

# Vår Historia

## SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



### THAT "OTHER" SUNDSTRÖM FAMILY

Given that Jacob Otto, or J.O. Sundström has his name attached to a conference center in Lindsborg, I thought I would clear the air right away. Carl Richard (C.R.) nor his older brother Johan Oloff (J.O.) Sundström seem to be related to Jacob. In fact, Johan (aka John) went as far as changing his surname to his step-father's name, Ekström.

Carl, born Feb. 16, 1850, was the youngest son to Olof and Margareta of Vedevåg, Sweden. Olof was a miller, and at just 18 months old, Carl lost his father. Margareta then married the flour mill handyman, Per (Peter) Ekström in 1857\*.

January 1869 Margareta sold the mill\* and the family, including 18 year-old Carl (*sometimes using his middle name, Richard*), immigrated to America. First to New York, then to Junction City, KS., where Peter worked for the railroad for a short time. The next year the family moved to the Lindsborg area. One of Carl's granddaughters stated that he had built the first ten houses in Lindsborg, as they were living in dugouts.\* He also helped build Johnson's Mill (*location of Smoky Valley Roller Mill*) and the first dam.

Carl married Matilda Sandell in 1879. Matilda, born 1853 in Orebrolan, Sweden, arrived in America in 1869 and to Kansas in 1871 with her parents Lars and Sara. During the journey west, Lars died on the prairie wilder-

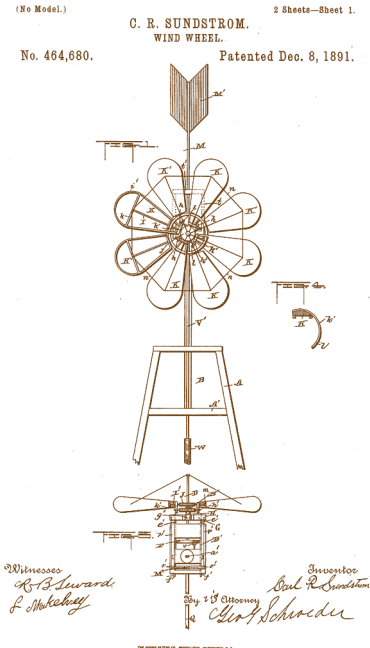
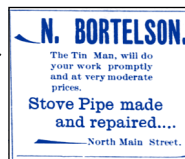
ness near Topeka. Sara and children made it to Lindsborg and in 1873 re-married to Nels Bortelson, who was a tinner, perhaps Lindsborg's first tinner. Interesting fact, Bortelson would later go in to partnership with Charlie Train and upon retirement in 1900 sold his half to the Train Bros. At Bortelson's funeral in 1918 all six Train Bros. were his pall bearers.

Carl and Matilda had the first of seven children in 1880, Myrtle Elizabeth. Unfortunately two of those children were still born, but the other four were Carl Olof b1883, Ernest Richard b1884, Ella Olivia b1891, and Ebba Irene Violet b1896.

Besides construction work, Carl served as Deputy Post Master, Union Hotel Manager, and Constable in Lindsborg thru the 1880s. Carl and Matilda both sang in the very first Messiah, which Matilda used her maiden name for some unknown reason.

In 1887 his wife, Matilda opened a millinery store on north Main St. and quickly stocked up the latest fashions in hats from New York.

1890 started out harsh as Carl's mother, Margareta (Margret), accidentally fell into a freshly dug well at her farm four miles SE of Lindsborg and drowned. She was in the habit of checking on the horses and cattle late at night and missed the path on the way back. At the time, she was caring for her



\*uploaded stories on Ancestry.com

**PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY**

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**MILLINERY!**  
 Having just received a large stock of Millinery DIRECT from New York, we are able to sell cheaper than the Cheapest, and "ALL THE GO." see us.  
**Mrs. C. R. SUNDRAM,**

## THAT "OTHER" SUNDSTROM FAMILY {CON'T}

crippled daughter, Carl's half-sister, Anna.

Carl became involved with local politics, getting elected to the Lindsborg City Council in 1892 and School Board Director the following year. During this time, he was also granted a patent on a new wind wheel, or wind mill. He was a founding board member of the Scandinavian Colonization and Townsite Co., which included Lindsborg, Arkansas City, and Caldwell, KS., and if that wasn't enough, also co-founded the Union Mercantile Co.

May of 1894 Carl accepted a position (job) at Hawkinson's Hardware Store in Marquette KS., that December Matilda moved her millinery store to Marquette's old Post Office building and relocated the family. Marquette quickly found out the talent the Sundstrom children had, both Myrtle's voice, Ernest's trombone, and 12 year old virtuoso Carl, Jr's violin playing were heard in Marquette's Opera House as if professionals were performing. Little did they know that the best was yet to come, Ella was quickly learning and on February 26, 1896, the Sundstrom's welcomed their last child, a nine pound baby girl named Ebba.

Carl, Jr and his brother Ernest built a four-person merry-go-round for all the kids in Marquette, showing that music wasn't the only thing they were good at. In fact, Ernest liked helping in construction and working broom corn fields. In his sophomore year at Bethany College in 1908, Ernest was 1st Trombone in the Bethany Orchestra and Band, but that summer he helped his father in Arkansas. An illness took his life that July at just 22 years old.

In 1897 the family moved back to Lindsborg, just as Carl, Jr started Bethany College. His father opened an implement dealership in the Crowley building, south of Gröndal's photography studio. This dealership was in Matilda's step-father's tin

shop. Matilda didn't reopen her millinery store, but did offer dress-making courses in her home three blocks west of Bethany College.

Myrtle, a soprano vocalist, was the first to graduate Bethany College in 1900. The second was Carl,

Jr, or Carl O., in 1901. While Carl O. was a superb violinist and tenor vocalist, his profession became teacher/principal. Carl Jr was now known as Professor Sundström.

Ella attended Bethany from 1903-1910, sixth through eighth grade model school, where she studied pyrography and needlework, and Conservatory of Music, studying piano, voice culture, harmony, history of music, and public school music. Ella not only was an accomplished pianist and soprano vocalist, she became a renowned teacher of music.

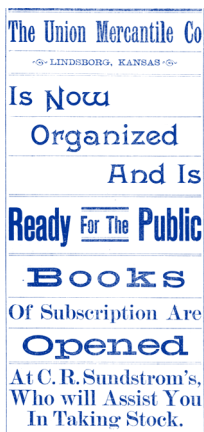
Then there was Ebba, the youngest child. Her Bethany College attendance started in the Model School and Conservatory of Music at fourth grade. She, like her older brother, Carl O., was a virtuoso violinist. Her brother passed his first violin on to her when she was a young child. In 1907 Ebba was a member of the Bethany Violin Quartet, and one of the girls died from Typhoid Fever, at her funeral Ebba and the remaining two performed, leaving an empty seat for their friend. Ebba was only eleven. Ebba attended Bethany College until 1910 when the family moved to McAlester, OK, where Ebba started teaching violin and performing. Ella had become a teacher there so the family followed. It was a special treat when two or three of the Sundström kids were able to perform together, not just for the parents, but for the audience. They quickly became celebrities.

Carl and Matilda followed their children, first to Minneapolis, MN where Ebba and Ella both taught at the Minneapolis School of Music and their older sister, Myrtle often joined in providing her soprano voice, and then to Chicago where in 1919 Carl Richard Sundstrom died. Myrtle followed in passing in 1922. Though all their children married and started their own families, the family stayed close to each other.

Ebba was the last to marry in 1924, though by then she had made a name for herself professionally so kept her maiden name, or hyphenated maiden with married. In 1931, with baby in arm, Ebba became the first American born woman to conduct an orchestra! It was the Chicago Woman's Symphony Orchestra. In 1940 she was a guest conductor/violinist at Bethany College, playing violin the first set, conducting the second.

Matilda Sundstrom died 1937 in Chicago, and like her husband, Carl R., was brought back to Lindsborg to lay at rest.

Though Carl was a master carpenter and inventor, and Matilda a milliner, their children are the ones who shined. All musical prodigies in their own rite.



In Memoriam



ERNST RICHARD SUNDRSTROM  
Born Dec. 25, 1885. Died June 30, 1968.  
Even cheerful and optimistic, a worthy  
classmate and a true friend.



Photo at left c1910 at Carl R. and Matilda's home in McAlester, OK.



1937 painting of Ebba Sundstrom titled "Maestro" by Carl Tolpo



## Upcoming SVHA Programs

July 14th, 2026

The Real "Ike" - Fact and Fiction

*Mark Teasley*



Sept. 8th, 2026

Kansas Horse Thieves

*John Burchill*



Nov. 10th, 2026

250 Years of the Domesticated Turkey

*Frank "Bob" Reese*



All programs  
start at:  
**7:30 pm**

Location:

**Messiah Lutheran Church—Fellowship Hall**  
402 N. First Street—Lindsborg, KS.

**Smoky Valley Historical Association**  
P.O. Box 255  
Lindsborg, KS. 67456



\$25    \$50    \$100    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Smoky Valley Historical Association is a non-profit organization and is registered under 501(c)3

All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.

Please mail or scan QR Code. **Thank You!**

**Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year**



**SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**VÅR HISTORIA FEATURES!**

**ALL PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS ARE POSTED TO OUR WEBSITE IN THE "NEWSLETTER" PAGE. ALSO, THE CURRENT ISSUE FEATURES PHOTOS AND NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS PERTINENT TO THAT ISSUE, AND SOMETIMES THE ONLY PLACE TO SEE THEM.**

[WWW.SMOKYVALLEY-HISTORY.ORG](http://WWW.SMOKYVALLEY-HISTORY.ORG)



**Funding**

Membership contributions are the SVHA's major source of on-going funding. A free-will donation in any amount will secure your membership in the Association for the year.

**\*Memberships are renewed in the First quarter of each year!**

Grants, such as those awarded by the Kansas Humanities Council, are also available from time-to-time to further the mission of Smoky Valley Historical Association.

**Smoky Valley Historical Mission**

*The purpose of this association shall be to collect and preserve historical photographs, manuscripts, and other items pertaining to the early history and settlement of our community in general and the City of Lindsborg in particular; to preserve and beautify places of historical interest in our city, its vicinity, and properties entrusted to the association; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.*

**Contact info:**

Email or visit our website:

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[www.smokyvalley-history.org](http://www.smokyvalley-history.org)



TACK SÅ MYCKET!



SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
LINDSBORG, KANSAS 67456

Smoky Valley Historical Association  
PO Box 255  
Lindsborg, KS 67456

*"History preservation and education"*



*Thank you for your contributions, and supporting the historical preservation of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley of Central Kansas.*

*Our pioneers left their legacy long after they were gone, so can you. Managing estates, bequests, and gifts through retirement plans can help keep our preservation ongoing and long-lasting.*

***All donations are tax exempt, we are a 501-(c)3 organization.***