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# The year is 1943...

## A lonely man in Stockholm connects to Swedish history by learning folk dances, and he has to have a proper costume

BY KARNA OLSSON

The man is Nils William Olsson, my father. Born in Seattle, Washington, to Swedish immigrant parents, he had lost his mother when he was four years old, moved to Sweden as a child, and then returned to the U.S. in his teen years. By 1943 he was bilingual in Swedish and English, was pursuing a PhD, and married with a one-year-old daughter – me.

Because of America's entry into WWII, Father joined the Navy and was sent to Stockholm as a Navy intelligence officer. When asked what he did, he never elaborated much but did make it clear his job was to learn where the Germans were in Norway and relay this information to the U.S. government.

Alone in Stockholm, he, in true NWO fashion, kept himself busy. He decided to find his biological mother's family. She had been given away as a child to a foster family so some sleuthing was necessary. This search in turn led to an avocation that lasted the rest of his life. He became passionate about Swedish genealogy and not only wrote many articles but also started the *Swedish-American Genealogist* quarterly, followed by trips to Salt Lake City for research.

Another diversion for him in Stockholm was joining a Swedish folk-dancing group. While this didn't last longer than the war years, Father did acquire a complete Swedish folk costume and also one for Mother.

These he brought back to the U.S. in 1945. Since then these two costumes have remained untouched. Which brings me to the purpose of this article. These costumes need new owners. As some of you know, my

parents started a scholarship program with the Swenson Center, known as the 'Dagmar and Nils William Scholarship' and it is awarded yearly to a selected person wanting to use the library at the Swenson Center.

These costumes will be sold in pieces and the monies donated directly to the above mentioned scholarship.

Folk costumes were created because the peasants wished to have 'dress-up clothes' for parties, church, weddings, etc. Because they could not afford the silks and fine laces and velvets of the upper classes, they created clothing based on the styles of the period with fabrics of their own creation. Thus most of the folk costumes are made of wool and linen and leather.

Father's costume was based on the costumes from Herrestad *härad* in Skåne. His father was from Skåne and Father had lived in northern Skåne as a child. Mother's costume in turn is from Dalarna as that is where her father was born.

Both costumes are in almost mint condition. Father used his to folk-dance in Sweden. There are photos to prove this. There are no photos of Mother in hers.

### This is how the sale will be

I have divided the costumes into parts. There is a minimum for each part. If interested please email me, and the highest bid by the time of the close of the sale will receive the part. One can purchase the entire costume by buying the parts.

I will pay the shipping within the continental U.S. Should these need to be shipped overseas, additional fees will be required.

### Father's costume: Three parts.

1) *Knee pants and knitted knee socks and two handwoven bands to tie around the knees.* The pants are made





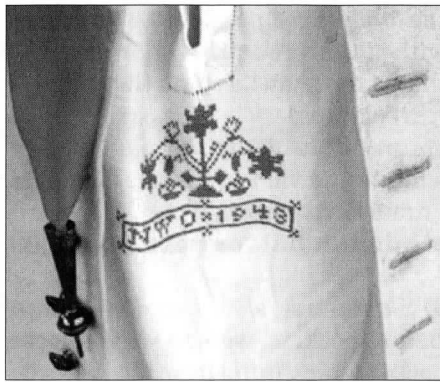
*Knee pants and band to tie around socks.* of a very tightly woven yellow wool. Most of these pants were originally made of a chamois skin type leather. The pants have a wide piece buttoned lined in cotton. Embroidery in red and green decorate the pants and each side of the pants is buttoned with three smaller silver buttons. The socks are made of fine white wool.

*Size?* Father was tall and thin. The measurements are waist size: 32 inches. Waist to knee: 30 inches.

The knee pants and knee socks and handwoven bands:

**Minimum bid for part 1 is \$200.**

**2) Shirt and vest.** The shirt is white linen with a high standing collar. The collar is edged in handmade lace, as are also the cuffs. The front of the shirt has beautiful cross stitch embroidery in red with the initials NWO and 1943. It was customary in earlier times to embroider the owner's initials and the date of the clothing's



*Embroidery on shirt.*

acquisition. Often in household inventories, the clothing left by the deceased is listed and these in turn were usually reused by the heirs. Measurements for the shirt are across the front and back, 22 inches. Length of shirt is 29 inches. The vest is made of the same yellow cloth as the knee pants. It has a raised collar and buttons down the front with eleven silver buttons. The vest is fully lined with cotton. The measurements for the vest are: front is 16 inches across and from top of back to bottom is 22 inches.

**Minimum bid for part 2 is \$200**

**3) Jacket.** This is made of black wool – a Swedish term for this type of wool is 'vadmal.' The jacket is fully lined in cotton, has embroidery in green, red, and rose around the collar, down the front, on the sleeve bottoms and on the lower back of the jacket. Down the front are eleven silver buttons with smaller silver buttons around the cuffs. The measurements for the jacket are across the front, 19 inches, and from back to bottom, 24 inches. The jacket is most handsome.



*Embroidered jacket cuffs.*

**Minimum bid for part 3 is \$300**

**Note:** This costume was probably worn a dozen or more times between 1943 and 1945. There is some evi-

dence of slight soiling here and there, some grass stains on the left knee (was this where Father knelt on the grass as the woman danced around him?). Once Father returned to the U.S., the costume was put away and not used. While there are not any moth holes, the stains have remained and can be cleaned professionally.

## Mother's costume: Five parts



*Girl in Floda costume. Picture from the internet.*

This is a traditional costume from Floda parish in Dalarna. It is beautiful!!! Mother must have worn it once as there is a small stain in the armpit of the blouse. Otherwise all pieces are mint.

**1) Blouse and vest.** The blouse is of handwoven patterned linen. By patterned I mean a pattern in the weave. It is white and it is very short because women's blouses were made short so they could be worn when pregnant or nursing or both!

There is embroidery (modest) a-



Vest and blouse.

round the neck and cuffs. The cuffs are closed with handmade buttons. The measurements are: approximately 15 inches across – approximately because there are not any shoulder seams – and 15 inches from neck to bottom of blouse which would reach just below the bust.

The vest is handwoven wool in a striped red, with green, black blue cream, and gold colors. It is tied in the front with silver clasps and a red band. The vest is approximately 18 inches long.

**Minimum bid for part 1 is \$150.**



**2) Hats.** There are two hats, one is red wool and is richly embroidered with the same colors as the jacket;

the other is red plaid cotton and lined with a flowered print that matches that of the shawl. I think the red wool with embroidery is for married women and that of the red plaid cotton which somewhat covers the face is for unmarried women.

**Minimum bid for part 2 is \$200.**

**3) Skirt purse, shawl, and stockings.** Before pockets, women wore a loose pocket which hung from their skirts. In Dalarna these were richly embroidered, as is this one of my mother's. The background is black wool with appliques of red, green, and gold wool with embroidery in green, blue, red, and gold. Topped by a silver band that is engraved with a flower motif and a hook that clasps onto the skirt band.



The shawl is white with patterned flowers in red and green and fuchsia. The stockings are of red wool and (I don't think ever worn) are to be fastened to garters.

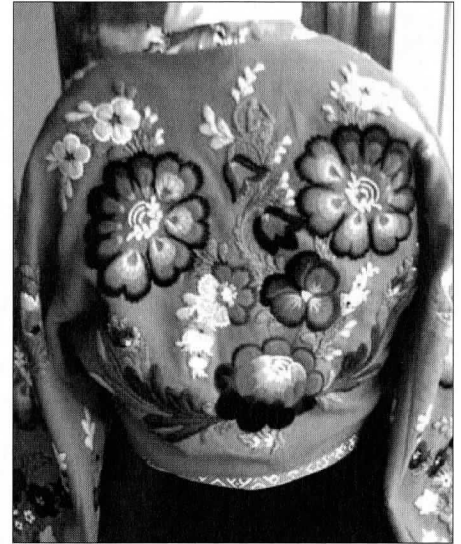
**Minimum bid for part 3 is \$200.**

**4) Skirt and apron.** The skirt is of black wool. Gathered in the back, the front is flat, the bottom of the skirt is richly embroidered with the same type of flowered embroidery as on the married woman's hat and the red jacket. The length of the skirt is 33 inches, the waist is approx. 29 inches. The apron is royal blue wool. A red and white handwoven wool band tops the apron and is very long so it

can be wrapped around the woman's waist and then hang down.

**Minimum bid for part 4 is \$200.**

**5) Red embroidered jacket.** This is the loveliest of lovelies. It is red wool that is covered with embroidered flowers in different colored wool. It is fully lined. Measurements are 18 inches across the front and 15 inches from top to bottom.



Embroidered back of jacket.

**Minimum bid for part 5 is \$300.**

## How to purchase these costume parts

Please send me an email at <karnaolsson125@gmail.com> I will keep you informed if someone bids more or if there is already a bid and you have the opportunity to raise your bid. I am happy to email you color photos of the pieces or close-up photos. I am also happy to answer any questions about these pieces. You may also see color photos at

[www.etgenealogy.se/karna](http://www.etgenealogy.se/karna)

All sales are final. All sales are paid by sending a check to Jill Seaholm at Swenson Center. All checks are to be made out to **Swenson Center**.

Once the checks arrive and Jill contacts me I will ship the costume parts.

The sale ends on 1 November 2014.