

6-1-2014

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### Recommended Citation

Anderson, David (2014) "Oscar Erickson: the sad fate of a toddler," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 34 : No. 2 , Article 6.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol34/iss2/6>

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# Oscar Erickson – the sad fate of a toddler

## The search for his origins led to his Swedish birthplace

By DAVID ANDERSON

Young Oscar Erickson died from accidental drowning on 8 Aug. 1910 at Tillamook, Oregon. He was two years, ten months, and four days old, having been born on 4 Oct. 1907. His parents, both born in Sweden, were Nels and Jenny Erickson. The location of Oscar's birth was not recorded on his death certificate, but he was buried in Tillamook, Oregon, somewhere.<sup>1</sup>

Where was Oscar born? To answer this question I turned to ancestry.com and conducted a search on what was known about Oscar. The only hint that turned up was the entry from the Oregon Death Index, extracting information already known from his death certificate. A search of findagrave.com was conducted but no results turned up, despite the fact that he was recorded buried in Tillamook. A search on his parents' names was then conducted in ancestry.com. The first hint that appeared was from the 1920 U.S. Census for Nels Erickson, born about 1862 in Sweden, and his wife Jannie (sic) M. Erickson living in Hoguarton, Tillamook [County], Oregon. Details on this entry indicated that Nels was 58 years old, born about 1862 in Sweden. He was a white male who immigrated in 1910, was married, and the head of the household. Included in the family listing were Jannie M. (48), Wayne (17), Ysador (15), Oscar C. (7), and Henry E. (5).<sup>2</sup> There were also ten other possibilities that could be for our Nels Erickson. None seemed to be promising since they were from locations other than Oregon.

Swedish naming patterns were such that when a child died, the next child born of that sex would often

receive the name of the deceased child. Therefore the presence of a child named Oscar in the 1920 Census who was less than ten years old was not surprising.

### More census research

Checking each of the listed family members did lead to some promising leads. There was a Jennie M. Erickson in the 1930 U.S. Census, where she was found living, widowed, as a mother, and as the head of house with Isador Erickson in Tillamook, Oregon. Also living in the same house are Oscar (17) and Henry (15).<sup>3</sup> Two men, recorded in 1920 are not found living in the household in 1930; they are

husband Nels and son Wayne. Since Jennie is listed as a widow it is most likely that Nels died some time prior to 1930, although divorce can't be ruled out since sometimes a respondent has claimed to be widowed/widower after a divorce.

Several persons with Isador's name are listed in the 1940 U.S. Census, Indexed Birth Records from Sweden 1860-1941, and Births from the Swedish Death Index 1901-2006. A check of the 1940 U.S. Census shows that Isador Y. Erickson, who had been living in Tillamook County in 1935, was now living in Yamhill County, Oregon. He was married, and was a laborer who had completed

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS		MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
SEX <i>Male</i>	COLOR <i>White</i>	DATE OF DEATH <i>Aug 8 1910</i> (Month) (Day) (Year)	
DATE OF BIRTH <i>Oct 4 1907</i> (Month) (Day) (Year)		I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from .....19....., to.....19.....	
AGE <i>2 years, 10 months, 4 days</i>		that I last saw h..... alive on.....19.....	
SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED		and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at.....	
BIRTHPLACE (State or country)		M. The CAUSE OF DEATH was as follows: <i>Accidental Drowning</i>	
NAME OF FATHER <i>Nels Erickson</i>		.....(duration)..... days	
BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (State or country) <i>Kingdom of Sweden</i>		Contributory.....(duration)..... days	
MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER <i>Jennie Erickson</i>		(Signed)..... <i>M. Smith</i> ..... M. D.	
BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (State or country) <i>Sweden</i>		19..... (Address).....	
OCCUPATION <i>Laborer</i>		SPECIAL INFORMATION only for Hospitals, Institutions, Transients, or Recent Residents.	
THE ABOVE STATED PERSONAL PARTICULARS ARE TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF			
(Informant)..... <i>Oscar Erickson</i> .....		Former or Usual Residence..... How long at Place of Death?..... Days	
(Address)..... <i>Tillamook</i> .....		Where was disease contracted if not at Place of death?	
Filed.....19.....		PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL <i>Tillamook</i>	
Registrar.....		DATE OF BURIAL .....19.....	
		ADDRESS <i>Tillamook</i>	

only the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary school.<sup>4</sup> Information from the Swedish Indexed Birth Records and Births from the Swedish Death Index did not produce any promising leads.

An Oscar Erickson was found, also in McMinnville, Yamhill County, in the 1940 Census. He was a single laborer boarding with the family of Lee Bynum.<sup>5</sup>

Since son Henry was born in Oregon, the information associated with his name probably wouldn't show any immigration information for his older siblings and parents.

## New searches

I then began to check the Oregon Death Index for information regarding the deaths of Nels, Jennie, and the older siblings. In ancestry.com I searched the Oregon Death Index, 1898-2008 database, for deaths in Tillamook County for Nels and Jennie Erickson. Since Jennie is listed as a widow in the 1930 U.S. Census, the Nels Erickson who died on 6 June 1923 in Tillamook is currently thought to be her husband. This is not yet proven, however, since the death certificate has not yet been inspected. Likewise the Jennie Erickson who died 21 March 1932 in Tillamook County, and whose husband's name is Nels, is thought to be the mother of our Oscar Erickson. What we hadn't found yet is Oscar's parents' birth dates or the location of their births.

None of the records found on ancestry.com thus far for Oscar's family provided specific birth dates. An inquiry of the Oregon Death Index for Isador Erickson provided the clues that prove the birth location for Oscar is Sweden. The Oregon Death Index lists an Isador Erickson who was born 12 Sep. 1904 and who died in Polk County 22 May 1989.<sup>6</sup>

In ancestry.com there was one find for Isidor (sic) from the Swedish Indexed Birth Records, 1860-1941. This record gives the following information: Isidor was born 12 Sep. 1904 in Skellefteå *landsförsamling*, Västerbotten, Sweden. His father was Nils Eriksson, born 8 Jan. 1868, and

his mother was Jenny Maria Renberg, who was born 3 Mar. 1870.<sup>7</sup>

Even though Nils's birth information is six years off from that reported in the 1920 U.S. Census, Jennie's information is a little more accurate with her birth being only two years off. Her middle initial in both of the U.S. Censuses she appears in is consistently given as "M" which matches the middle name of Isidor/Isador's mother.

The other clue that is associated with Isador Erickson's Oregon death index information is a record from the New York Passenger Lists database. This record gives an arrival date of 8 June 1910 in New York on the *S/S C F Tietgen*. This arrival date is consistent with the arrival date reported in the 1920 U.S. Census for the Erickson family members who were born in Sweden. Isidor's birth location is given as "skellefter." However, on the image of the manifest it appears to be "Skjellefteå."

On the digital image of the ship's manifest it can be seen that Nils Eriksson, aged 48, his wife Jennie, aged 39, sons Yngve (?) aged 8, Isidor aged 6, and **Oscar, aged 3** (emphasis mine) are admitted to the United States and are bound for Tillamook, Oregon. A Jonas Renberg is the name given for the nearest living relative or friend at the point of origin.<sup>8</sup>

## In the Swedish records

A search of the birth records from Skellefteå *landsförsamling* parish in 1907 shows that on 4 October 1907 a boy was born in Bureå sawmill to *arbetare* (laborer) Nils Eriksson, who was born 8 Jan 1861 and his wife Jenny Maria Renberg who was born 3 March 1870. A witness at his christening is Jonas Renberg, who is

undoubtedly a male relative (brother?) of Jenny Maria's<sup>9</sup> and the same Jonas Renberg mentioned as the nearest relative in the passenger manifests. A note in the birth record indicates that there is more information in the *Församlingsboken* [clerical survey or household examination roll (after 1895)], Volume AIIa:10, page 275.

In the *Församlingsboken* on page 275 of Volume AIIa:10 for the house Bureå sawmill, we find the names of Nils Eriksson, Jenny Maria Renberg, Yngve, Isidor, and Oskar crossed out, and a note that they left 8 Dec 1909 for North America. Vital statistics given for the family are:

Nils Eriksson, born 8 Jan. 1861 in Västerbotten; he was married 6 Apr 1902 with Jenny Maria Renberg who was born 3 March 1870 in Skellefteå. They had moved to Skellefteå on 28 Aug 1904 after the birth of their eldest listed son Yngve (later called Wayne in the 1920 U.S. Census records) in Nyhem, Jämtland, on 16 Jun. 1902. In Skellefteå *landsförsamling* sons Isidor and Oskar are born on 12 Sep. 1904 and 4 Oct. 1907 respectively.<sup>10</sup>

Despite discrepancies in the birth date information, especially for Nils Eriksson, the family, and birth place of Oscar Erickson who died soon after arrival in Tillamook, Oregon, has been positively identified. Oscar did not appear in any U.S. Census data after he arrived in Tillamook County just after the 1910 Census had been taken, and his death occurred later that year. Using his parent's names, locating the names of his siblings, and using finds related to his family I was able to locate members of his family in the 1920, 1930, and 1940 U.S. Censuses. This information

1									
2	<del>Nils Eriksson</del>	Arbetare	61	3	Ullmott l. v. 02/6			Nyhem, Jämtl. l. 04/2	
3	Jenny Maria Renberg		70	3	Skellefteå v. "				
4	Yngve		16	6	Nyhem, Jämtl. l. v. "				
5	Isidor		04	6	Skellefteå				
6	Oskar		07	4	"				

Skellefteå *landsförsamling* AIIa:10 (1900-1910) Bild 2930 / sid 275 (Arkiv Digital).

provided the year of immigration (1910) for some of his family. Searching the Oregon Death Index provided the clues to the birth location of an older brother and ultimately led to locating Oscar's birthplace and the name of the ship the family came on.

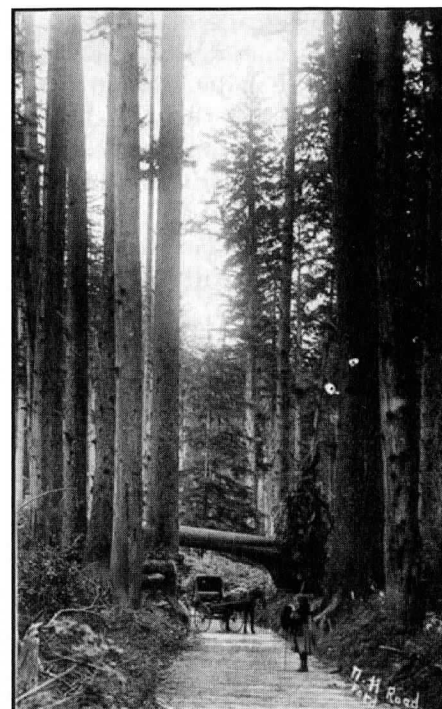
It used to be said that without knowing the name of the parish an ancestor was from in Sweden made it pretty difficult to find someone's birthplace in Sweden. However, as more and more Swedish records become indexed, it will become much easier to locate the location of someone's birth.

## Endnotes

- 1) Oregon State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death no. 2712, Tillamook County (1910), Oscar Erickson; Oregon State Archives, Salem, Oregon.
- 2) 1920 U.S. Census, Tillamook Co., Oregon, Hoguarton Precinct; Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.
- 3) 1930 U.S. Census, Tillamook Co., Oregon, Tillamook Precinct; Dwelling 19, Family 19, Isador Erickson; Nara, Roll: T626; digital image, Ancestry.com.
- 4) 1940 U.S. Census, Yamhill Co., Oregon; Page: 1B; Ancestry.com.
- 5) 1940 U.S. Census, Yamhill Co., Oregon; Page: 4B, Enumeration District: 36-45; digital image, Ancestry.com.
- 6) Oregon Death Index 1898-2008,
- Polk County, Certificate 89-10058, Isador Erickson; digital image, ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2000, accessed 4 July 4, 2014.
- 7) Skellefteå *landsförsamling*, SCB, births 1904, no. 448, Isidor; ancestry.com .
- 8) New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957, Year: 1910, *S/S C F Tietgen*, May 27, 1910 [sailing date from Norway], Nils Erickson family, lines 15-19; arrival: *New York, New York, U.S.* ancestry.com.
- 9) Skellefteå, Birth records C:21 (1904-1909), 1907, pg 260, no 466, Oskar; arkivdigital.net.
- 10) Skellefteå *landsförsamling* AIIa:10 (1900-1910), pg 275, Bureå sawmill (*såg*) lines 8-12, Nils Eriksson family; arkivdigital.net.

**Editor's note:** The Eriksson family was also found in the subscription database *Emiweb* at <<http://www.emiweb.eu/>>. There they were recorded as having left Sweden on 17 May 1910 from Torp parish, also in Västernorrland.

A new look into the Skellefteå *landsförsamling församlingsbok* (endnote 10) showed that the Erikssons had got a testimony to go to America 6 Sep. 1909, but changed their minds and instead moved 8 Dec. 1909 to Torp, where they lived at a place called Gim until their emigration (Torp AIIa:2b (1902-1911) *Bild* 2880 / *sid* 634. *Arkiv Digital*).



Oscar's father Nils worked in a lumber mill in Tillamook, and probably was familiar with this type of forest. Photo from 1910 from Oregon State University and flickr...

**Editor's note 2:** When the family is found in Swedish records the spelling is Eriksson; in U.S. records the spelling Erickson is used.

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## A helpful web site for U.S. vital records

When searching for vital records for someone, I usually start with ancestry.com or FamilySearch.org.

Then I know that there are many other sites that can help with data, but how to find them? It can be databases from local genealogical societies, libraries, or private individuals.

Somehow I found this very helpful web site *Online Birth & Marriage Records Indexes for the USA*. The site is organized by states, and the links go directly to the source. Some links require payments, but that is always noted. At this site there are also a number of divorce indexes. There are

also databases of *U.S. Citizens Born or Married in Foreign Countries*.

There is also a sister site: *Online Searchable Death Indexes for the USA*. It starts with the Social Security Death Index, and then two sites for fairly recent obituaries all over the nation. Then the site is organized by states and individual counties, and there is also sometimes information on how to order copies of certificates. Here are also links to military cemeteries.

These are the databases that I commonly use, but there are others,

like *Online Searchable Naturalization Records and Indexes*, and *Ship Passenger Lists and Records Online*, and more.

To get information when these websites are updated it is a good idea to subscribe to the free *Genealogy Roots Blog*, which is based in the U.S.A., but online European, Canadian, and other records sources are sometimes included. Mixed in with all this you will occasionally find a fun post or genealogy news.

*Elisabeth Thorsell*

*Links on p. 30.*