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# Karl August, an immigrant from Stora Tuna

## A relative tries to trace him, but did he succeed?

BY JAN KÄRRMAN

TRANSLATION:  
ELISABETH THORSELL

This story is about how I managed to trace the uncle (*morbör*) of my paternal grandfather (*farfar*). He was named Karl August Blom, and left Stora Tuna in Dalarna on 23 Apr. 1888.<sup>1</sup>

This research demonstrates some of the methods one can use to trace immigrants, but is also an interesting story in itself.

Karl August was born 17 Dec. 1868 in Naglarby, Gustafs parish in Dalarna, as the youngest child of the soldier Gustaf Nyberg and his wife Elisabet Karlsdotter.<sup>2</sup> In the moving-out records he is called Gustafsson, as he is also in the only clerical survey where he shows up with his full name.<sup>3</sup> There he has the surname Blom, but this is crossed out. Perhaps he called himself Blom when he came to the U.S., and maybe Karl became Charles.

A search at Ancestry.com (California Death Index<sup>4</sup>) showed a Charles Blom, born in Sweden on 1868 Dec. 12, who died 1950 Mar. 11 in Sacramento, CA. It seemed likely this was a very probable hit for Karl August.

### Trying to prove this

A first try to verify this was to check the probates (*bouppteckningar*) for his parents and his three sisters who all passed away before 1950. However, there does not seem to be any probates for the parents, and he is

not mentioned in any of the sisters' probates. His sister Karolina had no children of her own, so in her probate the children of her deceased sisters are mentioned, but not the brother. It might be that he had died without children, or they had simply lost contact.

At Ancestry.com I found a family tree where this Charles was mentioned. I contacted the owner of this tree and it turned out to be his grandson Kenneth "Ken" Blom who had posted it. Unfortunately Ken did not know much about his grandfather; his grandparents had divorced when his father Gordon was just a few years old. Ken's grandmother (*farmor*) Fanny Maude DeShields,<sup>5</sup> who married Charles on 4 Sep. 1913 in San Francisco,<sup>6</sup> described him as a bit of a loner, but had otherwise never told anything about him. The only other information Ken had about Charles was that he had been working in Billings, MT, and Calgary in Canada between the years 1916-1920, and after that in San Rafael, CA.

He was a salesman of leather goods, saddles, reins, and such. Sometime in the 1940s he had tried to contact his son Gordon. Charles then lived in Sacramento.

A copy of Charles's death certificate could be ordered from the Sacramento County Clerk/Recorder.<sup>7</sup> It



One of the few photos of Charles Blom and his wife.

states that he was born in Sweden, was employed as a leather worker, and that he died when his house did burn down. Thanks to Cheryl Nelson of the volunteer organization "Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness"<sup>8</sup> a notice about his death was found

DEATHS	
BLOM—In this city, March 11, 1950. Charles Blom, loving father of Mrs. Grace Snyder of Arvada, Colo., and Rex T. Blom of Los Angeles, survived by four grandchildren; a native of Sweden, aged 77 years. Friends are invited to attend the funeral tomorrow (Thursday) morning at 9:30 o'clock, from the George L. Klumpp Chapel of Flowers, 808 O Street. Interment Sacramento Memorial Lawn.	

75	Dec. 17	Dec. 20	1	Karl August	Soldaten Gustaf Blom og Hs. Lifa Karlsdotter	Naglarby 1921
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Birth of Carl August Blom (Gustafs C:8 [1862-1874] img. 81 / p. 150 [AD]).

304	50	57	Carlson Oscar	Head	10	4	M	W	71	M	1869	72	1882	yes	yes	Norway
			Anna S.	Wife			F	W	76	M	1867	Na		yes	yes	Sweden
			Blom Anna H.	Daughter			F	W	45	Wd				yes	yes	Illinois
			Koch Mimmie A.	Daughter			F	W	36	R				yes	yes	S. Dakota
			Blom Grace E.	grand daughter			F	W	13	S				yes	yes	Oregon
			Rex T.	grand son			M	W	11	S				yes	yes	Oregon
			Koch Doris M.	grand daughter			F	W	4 1/2	S				yes	yes	Montana
			Frederick P.	grand son			M	W	13 1/2	S						Montana

The 1920 U.S. Census for Helena, MT, where Anna H. Blom lived with her parents and children, and her sister and her children.<sup>9</sup>

in the *Sacramento Bee* on 15 Mar. 1950 March 15. From this it was also found that he had a daughter, Grace Snyder of Arvada, CO, and a son, Rex

with children Grace E. and Rex T., but no husband is mentioned. Both children are listed as having been born in Oregon. The same people are found in the 1920 census, still in Helena, but Anna is now recorded as a widow - 30 years before Charles died! In the same census a Charles Blom is found in San Francisco, married to Ken's grandmother. If it is the same person, then he must have abandoned his first family and remarried. Perhaps he had been reported as missing by his first wife, and been declared deceased after some time, or perhaps she did not want to admit that she had been abandoned, and rather told that she was a widow.<sup>10</sup>

Then I tried a payment site, where you can search old digitized newspapers, *archives.com*, and managed to find articles in the *El Paso Herald*

from 1958 Dec. 10, and 1959 April 22, where a Rex T. Blom and his wife sued a company on behalf of their son, Damon Blom. He had been badly injured in a traffic accident when he collided with the company's van. The family was recorded as living in Manhattan Beach, CA. With the help of an online phone book, the *white-pages.com*, I could find a Damon M. Blom in Manhattan Beach, CA, with a full address and phone number. Ken Blom contacted Damon, and it was the right person, but he did not know much about his grandfather either, and his father had not known him well. Damon had grown up with his grandmother Anna, but just like Ken's grandmother, she had never told anything about her former husband. But the little knowledge they knew, like that their respective grandfather had been a salesman of

## Cabin Fire Is Fatal To Old Age Pensioner

Charles Blom, 82, died in the Sacramento Hospital early today as the result of burns suffered last night in a fire in a one room cabin he rented at the rear of 3242 Sixth Avenue.

Blom was carried from the dwelling by a neighbor, Chris Trechal of 3241 Eighth Avenue, who saw smoke and flames flickering in the cabin about 7 o'clock.

Trechal broke into the building and began to throw out burning bedding. Because of the dense smoke, he did not see Blom huddling in a corner until several minutes later when the victim moaned in pain.

Blom, an old age pensioner, suffered third degree burns on his feet, legs and hands. The coroner's deputies are attempting to learn through the social welfare files if he has relatives. He was a native of Sweden.

Battalion Fire Chief George A. Ambrose reported damage was confined mainly to the bed and a portion of the wall beside it. He said preliminary investigation indicated defective wiring in the wall may have been the origin of the blaze.

The cabin is one of four on property owned by Mikel Dashiakos of 1541 El Camino Way, North Sacramento.

*Sacramento Bee* 11 March 1950.

(Genealogy Bank.com)

T. Blom in Los Angeles, CA. These persons were totally unknown to Ken Blom! Maybe it was the wrong person after all?

More research was now needed to locate Rex T. Blom, and he was found in the U.S. censuses. In 1910 he was in Helena, MT, living at his maternal grandparents' house with his mother, the married woman Anna H. Blom,

MARRIAGE LICENSE.		No. 3978
STATE OF MONTANA, COUNTY OF LEWIS AND CLARKE.		
To any Person Authorized to Solemnize Marriages, Greeting:		
You are hereby authorized to join in lawful wedlock and to celebrate within this County the rites and ceremonies of marriage between <u>Charles Blom</u>		
Of <u>Spokane, Wash.</u>		
Aged <u>35</u> years,	months,	days. Color <u>white</u>
Born at <u>Orns, Sweden</u>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Previously married.		
Unwed son of <u>Gustav Blom</u>		
His mother's maiden name was <u>Elizabeth Carlson</u>		
And <u>Annie H. Carlson</u>		
Of <u>Helena, Mont.</u>		
Aged <u>29</u> years,	months,	days. Color <u>white</u>
Born at <u>Chicago, Ills.</u>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Previously married		
Unwed daughter of <u>Oscar Carlson</u>		
Her mother's maiden name was <u>Annie S. Anderson</u>		
and this shall be your good and sufficient warrant therefor.		
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and official seal this <u>25</u> day of <u>Aug.</u> A. D. 19 <u>04</u> .		
(Seal) ✓		
	<u>Frederick R. Bayha</u>	District Clerk.
	<u>Leo Bayha</u>	, Deputy.

leather goods in Sacramento, convinced them that they really had a common grandfather in Charles Blom and that they thus were cousins!

Of course it was very satisfactory to be able to connect two such close relatives that had until now been totally unknowing of each other, both living in California. But the question remained, was this Charles Blom the same person as the immigrant Karl August?

With the help of the Lewis & Clark County Genealogical Society<sup>11</sup> in Helena, MT, the marriage certificate for Charles's first marriage in 1904 to Anna H. Carlson in Montana was located. On this certificate Charles listed his parents as Gustaf Blom and Elisabet Carlson, and that he was born in Ornes, Sweden. In reality he was born in Naglarby, in Gustafs, but the family moved to Tägt in Stora Tuna when he was about four years old. Tägt is about a kilometer south of Ornäs. Note that there are two villages called Tägt in Stora Tuna; the one where Karl August lived is now called Dalsjötäkt.

This document proves that Karl August was the grandfather (*farfar*) of Damon Blom, and if no document has been found that supports this, there is hardly any reason to doubt that he also was the grandfather (*farfar*) of Ken Blom. His not very common name, profession, and place of living, and the fact that the time periods fit is a little too much to be just a coincidence. As Ken and Damon are both descended in a straight male line from Charles, one way of proving their descent for certain

would be to do a DNA-comparison of their Y-chromosomes - but so far they have not been interested.

As a summary it might be stated that Karl August/Charles married Anna Carlson in 1904, and they had daughter Grace in 1907 and son Rex<sup>12</sup> in 1908. Charles seems to have abandoned his family shortly after that and married Fanny Maude DeShields in 1913. They had son Gordon in 1920, separated around 1926-27, and were divorced in 1930. After that nothing much is known of his life until 1950, when he died when his house burnt down. There is also nothing known about his life between immigration in 1888 and his marriage in 1904. Unfortunately it will not be easy to come closer to Charles's life, when even his closest relatives did not know anything special about him. The fact that he was not mentioned in his sister Karolina's probate probably means that he had broken off all contacts with his relatives in Sweden, and he seems to have been a wandering soul.

As Karl August was an only son, the soldier's name for the old soldier #49 Gustaf Blom of the Gustafs company of the *Dalregementet*, now only lives on the other side of the Atlantic. Both Ken and Damon have children that carry the name on.

As it has been demonstrated there are some trails you can follow to trace immigrants, but the probably best - anyway the nicest - is if you can make contact with now (possible) living relatives that can share information that might not be easily found otherwise.

But some luck is also good!

## Endnotes:

- 1) Stora Tuna B:2 (1878-1889), p. 113, [AD].
- 2) Gustafs C:8 (1862-1874) img 81 / p. 150. [AD].
- 3) Stora Tuna AI:24k (1880-1890), p. 102.
- 4) California Death Index (FamilySearch).
- 5) Fanny M. DeShields was born 11 July 1885 in CA, died 22 Sep. 1977 in Shasta County, CA (California Death Index (FamilySearch)).
- 6) California, County Marriages, (FamilySearch). The bride is called McShields.
- 7) Sacramento County Clerk/Recorder: <http://www.ccr.saccounty.net>
- 8) The RAOGK site disappeared in 2012, and it is not known if it has come back.
- 9) 1920 U.S. Federal Census for Helena, Ward 7, Lewis and Clark County, MT (ancestry.com).
- 10) Anna H. Carlson Blom was born on 23 Sep. 1874 in Chicago, IL, and died 22 July 1964 in Los Angeles County, CA (www.findagrave.com).
- 11) <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mtlcs/>
- 12) Rex Thaddeus Blom was born 28 Jan. 1908 in Portland, Multnomah County, OR, and died 21 Apr. 1966 in Los Angeles County, CA, (www.findagrave.com).

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## The Swedish Death Index 1901-2013 (6) is here!

During the Swedish Genealogy Days in Karlstad in late August the new *Sveriges dödbok 6* (Swedish Death Index) was released as a DVD, but also available on a USB-drive. This as many new computers and ipads do not have a DVD drive.

The new database is the result of hundreds of volunteers copying death dates manually from the ori-

ginal death records for the period of 1901-1946. The later deaths from 1947 were already available in government databases.

The new version contains almost all of the 9.3 million deaths during the period. All have name of the deceased, parish and date of death, date of birth, etc. and most of them also have parish of birth, marital status,

and last address.

The *Sveriges Släktforskarförbund* (Federation of Swedish Genealogical Societies) has now decided to start another volunteer effort to excerpt deaths from 1860-1900 for the next version, which might be finished in 2018 or thereabouts.

For price and shipping check with <http://rotterbokhandeln.se/>