WHERE WAS SWEDENBORG?

Frank S. Rose

As one long interested in his theological works and his life, I have wondered just where Swedenborg’s travels took him. Where was he at certain key times in his life? What other countries did he visit and for how long? These questions are not always easy to answer. There is a great wealth of facts about Swedenborg and his life, but no simple outline for easy reference. Information is available, but it is scattered here and there, and some of it is inaccurate. This is why it seemed worthwhile to gather as much data as possible in order to create a more accurate chronology. The following is the result of this research.

For the purpose of this essay I divide his life into four periods.

1. 1688–1715, ages 0–27. These are the years of his childhood, youth, and educational travel. He lived with family (first his parents, then his sister) until he was twenty-two. Then he made his first journey abroad, as an extension of his formal education, returning at the age of 27.

2. 1715–1723, ages 27–35. During these years he moved around a lot, at times staying with his parents in Brunsbo or his sister Anna in Uppsala or in the home he jointly owned with his sister Hedwig in Starbo. He also lived with the Polhem family. His foreign travels were for publishing and research, especially about the mining industry.

3. 1723–1745, ages 35–57. In this third period of his life, he was a full member of the College of Mines, attending meetings regularly. He lived in a series of apartments in Stockholm, making occasional short trips around Sweden, and long trips abroad, once again for research.

* Frank Rose was born in Bryn Athyn in 1927, the ninth child of Don and Marjorie (Wells) Rose. He was ordained in 1952 and served sixteen years in England, visiting groups in England, Scotland, Wales, Holland, Belgium and France. He also served as Pastor of the Colchester New Church Society in England. From 1968–1977 he served as Pastor of the Carmel Church in Kitchener, Canada. From 1977–1982 he was resident housemaster of the College Men’s Dorm in Bryn Athyn, teaching in the high schools and college of the Academy of the New Church. In 1982 he and his wife Louise moved to Tucson Arizona, where he served as pastor of Sunrise Chapel until his retirement in 2003. He and his wife had six children, five of whom are still living. Current address: 9233 E. Helen St., Tucson, AZ 85715. Tel. 520-721-1091; fuzrose@sunrisechapel.org
and to publish his greatest philosophic works. Through the journals he wrote during this period, we have a detailed picture of where he was during much of this time, whether in Stockholm or abroad.

4. 1745–1772, ages 57–84. In this last phase of his life he lived in his own home in Stockholm, traveling around Sweden very little, and making six trips abroad to publish his theological works.

Going into these periods in greater detail:

CHILDHOOD, YOUTH AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
STOCKHOLM, UPPSALA, BRUNSBO, AND FIRST TRIP ABROAD

1. 1688–1715, ages 0–27

Swedenborg, then Emanuel Svedberg, was born in Stockholm. His father’s work changed when Emanuel was only two, but the family remained in Stockholm, only moving to the place of his father’s new assignment in the spring of 1692 when Emanuel was four. Unfortunately, his father received another assignment, and after only about two months in Vingåker they moved to Uppsala in the summer. Emanuel lived with the family for another eleven years, but then his father was given a new assignment as Bishop of Skara. The Bishop and his wife moved to Brunsbo, just near Skara, leaving Emanuel to move in with his newly married older sister, Anna, who was then seventeen, and her husband Erik Benzelius. Emanuel continued to live with the Benzelius family in Uppsala until he graduated, in 1709. His hope was to begin foreign travels immediately after graduation, but this was not possible, so he moved to Brunsbo to be with his parents and remained there a year before taking that longed-for trip.

Permission was finally granted, and he took his first trip abroad when he was twenty-two years old. This trip lasted almost five years and included London and Oxford in England, Holland, (where he attended part of the Congress at Utrecht), Brussels, Paris, Hamburg, Greifswald, Stralsund, and back to his native land.
EARLY CAREER: BRUNSBO, STOCKHOLM, STARBO, AND SECOND TRIP ABROAD

2. 1715–1723, ages 27–35

When Swedenborg returned from his long travels, he teamed up with the Swedish inventor Christopher Polhem and became involved in projects for King Charles the XII, which meant traveling extensively around Sweden. He worked with Polhem on dry docks, sluice works, and transporting ships overland. Through inheritance he also became involved in the mining industry. He used his parents’ home in Brunsbo as a base. He also had a home in Starbo. During this time he was very active as an inventor, engineer, and philosopher. He wrote poems, edited a scientific journal, and began his philosophic studies. We know where he was in this phase of his life mostly through letters. Many of them give the date and the place of writing, but they do not indicate how long he remained in each place. In 1716 he became an extraordinary member of the Bergskollegium, by appointment of Charles XII, but after the king died in 1718, his position on the board was in dispute. The Board had its meetings in Stockholm, but since he was not accepted as a member, he did not move to Stockholm but continued to visit a variety of places in Sweden.

His second foreign journey, 1721–1722, was taken primarily to publish the *Prodromous to the Principia*, a work on *Iron and Fire* and his method of *Finding the Longitude*, all in Amsterdam.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER ON THE COLLEGE OF MINES
THREE TRIPS ABROAD

3. 1723–1745, ages 35–57

Swedenborg moved to Stockholm probably in August of 1722, and became established as a regular member of the College of Mines on April 2, 1723. From that point on he was very regular in his attendance, going to meetings six days a week (not on Sunday), for about ten months a year. Since the records of the Bergskollegium are extant, we have a detailed
picture of the times when Swedenborg was in attendance, and therefore in Stockholm. He kept journals for much of the time he spent abroad on his 3rd, 4th and 5th foreign journeys, and so we can trace fairly precisely where he was from day to day. He spent over seven years traveling in this period of his life. He was a full member of the Bergscollegium for twenty-four years, attending meetings regularly for the seventeen of those years that he was in Stockholm. He lived in Stockholm most of each year, with occasional visits in connection with his responsibilities as a member of the board, plus trips he took in the summer when the board was not in session. There are very few records of these summer trips. His three foreign journeys were all taken for the purpose of research and publishing his major scientific and philosophic works.


**Fourth Foreign Journey** July 1736–October, 1740. *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* in Amsterdam and London.


**THEOLOGICAL PERIOD**

**SIX TRIPS ABROAD TO PUBLISH THE WRITINGS**

4. 1745–1772, ages 57–84

In the spring of 1743 Swedenborg bought his first home in Stockholm, but did not move in right away because of a pending trip abroad. That was the trip (1743–1745) that changed his life. In it he had intense paranormal experiences bringing him through a profound change. Ultimately he received a call from the Lord to abandon his scientific and philosophic work and turn his attention to theology. On returning to Stockholm, he moved into his new house on Hornsgatan, continued on the College of Mines (but attending less regularly) for another two years, and then retired from the
College July 1747. After that he devoted himself to his new use while still taking an active part in the House of Nobles.

He lived in Stockholm. When he had material ready for publication, he traveled abroad to publish it. The first of these trips lasted three years, and on it he did a considerable amount of research and writing, especially in London and Aix la Chapelle. The other trips each lasted about a year. We do not know much about the routes he followed. It seems as if he went directly to London or Amsterdam where he remained seeing his works through the press. In 1770 he set off to publish *True Christianity*. This was to be his last trip. His final months were spent in London, working on a proposed appendix volume which he did not live to complete. He died in London on March 29th, 1772.

**Sixth Foreign Journey.** July 24 1747–May or June, 1750 publishing *Secrets of Heaven* in London.

**Seventh Foreign Journey.** Spring or summer, 1758–mid July 1759 publishing five books in London: *Heaven and Hell, New Jerusalem, Last Judgment, White Horse, Other Planets*.

**Eighth Foreign Journey.** End of May or early June, 1763–early August, 1764 publishing seven books in Amsterdam, Holland: *The Lord, Sacred Scripture, Life, Faith, Supplements, Divine Love and Wisdom, Divine Providence*.

**Ninth Foreign Journey.** June or July, 1765–September 8, 1766 to publish *Apocalypse Revealed* in Amsterdam.


**Eleventh Foreign Journey** July 31, 1770 to the end of his life, March 29, 1772 to publish *True Christianity* in Amsterdam, and continue writing an Appendix volume.
SWEDENBORG’S WHEREABOUTS YEAR BY YEAR

January 29 1688 to early spring 1692 in Stockholm
1692 Spring, about two months in Vingåker

Summer 1692 to December 31 in Uppsala

Summer 1693 to early June 1709 in Uppsala

1709
January 1 to early June, Uppsala except for a trip in May to Brunsbo
Mid-June to December 31, Brunsbo

1710
January 1 to end of April, Brunsbo

Start of First Foreign Trip
Leaves at the end of April or early May
May 10 sails from Göteborg to Harwich; by June to December 31
London and possibly other places in England

1711
January 1 to late December, Oxford and London
End of year, Holland, Rotterdam, Hague, Leiden

1712
January 1 to mid-January, Utrecht
January 15 to the end of December, London, and Oxford
End of December, Holland

1713
January 1 to May or June, Holland
May or June to December 31, Brussels, Vincennes, Paris, and Versailles

1714
January 1 to May or June, Paris
June, July and possibly August, Ryssel (Lille), Leiden, Osnabruck, Hannover, Hamburg
End of August, arrives Rostock for a “considerable time”
End of November to December 31, Greifswald
WHERE WAS SWEDENBORG?

1715
January 1 to April or later, Greifswald
Greifswald a couple of months
June 7, arrives Stockholm by yacht

*End of First Foreign Trip*

Early July, arrives Brunsbo
September, short visit to Stiernsund (Stjärnsund)
November 19, leaves Uppsala
November 21, arrives Stockholm
End of November, to Brunsbo, Mt. Kinnekulle
December 5, arrives Stockholm
After December 19th, to Starbo
Until December 31, Starbo

1716
January 1 to end of February, Stiernsund
February 14, Skarviken
March, Brunsbo
April, trip to Westergyllen and Uppsala
Beginning of June, in Westergyllen
Summer, in Brunsbo
End of September to early November, Uppsala
November, Uppsala, Stiernsund,
November 12, arrives Brunsbo
November 18, to Lund
November 20, Brunsbo
Early December, Lund
December 20, leaves Brunsbo
End of December, Karlskrona

1717
Early January, travels to Göteborg with Polhem
Four-week trip to Strömstad, Trollhättan, Gullspring, Hjalmar
February 21, Stiernsund
February 21 or later, leaves for Starbo
March 22, arrives Stockholm
April 17, last meeting with Bergskollegium, leaves for Uppsala
Easter Sunday, Uppsala,
May and/or June, Lund
August, Brunsbo

Early September, leaves Brunsbo for Karlskrona
September 17, dam lowering in Karlskrona
End of October, to Göteborg, Uddevalla

Late November, to Brunsbo
November or December, Karlskrona
Most of December, Brunsbo
December, joins his Father and King Charles XII at Lund

1718
January 1 to 21, Brunsbo
January 21, to Orebo, Skinnskatteberg, and Starbo
Possible hurried trip to Uppsala in February

May to mid-September, Vennesburg working on moving ships overland
Short visit in July to Strömstad
Mid-September and part of October, Brunsbo
Early December, in Karlsgraf, returning to Brunsbo in mid-December

1719
Arrives Stockholm end of January
February, early March, Stockholm
Mid-March to mid-May, Uppsala when he was ennobled
May 24, to Brunsbo
Summer, travels to mines, Starbo, etc.
End of September, arrives in Stockholm for the rest of the year

1720
January, Brunsbo and possibly Uppsala
February, Stockholm
Early March, Starbo
Early April until June, in Brunsbo
June, Skinnskatteberg and Starbo
End of June until the end of the year, in Brunsbo and mostly Stockholm
WHERE WAS SWEDENBORG?

1721
January, February, Brunsbo
February, March to mid-May, Starbo
Mid-May, arrives Stockholm

Start of Second Foreign Trip
June 30, Helsingborg
July, Copenhagen, Hamburg
Mid-August, arrives Amsterdam, The Hague, and Leiden to mid-November
End of October, to Leiden for five weeks
November 18, Liege
Early December, leaves for The Hague and Amsterdam
Liege for most of December including Christmas

1722
January to end of June, Amsterdam, Aix la Chapelle, Cologne, Dillenburg,
Marburg, Cassel, Stolberg, Leipzig early March
June, Goslar, Blankenburg, Hartz Mountains, Schwartz, Lautern, Hamburg, Stralsund, Ystad
Early July, returns to Sweden

End of Second Foreign Trip
The rest of July, Medevi, (Lake Vettarn)
End of July, leaves for Brunsbo and then Stockholm
Mid-August to end of year, in Stockholm

1723
Stockholm all year until November, then to Starbo, Presthyttan, Brunsbo, Axmar
Brunsbo for Christmas

1724
Early January, Brunsbo
First week of February, Stockholm
February 10, leaves Stockholm for Presthyttan for over a month
April 28, back in Stockholm for rest of year, except for some visits in July and August to Axmar, Stockholm, Uppsala
September and October, Örebro
November 1 to December 31, Stockholm

1725
In Stockholm all year except for July 19 to October 26 visiting Nya Copperberg, Örebro, Axmar, etc.

1726
In Stockholm all year except for July and August
July 12 to August 31, Värmland

1727 to 1729
All year in Sweden, mostly Stockholm, possible summer trips

1730
All year in Stockholm except for visit to Falun, August until September 22

1731
All year in Stockholm except for visit to Örebro, October 9th Örebro

1732
All year in Stockholm—possible summer visits

1733
January 1 to May 10, Stockholm

Start of Third Foreign Trip

May 10, 3rd foreign trip (details in appendix)
Long stays:
June 2 to 5, Berlin
June 7 to July 21, Dresden
July 23 to 29, Prague
July 30 to August 6, Carlsbad (now Karlovy Vary)
August 25 to September 2, Dresden
September 4 to March 1, 1734, Leipzig

1734
January 1 to March 1, Leipzig
March 1 to June, visits the mines in the Hartz Mountains
Late June or early July, arrives Stockholm
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End of Third Foreign Trip

July 3 or earlier until December 31, Stockholm

1735
Stockholm all year, except for visit to Falun, etc., in June and July

1736
January 1 to July 10, in Stockholm except for trip to Brunsbo
January 19 to the end of February, in Brunsbo for his father’s burial

Start of Fourth Foreign Trip (See R.L. Tafel Documents for details.)

July 10, 2 P.M., leaves Stockholm
July 17 to 24, Copenhagen
July 30 to August 4, Hamburg
August 6 to 12, Hanover
September 3 to December 31, Paris

1737
January 1 to December 31, Paris

1738
January 1 to March 12, Paris
March 17 to 22, Lyons
March 31 to April 7, Turin
April 9 to 13, Milan
April 19 to August 9, Venice
August 14 to 21, Mantua
August 28 to September 1, and September 6 to 21, Florence
September 25 to December 31, Rome

1739
January 1 to February 15, Rome
February 20 to 27, Florence
March 17 to about May 14, Genoa
Late May to December 31, Amsterdam

1740
January 1 until September or October, The Hague and Amsterdam
September or October, travel including Copenhagen
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End of Fourth Foreign Trip
October 25 to December 31, Stockholm

1741, 1742
All year in Stockholm except for short, summer trips

1743
January 1 to July 21, Stockholm

Start of Fifth Foreign Trip
July 21 to end August, en route
July 27 to August 5, Ystad
August 12 to 17, Hamburg
August 18 to 20, Bremen
End of August to December 31, Amsterdam and The Hague

1744
January 1 to May 1, The Hague, Delft, Amsterdam, Leiden
April 25 to May 1, The Hague
May 4, Harwich
May 5 to December 31, London

1745
January 1 to about July 19, London
About July 19 to August 19, en route to Sweden

End of Fifth Foreign Trip
August 19 to December 31, Stockholm

1746
All year in Stockholm, in the spring, moved to new home in Hornsgatan

1747
January 1 to July 24, Stockholm

Start of Sixth Foreign Trip
July 24, leaves for Holland
Some time in August to December 31, Amsterdam
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1748
January 1 to about July 24, Amsterdam
September 24 (old style) to December 31, London

1749
January 1 to Mid-August or September, London
Mid-September, Amsterdam
Fall to December 31, Aix la Chapelle, France [now Aachen, Germany]

1750
January 1 to spring or summer, Aix la Chapelle

End of Sixth Foreign Trip
Spring or summer to December 31, Stockholm

1751–1757
All year in Stockholm

1758
January 1 to spring or summer, Stockholm

Start of Seventh Foreign Trip
Spring or summer to December 31, London

1759
January 1 to June or July, London
July 19, Göteborg

End of Seventh Foreign Trip
Later July to December 31, Stockholm

1760, 1761
All year, Stockholm

1762
In Stockholm most of the year (Possible trip to Amsterdam on July 17, Supplemental Notes below)

1763
January 1 to end May, Stockholm
Start of Eighth Foreign Trip

End May or early June to December 31, Amsterdam

1764
January 1 to late July, Amsterdam
July or August, visit to Copenhagen on return

End of Eighth Foreign Trip

August 12 to December 31, Stockholm

1765
January 1 to June or July, Stockholm

Start of Ninth Foreign Trip

July or August, departs Stockholm
August 6 to 12, Göteborg
August 12, sails to Amsterdam
Late August to December 31, Amsterdam

1766
January 1 to mid-April, Amsterdam
September 1 to 8, sails directly from London to Stockholm, a record breaking trip of eight days with possible stop at Helsingborg on September 4

End of Ninth Foreign Trip

September 8 to December 31, Stockholm

1767
All year, Stockholm

1768
January 1 to May, Stockholm

Start of Tenth Foreign Trip

Mid-May to end of June, Amsterdam and The Hague
July 1 to end of September, London
October to December 31, Amsterdam
WHERE WAS SWEDENBORG?

1769
January 1 to April 24, Amsterdam
April 24, leaves Amsterdam for Paris
July 1 to September 18, London
September 18, leaves London for Göteborg and Stockholm

*End of Tenth Foreign Trip*

October 2 to December 31, Stockholm

1770
January 1 to July 31, Stockholm

*Start of Eleventh Foreign Trip*

July 31, leaves Stockholm for Göteborg, Elsinore, and Holland
August to December 31, Amsterdam

1771
January 1 to end of August, Amsterdam and The Hague
September 1 to December 31, London

1772
January 1 to March 29, London
5 P.M., March 29th, death in London
April 5, burial in London

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

Swedenborg spent more than a quarter of his eighty-four years outside of his native Sweden in eleven trips.

**Time of year**

He usually began his trips in spring or early summer, returning in July, August, or September at the latest.
Why travel?

His first and longest trip was considered an extension of his university education; it lasted five years, and took him to England, Holland, France, Germany, and possibly other countries. All of the other trips included the publication of a book or books. He did not publish his works in Sweden, preferring England, and, when that was no longer convenient, in Holland. Each trip from 1721 on can be tied to the publishing of specific works.

How many trips?

It is generally thought that Swedenborg took eleven foreign trips in his lifetime. A newspaper article in Stockholm refers to his last trip abroad as his 11th. But there is one testimony by Mr. Jung-Stilling that puts him in Amsterdam on July 17, 1762.

In the year 1762, on the very day when the Emperor Peter III of Russia died, Swedenborg was present with me at a party in Amsterdam. In the middle of the conversation, his physiognomy became changed, and it was evident that his soul was no longer present in him, and that something was taking place with him. As soon as he recovered, he was asked what had happened? At first he would not speak out, but after being repeatedly urged, he said, “Now, at this very hour, the Emperor Peter III has died in prison,” explaining the nature of his death. “Gentlemen, will you please to make a note of this day, in order that you may compare it with the announcement of his death, which will appear in the newspapers.” The papers soon after announced the death of the Emperor, which had taken place on the very same day. (Tafel II p. 490)

It is rather compelling that the event is linked to a known historical date. Against accepting this testimony is the fact that it was written forty-seven years after the date (1809) and was not the writer’s own experience but from a letter received from an unnamed friend in Holland in 1808. There is no other known reference to Swedenborg taking a trip abroad that year. We have good reason to believe that Swedenborg was in Stockholm on June 16 and August 5, 1762, and since the trip to Holland could take as
long as a month it seems highly unlikely that Swedenborg would have been in Amsterdam July 17th of the same year. Of course it is possible, and it is also possible that there are other trips that we have no record of.

How long did the journeys take?

The shortest trip was eight days, from London to Stockholm, the captain remarking that he had never done it in so short a time. In 1745 it took him a month to do the same journey, though by a different route.

Mode of transport

For part of every journey abroad he took a sailing ship. This meant that his trips were subject to vagaries of wind and weather. Sometimes he had to wait several days before the winds became favorable. Once (the rapid eight-day trip) he was taken by private yacht directly to Stockholm. On land, he traveled by horse-drawn carriage, some public and some private, some enclosed, others open. He also rode in horse-drawn canal boats. Crossing the Alps it seems that he rode on the back of a mule.

How do we know his whereabouts?

1. His own diaries
2. Letters with the date and place of writing
3. Testimony of people who knew Swedenborg. Some of these are unreliable, having been written years after the dates in question.
4. His own Memorials written to the Royal Academy of Sciences, House of Nobles, etc.
5. Records of the College of Mines. Books containing names and dates of people in attendance are still preserved by the Royal Academy of Sciences. If he left the country, he had to obtain royal permission to do so.
6. Records of the House of Nobles
7. His own biographical accounts
8. His own works with place and date of publication. Swedenborg was often, but not always, present to see his works through the press.
10. Letters written to Swedenborg, although he was not in the habit of keeping his correspondence, and, on his death, his landlord destroyed the correspondence found among his effects.

The Calendar

The Julian calendar had been in force for almost 1800 years, and was gradually departing from the actual change of seasons (adding about one day every hundred years). To correct this problem Pope Gregory XIII consulted astronomers, and instituted a new calendar in 1582. Catholic countries in Europe were slow to adopt the new calendar (Germany did so in 1700), and Protestant countries were even slower (England 1752, Sweden 1753). This meant that for the first six of Swedenborg’s eleven major trips abroad, he had to deal with calendar changes, so it is not unusual for him to indicate the date: v.s. (or Old Style) or with a double entry, for example, September 1/12 meaning September 1 in Sweden (the Old Style, or Julian Calendar), and September 12 in Holland (New Style or the Gregorian Calendar). Sweden finally adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1753. That year February had only seventeen days. The day after February 17 was March 1st. In his Journal for 1733 he gave double dates, and then, on July 6, switched over to New Style. For details about the calendar see this web-site. http://www.norbyhus.dk/calendar.html

Political Europe in his day

Swedenborg’s travels took him to Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium, England, Switzerland, and Italy. But the political map of Europe was very different in Swedenborg’s day, and what we now think of as Germany was then a collection of many different smaller states, such as Bohemia, Saxony, and so on. Aix la Chapelle was part of France in Swedenborg’s day. It is now known as Aachen, a German city near the Belgian and Dutch borders.
Bibliography

We are very much indebted to R. L. Tafel for his research beginning in 1868 in which he collected a wealth of documents, published in three volumes in 1875–1877 known as *Tafel’s Documents*. We are similarly indebted to Rev. Dr. Alfred Acton who traveled to all of the places he could reach connected with Swedenborg’s life. These have been put together in a collection called “The Academy Collection of Swedenborg Documents” otherwise known as the *Green Books*, with the invaluable assistance of his secretary, Beryl Briscoe. I had the privilege of being a student under Dr. Acton as part of the last class he served as Dean of the Theological School. I clearly remember seeing him return to class in September having made yet another of his travels in pursuit of Swedenborg’s life in Europe. Like Swedenborg, he traveled alone, well into his eighties.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Where did Emanuel Swedenborg believe we came from? creation swedenborg. Although Emanuel Swedenborg (1688â€“1772) had a distinguished career as a scientist during his younger and middle years of adulthood, in his mid-fifties he ceased his scientific work and turned to spiritual subjects instead. His theological works, published between 1749 and 1771, in the later period of his life, are devoted almost entirely to Bible interpretation, theology, and accounts of his experiences in the spiritual world. Emanuel Swedenborg is one of the most prominent persons in Swedish history. With this biography, explore his life, childhood and timeline. With time, Swedenborg's interests wavered. He switched to spiritual matters, resolute to find a theory that would explain how 'matter' relates to 'spirit'. This invention led him to discover the structure of matter and the process of creation itself. In his book, Principia, he outlined his philosophical methods, which included his experience, geometry and the power of reason.