

Christine and Anna Mangney

Ouch! After pricking my finger twice on a straight pin pushed through the creased corner of a canceled 1926 check and the attached receipt, I noticed the name on the signature line—Anna Mangney. Sisters Christine and Anna Mangney were raised in the small farming village of Ramkvilla in southern Sweden. Christine was born in 1866. Her sister Anna was six years younger. Of the two, Christine was the more disciplined and responsible while Anna was the more adventurous. Life on the farm was hard; especially in the late 1800's as repeated crop failures decimated the farm economy in Sweden. Were that not enough, the utter disregard on the part of the aristocracy and the clergy in the State Lutheran Church for the plight of the poor left the Mangney family and their fellow countrymen with few options but one—immigrate to America.



Rankvilla, Sweden

Land of Opportunity



As early as 1840, recent Swedish immigrants to America wrote home telling of offers for free land in the Midwest. In addition, they wrote of the availability of jobs for Swedish farm girls working as domestic servants in the homes of the wealthy in cities such as Minneapolis and Chicago. After weeks of discussion and prayer around the dinner table, it was decided. Christine, the oldest daughter at age 22, would go. She would seek her fortune in the hopes of being able to share it with the rest of the family

back home in Sweden. 1888 turned out to be the peak for Swedish immigration to the United States with 45,000 souls making the voyage that year. After a tearful good bye to her family, she boarded a ship in Gothenburg, Sweden along with thousands of other young fortune seekers. Despite being seasick for much of the voyage, missing her family, and anxious for what lay ahead, she was also strangely hopeful that God was with her and going before her.

Christine landed in New York and boarded a train for Minneapolis. Upon arrival she booked a room in a boarding house along with other Swedish girls her age. She soon found work as a cook in the large home of a Scottish family. Though the hours were long and the work taxing, the job was less demanding than anything she had experience growing up on a farm. And for the first time in her life, she was earning money for her labor, she had plenty to eat, and she was learning a new language—



English. Of the 1.3 million Swedes who immigrated to the United States between 1865 and 1920, Swedish farm girls were the most successful at establishing themselves and assimilating into American culture. It proved to be a liberating experience for many young women who might otherwise have faced a dreary, hand to mouth existence on a rural farm in Sweden.

Each week Christine wrote home to her family, sending a portion of her earnings. She often included a letter to her teenage sister, Anna. Favorite subjects in her letters were the lives of her boarding house roommates working as cooks, maids, and nannies. A few of them began meeting each week for Bible study, fellowship, and prayer. Christine found the little community so encouraging especially on those lonely nights when she missed her family and all that was familiar. The little group became her home away from home where she could share her heart.

Mission Friends in Sweden

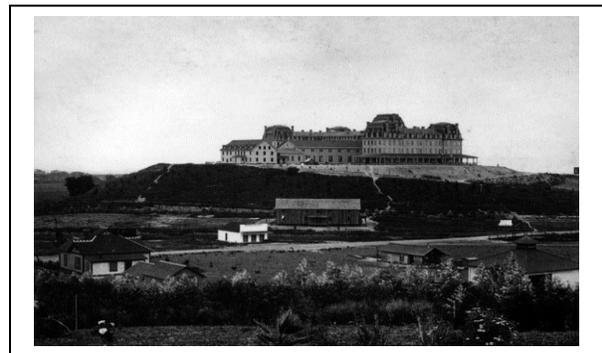
Back home on the farm in Sweden, Anna desired to join her sister in America, but responsibilities on the farm prevented her from being able to leave. As the years wore on, her longing to join her sister grew. It was about that time when she began attending a Mission Friends Church and experienced her own spiritual awakening. Mission Friends was a seventy-five-year-old revival movement within the State/Folk Church that emphasized personal Bible reading, prayer, home fellowship groups, and a heart devotion to Jesus. At age twenty-four she was baptized and made the commitment to serve the Lord wherever He led. At some point between the ages of twenty-four and thirty, she was freed to join her sister in Minneapolis.

Moving to the Sunshine

In October of 1902, with the Midwest winter fast approaching, the girls, Christine age 36 and Anna age 30, chose adventure and moved to Pasadena arriving on October 22. At the time, Pasadena was in the midst of a population explosion. The city of 9000 had doubled in size in the previous 10 years. By 1910, it would grow to 30,000 people and continue its double-digit growth rate for the next fifty years. Word had reached the wealthy in other colder parts of the country that Pasadena was the place to be in the winter time. Land was cheap and the sun always shined. When the sisters arrived, they would have encountered a city of dirt streets surrounded by orange groves, hosting grand homes and opulent hotels in the shadow of the stunning San Gabriel Mountains.



Colorado Boulevard in 1890



The Raymond Hotel

The women quickly found jobs which led to meeting other Swedish girls their age and younger. Somewhere along the line, the sisters had scraped together enough money to purchase a home at 853 Magnolia Street, eight blocks south of Colorado Boulevard. As in Minneapolis, the girls began inviting their new friends to their home for coffee, Bible study and prayer. They made their guest room available for new arrivals while they looked for more permanent housing. They counseled the lonely. Their home

became a center of hospitality. Eventually the sisters invited the pastors from the Los Angeles Covenant Church, part of the Mission Friends movement in Sweden, to their home to share the gospel with their working girl friends. So it went for the next 30 years.

Birth of Pasadena Covenant Church

In 1922, what we now call Pasadena Covenant Church was born out of the personal ministry of the Mangney sisters. Along with twenty-six other people, eighteen of whom were women, Christine and Anna were charter members. They helped start the Ladies Aid Society, which became the Phoebe Society, which became the Covenant Women Auxiliary. The little church met in their home while the first church building was being constructed. When they died, they gave their small estate to the church. Those funds along with other estate gifts were used to construct the gym building.



The Mangney Home at 853 Magnolia Avenue

From the skimpy documentation left behind, I get the impression that Christine and Anna Mangney were always true to their roots—gracious, pious, humble, disciplined, practical, working class women who shunned the spot light. They were the kind of women who would stick a straight pin through the crimped corner of a canceled check rather than waste money on a fancy stapler.



Anna died in 1931 at the age of 59 and was buried at the Mountain View Cemetery in Altadena. Her grave is next to that of Matilda Wallin, one of her working girl friends who died earlier. Christine grieved the loss of her sister while living another twenty-three years and dying at age 87. She was buried in the same grave with her sister. Because there were no other family members to add Christine's name to the grave stone, only Anna's name is listed. I think Christine would be fine with that arrangement. She is with her beloved sibling and together they are in the presence of the Savior who has

loved them for all eternity. The grave right next to theirs on the other side is that of Reverend Axel Sporrong (1867-1935), the first pastor of Pasadena Covenant (1923-1930). Pastor Sporrong found in the Mangney sisters the kind of ministry partners he admired and was honored to stand with in death.

Author's Note

In telling the story of the Mangney sisters, my goal was to tell it in a way that readers could understand the context and identify with the characters. Details about the sisters are very thin side aside from dates, locations, and testimony from others of what they accomplished. I made assumptions about their motivations and feelings which may or may not be true.

Steve Stuckey, January 2021