



SÄLLSKAPET VALLONÄTTLINGAR

Sällskapet Vallonättlingar was founded in 1938.

The purpose is to disseminate knowledge of the influence the Walloons have made for Sweden in an economic and cultural way and to support the research within this subject.

The society shall also offer the descendants of the original immigrated walloons different kinds of get-together. The society shall also take part in preserving Walloon culture and to create living contact with people, public authority and institutions in Walloonica.

Anyone who is related to a Walloon can be a member, but also the one is welcomed, who will economical or in any other way, support the activity of the society. The members represent different parts of Sweden and the board is located in Stockholm. The number of members is now 1.100. The society arrange different activities for the members.

The annual planning offers study visits and excursions, mainly inside the country, lectures interesting for the society as well as a more joyful meeting in autumn.

Several times the society also has made expeditions to Belgium, above all in the Walloon part of the country.

The Society also arranges meetings for genealogists and publish the genealogistic results in the membership paper VALLONÄTTLINGEN, which is publicated four times a year and is posted to each member. Vallonättlingen is included in the membership fee.

Sällskapet Vallonättlingar can now look back at seventy years of successful activity. All years, the

direction has been to point out the importance of the originally immigrated walloons and thereafter their descendants and the importance to the economic and cultural development in Sweden.

There are many personalities with walloons origin who has made great achievements in different areas. For example the well-known statesman Louis Gerhard De Geer, who was the one who introduced the two-chamber parliament system 1866, the great sculptor Carl Eldh, the writer and artist Olof Thunman and the well-known musician Byss-Kalle.

The immigration of the walloons and their activity have lively been described in different ways. Erik Appelgren and Kjell Lindblom have been of great importance within the genealogical research and have written a number of reports about individual families.

Written documents have been published by, among others, Karl Kilbom ("Vallonerna"- "The Walloons") and in a doctor's dissertation by Bernt Douhan ("Arbete, kapital och migration"- "Work, capital and migration") and Tore Hållander ("Vägen in i sockenkyrkan"- "Direction into parish church"). Mr Douhan has also written a lot of articles and essays in papers and periodicals. Prince Vilhelm made a newsreel about working walloon smiths. Later TV-films have been created by the directors Jan Bergman and Curt Strömblad. Among the artists Sixten Haage can be mentioned too. He has made a big suite of lithographies which worthy of imitation shows the conditions of the walloon workers and their life in Walloonica and in Sweden.



A short history of the Walloons in Sweden

At the end of the 16th century, the first iron workers arrived from Walloonian, an area nowadays in the south of Belgium and in the north of France. In 1597 Wellam de Besche brought a team of workers to Nyköpings bruk.

Eleven years later Pacquet Gilson (Påke Gilliusson Chenon) recruited eleven Walloon workers to the mining district in Värmland.

The primary Walloon immigration took place during the years 1615-1640. Ca one thousand of Walloon people practising the profession were recruited by Louis De Geer and Wellam de Besche for employment at Swedish factories.

Those who arrived first were woodmen, charcoal-burners and horsemen. After 1625, smiths, workers at the blast furnace and craftsmen arrived as well as work managers. Approximately a fifth of the workers returned to their homes on the expiration of the time of the contract.

It was about 2.500 persons, including family members, who chose to stay in Sweden. The Walloon descendants who live in Sweden today are descended from these people. They can be estimated to be about 100.000 persons.

The ironworks and their production were the base for the work for the Walloons in Sweden. Principally it was the final product of the Walloon steel process, the valuable quality of the bar iron, that gave the export profit.

During the 18th and 19th centuries a lot of Walloons also made careers in the sphere of society.

At the beginning of 1900, when the classical activity at the Walloon steel draw to an end, also the traditions and the spirit among the Walloons became weaker. One way to obstruct this, were the foundation of Sällskapet Vallonättlingar.



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