In the years immediately after the Civil War, my great-grandfather, his brother, and their father took a ship from Malmo, Sweden , for North America, hoping to start a new life. The ship, intended to land in New York, first landed in Canada, because of bad weather. In Canada, Swedish-speaking men boarded the vessel and offered the men good jobs in Virginia. They were promised good accommodations and their food in exchange for farm labor. Many on the ship accepted the offer and sailed to Norfolk, Virginia.

When they landed, they were taken by the Swedes—who had offered them work—to plantations. They signed work papers printed in English but did not understand that they were agreeing to work for two years before they could leave. The good accommodations turned out to be the quarters where former slaves had lived. The food they were given was terrible—wormy salted pork and flour and cornmeal filled with bugs.

Once they discovered how horrible the conditions were, they tried to leave but were forcibly kept on the plantation. After several unsuccessful attempts to leave, they managed to escape and made their way to Richmond, Virginia. In Richmond, they went to a church, and although they spoke no English, they were able to explain their predicament to the church pastor. Their original plan, when they left Sweden, had been to come to the United States and join relatives who had earlier immigrated to Indianapolis.

Once they had somehow explained their story without the benefit of English, the pastor loaned them $50, which they later repaid. It was enough money to pay for their transportation to Indianapolis, where they joined their relatives. My grandmother told me this story. She heard it from her father, who was one of the two brothers.

Other stories she told me concerned the hardships of life in Minnesota, where the family settled. Plagues of grasshoppers, the deaths of brothers and sisters from diphtheria and tuberculosis, and house and barn fires that destroyed their possessions were all described to me in great detail as a child. Life became better for the family when they moved to California around 1905. However, as farmers, life was always hard, especially during the 1920s and the Great Depression.

My grandmother lived to be nearly 90 years old. She was a wonderful woman, but her stories about her life were always about the difficult times. Life finally became better for her and many

other farmers during and after World War II.

Todd, California