'd like a chance to make something more of it.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Handwritten signature: "With Robert Jordan"]
Dear Craig,

I'm sending you a picture of a little Irish cottage that Aunt Vic Huff tells me was the home of former Swan descendants. She asked me about it after Mother died and my sister and I were going through our family's house and trying to find the proper resting places for former Swan and Roberts memorabilia.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

MRS. M. F. JORDAN

1330 Broadmoor Drive East, Seattle, Washington 98112
I'll ask Aunt Vic to tell you about this picture. She says that you are the one most interested in Swan history. It's sort of amazing that I happened to have saved it. I thought it was cute and because it was framed, figured that it was something more than a little picture that Mother and Dad might have picked up on a trip to Ireland.

Sincerely,

Will Jordan
Dear Janet and Craig,

First of all, I want to congratulate you on the arrival of your son, Andrew Craig, whose arrival was November first, I believe. I am sure he is very much an individual by this time and gets more so each day. I haven't heard details about your family reunion at Christmas time but am very sure who was the center of the party!

I am writing especially at this time to explain about the picture you have received from Ruth Roberts Jordan. It is the original picture sent to my father (your great-grandfather, George Swan) I had it with other family pictures and
Letterhead used by the eight children of George and Antoinette Swan for their round-robin letter.
I am writing especially at this
time to explain about the picture
you have received from Ruth
Roberte Jordan. It is the original
picture sent to my father (Your
great grandfather, George Swan.) I had
it with other family pictures and
It was the Swan home in the Glasgow area in Scotland, and we always knew it as the birthplace of our grandfather James Swan. The boy leaning on the cane was a cousin of our father, who later lived in the house. We had a picture of him with his wife and two children—and in that picture, he was also leaning on the cane. Our father used to get letters from him and another cousin from Scotland, and they always intrigued us as children. Most of them were outlined in black, reporting the death of some relative. Dam sorry some of them weren't preserved.
CHRISTMAS 1965

Dear Alice:

There is a little history to give you along with the "Hearts and Darts" quilt, and while I am not an author of note, I shall attempt to set down a few pertinent facts.

The original quilt was created lovingly for your great grandmother and great grandfather, Bessie Park McIntosh and Will McIntosh as a wedding gift to them, (October 17, 1904 in Colorado Springs), by Bessie's sister, Belle Grierson, in Canada.

My two sisters, Marian and Jean, and I remember it being on our bed when we were very young. Then there was a long period that it seemed to have disappeared. We always wondered what had happened to it. Suddenly, one day in 1970, in Santa Cruz, California, the three of us were looking at a disreputable drab patchwork quilt being used to cover the hood of Jean's car, and happened to notice some pink peaking through a rip in the quilt. We quickly ripped the cover to find the lost quilt.

Our mother had put together a wool top from sample blocks of material from a tailor's book of samples--and had covered the very frayed and faded hearts and darts quilt so it would still be of some use. We needed heavy comforters in Aspen in the winter--and this was heavy and warm.
In February of 1977 I went to Santa Cruz to take care of Walter Davis while your Aunt Allene was in the hospital for emergency surgery. Of course I took the quilt pieces along to work on them. All the pieces were neatly cut and in a box. When my time there was completed, Grandfather drove down to bring me home. He carried numerous articles out to put in the car, including the box of patches, and placed them on the roof of the car to free a hand to open the door. Somehow the box was left on top of the car without our knowing--and away we went. Several cars honked at us as they passed, but we paid no attention. Finally--after we had driven over the mountains and were half way home, a car passed and they pointed to the back of our car. We stopped to investigate and there was the box of quilt makings on the back of the car. It had blown down over the slanting back window and was resting precariously in the depression which framed the window. We were utterly weak, thinking how nearly we had lost it. We never could have imagined what had happened to it.
January 18, 1906
George Swan to his daughter  Victoria

Dear Victoria,

Again letter came yesterday just as I was starting for family. Center Aunt Bella is recovering. Uncle John has got the grippe but quite badly. Nellie boots well. Bessie fairly well. The rest are all well except here. We also got a letter from Aunt Sarah. She says there is an epidemic of colds up there. They are fairly well. We also had letters from Henrietta, James and Edith this week. They all
Now Victoria we were pleased to get your plans letter and glad to know that you are loyal to your home, folks + church.
January 18, 1906
George Swan to his daughter  Victoria

Loyally will win the respect and esteem of the best people always. We know that you will work hard, but be sure not to overwork. Keep regular hours, make friends, and keep them, but don't get too intimate.
January 18, 1906
George Swan to his daughter Victoria

It is much better in any case, to be able to perform (more than the promise better to climb the hill slowly and be sure that every step is pure and right than scramble to the top for there is danger of a descent.)
January 18, 1906
George Swan to his daughter Victoria

Friendship is the same. The best is that which grows and goes on ever.
Beach House

East Newport Beach

California

early 1920s
Newport Beach Calif.
Aug. 17, 1942.

Mrs K. Swan
1200, The Alameda
Berkeley Calif.

Dear Mrs Swan;

No doubt you will be surprised to get this letter with a statement enclosed for window shades, the City passed an ordinance demanding all windows facing the ocean be blacked out, and your shades were in a bad condition and would not pass, the real estate people called me and I went down and measured the windows then went shopping to see where I could do the best, all the places wanted thirteen to fourteen dollars so I finally found a place where I got them for $10.50 by using the old rollers so I came back and got them and saved over three dollars.

I had been expecting the tenants to complain about the shades for they were really bad and being odd lengths they cost more, so there wasn't anything left to do but get them, as there is a heavy fine with imprisonment for all who fail to comply with the ordinance.

I paid for them, so if I did wrong you can tell me, but I was afraid I wouldn't be able to get a letter to you and back in time, hoping I did the right thing I am.

Yours Truly
Newport Beach Calif.
Aug. 17, 1942.

Mrs. K. Swan
1200, The Alameda
Berkeley Calif.

Dear Mrs. Swan;

No doubt you will be surprised to get this letter.

I went down and measured the windows then went shopping to see where I could do the best, all the places wanted thirteen to fourteen dollars so I finally found a place where I got them for $10.56 by using the old rollers so I came back and got them and saved over three dollars.

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Yours Truly
Dr. and Mrs. Carl Weston Fisher
request the honour of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter
Janet Lynne

To
Mr. Craig Eliot Swan

on Saturday, the twenty-first of February
one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five
at three o'clock in the afternoon

Arlington Community Church
Berkeley, California
Dear Aunt Bettie

Just looked on the Wedding invitation last night and saw that a reply was requested. We will be there with bells etc. Also for reception. This machine doesn't spell very well as it is used to writing "take 4 times daily as directed" and not much else.

Must go to work—several Rxs came in.
See you all the 20th
Love bill
Letter from my Mother’s childhood friend following the death of my parents

Dear Craig,

It was most thoughtful of you to send the packet with the memorial material & picture, and I had a nostalgic time recalling many old scenes and days with Kay & Elsie. My brother, John, was also grateful for the envelope to him.

As you may know, Kay & I were close from the 7th grade at old Grant school, through high school and college (as roommates in undergrad years in the society & in an apt. in grad school.)
Here are just a few vignettes:

Dancing at the old Ambassador Hotel to Guy Lombardo

...
2. At the apt. as guards Keeping were Caught in the Prevent Bank Holiday. Without funds for groceries. Eliza's 7th prod. brother took up a collection.

Going starry-eyed to A.F. to hear Norman Thomas debate & deciding to vote for him.

By noon the mountain country in the desert. Another linkage began then.

Forgive an old lady's musing. But all the recall is of wonderful (over)
At the apt. as seemed Key & I were
caught in the Roosevelt Bank Holiday;
without funds for groceries. Eliot
& his first brother took up a collection.
One rainy night Eliz came running
down to the apt., slipped on the
wet sidewalk & broke two front
teeth. He came to the door—a
bloody mess—and he promptly
went in and threw up!
Family Letters

Questions and Discussion