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This is the accepted version of a chapter published in *Nomina: Studi di onomastica in onore di Maria Giovanna Arcamone*.

Citation for the original published chapter:

Wahlberg, M. (2013)

Italian names in Sweden.

In: Donatella Bremer, Davide De Camilli, Bruno Porcelli (ed.), *Nomina: Studi di onomastica in onore di Maria Giovanna Arcamone* (pp. 569-578). Pisa: Edizioni ETS

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published chapter.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-214105>



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Italian names in Sweden

1. *Place-names*

Since the Middle Ages a succession of names has been added to the place nomenclature of Sweden that have been borrowed, ready-made, from other countries, e.g. *Landskrona*, *Kina* and *Sibirien*, a phenomenon that can be referred to as ‘name transfer based on non Swedish models’. Such names can denote settlements, fields and other localities, such as valleys and woods. Well-known names often have a form native to Swedish (endonyms), such as *Kina* ‘China’, *Rom* ‘Rome’ and *Sibirien* ‘Siberia’. Less known names, borrowed in something closer to their original form, are either kept in their original form or have been reshaped linguistically into a more Swedish-sounding form, once they have been incorporated into the Swedish name stock. (For an overview of names of this kind in different parts of the world, see RENTENAAR 1996.)¹

Borrowed names may sometimes be examples of ‘pure name transfer’, the principal reason for their adoption being the prestige and glory associated with their original bearers. Others may have been attached to the site in question as a result of their secondary associations, e.g. *Kina* for a yellow house or *Sibirien* to refer to fields that are remote, exposed to frost or difficult to cultivate (cf. RENTENAAR 1996: 1015 ff.).

Name borrowing took place already during the Middle Ages. The town Landskrona in southern Sweden, founded in 1413, took its name from German castles called *Landeskron*, *Landeskrona* ‘the crown of the country’ or the like (WAHLBERG 2007: 104 f.; 2009: 1036 f.). Other early examples of German loan names are the town name *Falkenberg*

¹ More detailed information about the names mentioned in this article can be found in the place-name collections at the Institute for Language and Folklore, Uppsala (OAU). For a broader treatment of borrowed place-names in Sweden, see WAHLBERG 2007 and 2009.



'Falcon Mountain', known from 1298 (WAHLBERG 2002: 71; 2009: 1037), and several settlements *Rosendal* (earliest recorded in 1332), most probably a Swedish form of the monastery name *Rosenthal* 'Rose Valley' (WAHLBERG 2007: 105). The name *Rosendal* has been popular also in later times, especially for smallholdings – in the place-name collections at the Institute for Language and Folklore in Uppsala (OAU) at least 400 examples are found.

During the 18th and 9th centuries many smallholdings pertaining to large estates in central and southern Sweden have been given names after foreign towns and seats of war, very likely by the owners of the estates. A number of smallholdings pertaining to an estate in the province of Östergötland have names such as *Alger*, *Antwerpen*, *Aten*, *Berlin*, *Genf*, *Koburg*, *Madrid*, *Mannheim*, *Marocko*, *Potsdam*, *Rom*, *Sparta*, *Weimar* and *Zürich*. They are inspired by a journey, made by one of the 18th century owners (WAHLBERG 2007: 107; 2009: 1040). In the beginning of the 19th century several smallholdings pertaining to another estate in Östergötland were given names after places where the Swedish army had won a victory, e.g. *Lützen*, *Narva* and *Svensksund* (Finland), or after places where Emperor Napoleon had been defeated, e.g. *Dennewitz*, *Grossbeeren*, *Kulm* and *Waterloo* (WAHLBERG 2007: 107; 2009: 1040; cf. RENTENAAR 1996: 1014 f.).

En special group among the borrowed names are the many biblical names, such as *Betlehem*, *Emaus* and *Nasaret*, mostly denoting smallholdings from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries (WAHLBERG 2007: 113 f.; 2009: 1040). But such names have also been given to fields, meadows and different natural formations. For most of these names we do not know anything of their background; they have often probably been given only because of their prestige and glory.

1.1. *Italian place-names*

Among the borrowed place-names in Sweden those of Italian origin are not very frequent. Some of the earliest instances seem to be a set of well-known names in northern Stockholm, *Albano*, *Frescati* and *Tivoli*.

At Lake Brunnsviken north of Stockholm's city centre we find king Gustavus III's summer residence Haga, built in classical style in 1787, but preceded by an earlier building. The name *Haga* is formed from Swedish *hage* 'enclosed pasture'. Situated around the lake are also four settle-



ments with Italian names, *Frescati*, *Albano*, *Tivoli* and *Montebello*. They are commonly thought to be inspired by king Gustavus III's journey to Italy in 1783-1784, which very much influenced the cultural life of Sweden (STAHRE & AL. 2005: 143; CALISSENDORFF 1981: 57). *Frescati* is now the name of the Stockholm University Campus. It originally denoted a still preserved big villa, built in 1791 by Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, one of the noblemen who accompanied the king to Italy. It is situated opposite King Gustavus III's residence Haga (STAHRE & AL. 2005: 143; RITTSÉL & ENGSTRÖM 2005: 115 f.; RÅBERG & MANDÉN-ÖRN 1995: 93). The name is given after Frascati, one of the small towns in the Albano Mountains just south of Rome, which the king visited 1 April 1784. The background to the name form *Frescati* is unclear. It is used by Armfelt himself in his travel diary (RESAN TILL ITALIEN: 146) and on at least eight 19th century maps (WAHLBERG 2007: 110 note 5). A possible explanation could be that it is influenced by Italian *fresco* 'fresh', considering the fresh mountain air in the Albano mountains, ever since antiquity appreciated by people from Rome. (It is evident from Armfelt's diary that he knew Italian, cf. RESAN TILL ITALIEN: 17, 217.) The town name *Frascati* is, to my knowledge, formed to *frasca* 'branch, twig', and no instance of a form *Frescati* is known.²

Albano, the name of a small area not far from Frascati, must be seen in connection with the name *Frescati* – Albano is another of the towns in the Albano Mountains – but the exact background to the name is unclear. It is marked on a map from 1794 (VON FIEANDT 1794); in the 19th century it referred to an inn, later to a railway station and an industrial area. The industries are now gone, and for the moment the University of Stockholm and the Royal Institute of Technology are planning new institutes there. Consequently another big university centre in Stockholm will bear a name, which is a memory of Gustavus III's Italian journey.

A beautifully situated promontory in Lake Brunnsviken, north of Stockholm's city centre, is called *Tivoli*. Here the Swedish nobleman Gustaf Philip Creutz planned to build a summer residence, just opposite Gustavus III's summer residence (EDLING 1983: 12). Creutz had been the Swedish ambassador in Paris, but had been called back to Sweden to lead the government during the king's Italian journey. He started the arrangements for a big park in English style, which was never completed

² I thank Dr. Enzo Caffarelli, Rome, for information about the Italian name *Frecati* and the suggested origin of the name form *Frescati*.





because of his death in 1785. A later owner built a house and a musical pavilion in 1796 and 1800, both named *Tivoli*. The name is most probably given by the first owner Creutz as a memory of the king's just finished Italian journey, during which the king visited the small mountain town Tivoli just outside Rome (RESAN TILL ITALIEN: 148). Perhaps Creutz was inspired by the memory of the antique Roman villas in Tivoli, above all Emperor Hadrian's, and also the still remaining 16th century Villa d'Este with its magnificent park and fountains. But another reason for the name-giving could also be considered. Creutz is more known as a poet than as a diplomat; perhaps he wanted to arouse associations to his Roman poet colleague Horace. During the 18th century it was common belief that Horace's summer villa was situated in Tivoli (KELLGREN 1995: 292), though we now know that it was probably situated in the Sabini Mountains some kilometres away (STAF 1947: 55 ff.).

Rather soon after the coinage of the name *Tivoli* at Lake Brunnsviken in Stockholm we know that *Tivoli* came into use around Europe as a name for public places of entertainment, though the reason for this of course is not the Stockholm name. Jardin de Tivoli in Paris is known from 1796, but the famous Tivoli in Copenhagen did not open until 1843 with the name *Copenhagen's Tivoli and Vauxhall* (Vauxhall after Vauxhall Gardens in London). The background for this use of the name *Tivoli* is unclear (RAUP 1974: 35; RENTENAAR 1976: 24 f.). Jardin de Tivoli in Paris was founded by two brothers with the Italian-sounding name *Ruggieri*, but if they had taken the name directly from the Italian town cannot be decided. In 1815 the Italian Tivoli was described as poor, dirty and unpleasant, but the memory of its magnificent past could of course have survived. In modern Swedish *tivoli* is an appellative meaning 'amusement park, funfair'.

The fourth among the Italian names round Lake Brunnsviken, which is commonly thought to be inspired by Gustavus the III's Italian journey is *Montebello* 'Fairhill', referring to a former house not far from *Frescati*. But this house was not built until 1866 (ARVIDSSON 2003: 4). It was first called *Lilla Annedal*, but very soon it got the Italian name *Montebello*, which might well be inspired by the earlier name *Frescati*. An interesting question, which cannot be dealt with here, is if the common English *Fairhill* and the likewise common German *Schönberg* are translations of the Italian *Montebello*.

The name *Albano* (ca. 30) is represented also in other parts of Sweden, referring to smallholdings, many of them now disappeared. The





majority of these seem to be young (19th and 20th centuries) and nothing is known about the reason for the name giving. The name *Tivoli* often refers to different places for entertainment but also to villas and smallholdings (ca. 15); for some of the latter ones it is said that the places were known for fighting and drinking. Only a few other instances of *Montebello* as names of smallholdings and villas are known. No other instance of *Frescati* is known.

Another name, *Bellevue* 'Fairview', though it is unmistakably French, could be worth mentioning in this connection. It refers to a summer residence, built in 1757 not far away from the above-mentioned Frescati and Albano. But the name was not given until after the residence had been bought by the Stockholm governor Carl Sparre in 1782, and it is first recorded in 1783 (STAHRÉ & AL. 2005: 299 f.; RITTSÉL & ENGSTRÖM 2005: 105; RÅBERG & MANDÉN-ÖRN 1995: 89, 92). The name *Bellevue* is found all over France denoting beautifully situated places, especially those with a wide view. It is recorded as a castle name already in the Middle Ages but did not become popular until the 18th century.³ The most famous castle with this name was built in Paris 1748–1750 for Madame de Pompadour, Louis the XV:s mistress, and some decades later destroyed during the revolution. It could be this castle that has spread the name all over Europe. Most probably Sparre was inspired by the Parisian *Bellevue*, when giving this name to his summer residence, beautifully situated with a wide view over Lake Brunnsviken. Sparre accompanied king Gustavus III on his Italian journey, but any direct connection with the Italian names in the neighbourhood is difficult to trace.

The name *Bellevue*, as well as the Italian equivalents *Bella Vista* and *Belvedere*, is found in Sweden referring to a number of smallholdings and villas from the 19th and 20th centuries. In many cases the name has probably been chosen more because of its fashionable ring than for the fact that the view is extraordinary. Since these names, as well as Spanish *Buena Vista* and Portuguese *Boa Vista*, are found in many parts of the world, they are well worth a study from a socio-onomastic point of view. The popular English place-name *Fairview* could well be a translation of the French *Bellevue*, but possibly also a result of the so-called picturesque movement of the mid 18th century in England with its ideas of the view or prospect as a part of rural aesthetics. Also equivalents in other languages, such as German *Schönblick*, should be considered.

³ I thank Dr. Pierre-Henri Billy, Université de Toulouse II-Le Mirail, for this information.





There are also other Italian place-names than the above-mentioned *Albano*, *Frescati*, *Montebello* and *Tivoli* to be found in Sweden. Some of them are treated below. For the majority of these names no reason for the name giving is known.

Rom, the Swedish form for *Roma*, is the most frequent Italian name in Sweden (ca. 90 instances can be found in OAU and ca. 50 on official maps of today). The vast majority of them refer to smallholdings, cottages, villas and the like, but some of them also to fields and one to an island. The names date mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries, but some of them are recorded in the 18th century. The reason for the name giving is known only for a few names. One field and one cottage are situated far away from the village they belong to, one farm is situated in the outskirts of the village and another one far away from the parish centre (cf. Sw. *romresa* 'pilgrimage to Rome; long and troublesome journey'). One farm was built by a sailor, who had visited Rome, and one cottage was never completed (cf. the proverb "Rome was not built in a day"). In two smallholdings men with the byname *Påven* 'the Pope' were living, but if their bynames were given to them because the houses they lived in were called *Rome* or vice versa is unknown. Some of the names *Rome* form part of a series of foreign names in an estate, given by the owner (see above part 1). A few names have nothing to do with the Italian capital, containing instead *rum* 'open, cleared place'.

Vatikanen 'the Vatican' is the name of two cottages and one island. One of the cottages lies close to a farm called *Rome*, and the other one got its name because the man living there was called *Påven* 'the Pope'.⁴ *Marsfältet* 'Field of Mars', a translation of the district name *Campo Marzio* in Rome, is the name of a small area in the centre of the town Örebro, a former military training ground, used in the 19th century by the regiment Livregementets husarer.

Few names of towns other than *Rome* can be found. Some instances of *Palermo*, *Sorrento*, *Venedig* 'Venice' and *Verona* as names of villas in towns, suburbs and villages can be mentioned. *Neapel* 'Naples' is the name of a dwelling-house for workmen in a small industrial community, where other houses of the same kind are called *Berlin*, *Malta*, *Paris*, *Rom*, *Tokyo*, *Tunis*, *Chicago*, *Dakota*, *Michigan* and *Minnesota*. These names

⁴ The byname *Påven* was given to the man because he had earlier lived in a cottage with the name *Påvelstugan*, where the first element contains the man's name *Påvel*, a Swedish form of *Paulus*.





were very likely given by the owner of the industry to which the houses belonged.

For *Italien*, the Swedish form for *Italy*, only three instances can be found. One street block in central Stockholm is called *Italien*, *Större* 'Greater Italy'.⁵ The name is known from the 1650's in the form *Italianen*, in 1733 changed to *Italien* (HASSELBERG 1979: 98). *Italianen* is the definite form of *italian*, an older form of *italienare* 'Italian man'. A person from Italy may have been living there, when the name was given. A smallholding southwest of Stockholm is likewise called *Italien*. A field in south of Stockholm got its name *Italien* because it is situated south of a high situated field called *Alperna* 'the Alps'. The name *Alperna* is also found in other parts of the country (ca. 10), denoting hills and mountains, often steep and difficult to access.

Some Italian island names are also found. *Sicilien* is the name of a small island in a lake in the province of Småland and also the name of a smallholding in the Stockholm archipelago. A house in the province of Jämtland and a cape in the province of Bohuslän are called *Capri*. *Elba* is the name of a dwelling house for workmen, a smallholding and two small islands, one near the royal castle Tullgarn south of Stockholm and the other one in Lake Mälaren outside the town Västerås. The name has certainly become known only after emperor Napoleon's exile on the Italian Elba 1814-1815, but the direct reason behind the name giving is not known. The island in Lake Mälaren seems to have its name from a cottage with the name *Elba*, earliest recorded on a map from 1846-1847. A popular restaurant of today on the island, established sometime during the (late?) 19th century, bears the same name. The smallholding, in the parish of Giresta in the province of Uppland, is adjacent to another smallholding called *Waterloo*, making the connection with Napoleon clear. The two names are probably given by the owner of the estate to which the smallholdings pertain.

Since Italian culture, especially food and fashion, has become popular during the last decades, many restaurants, shops, hairdressers etc. have Italian or Italian-sounding names. For an overview of these, see MERCATANTI 2010.

⁵ A now disappeared block was called *Italien*, *Mindre* 'Smaller Italy'. For the Swedish custom of naming street blocks, see WAHLBERG 2005: 1329 f.





2. Personal names

Personal names of foreign origin have been introduced in Sweden since the late Viking Age, starting with biblical names and names of apostles and saints. During the Middle Ages Germans names came into use, during the 17th and 18th centuries French names were introduced and from the late 19th century up till now English and American names.

First names of Italian origin, which have been incorporated in the Swedish name stock, do not seem to be very common. I have not examined this matter more closely because of the difficulties to decide whether a name should be considered as borrowed from Italian, from any other modern Romance language or from Latin. Among such names, used in Sweden today, can be mentioned the women's names *Beatrice*, *Claudia*, *Cornelia*, *Elena* and *Isabella*. But names which in themselves seem to be of a more certain Italian origin, like *Laura*, *Norma* and *Rita*, could also have been given as a result of English or American influences, since these names also are a part of the name stock of those languages.


There seem to be very few men's names of Italian origin born by native Swedes. A rather odd example is *Garibaldi*, which according to the name statistics of Statistiska Centralbyrån (Statistics Sweden) is born by 13 men as a forename (by two as the preferred name). I happen to know one of these, Ernst Gunnar Garibaldi Lindeberg, Uppsala. He has kindly informed me that the name *Garibaldi* is hereditary in his family. It was first given as the second first name to his grandfather, born 1871, but not to any of his grandfather's brothers (their father, a bookbinder, was born in 1843). He in his turn gave his four sons the name *Garibaldi* as the second first name. One of these sons did not have any children, one considered the name ridiculous, but two of them passed it on to their sons, and *Garibaldi* is now born by the fifth generation in the family. The reason for the name giving in the first generation must of course be great admiration for Giuseppe Garibaldi and his role in the Italian Risorgimento, completed in 1870 shortly before the birth of the first Garibaldi. Nothing in the family history suggests any Italian ancestors, but it must be of some to me unknown significance that a cousin of the first Garibaldi was called *Giovanni* (first given name).

Another Swede with the name *Garibaldi*, not related to the family discussed above, was the painter Tengel Leonard Ervin Garibaldi Lindberg



(1863-1957), who used his forth given name *Garibaldi* as his preferred name. He is known as having illustrated several of August Strindberg's books.

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