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# How to trace your Swedes

## - a research example

BY MATS LÖNEGREN

If you have immigrants among your ancestors, you probably know a lot about what happened to these people when they built their new lives in the United States, but maybe not so much about the world they left. The name of the town or village and perhaps the names of the father and mother are all the information known. In the best cases old letters and photos are preserved. The question then is whether these small pieces of information are correct? What more can be found about these families? Where and how were they living? Were there any siblings? What are the names of the grandparents? Are there cousins living in Sweden today? Etc.

The questions above are the most common and are often the information that is available. This is where the investigation starts.

The first challenge is to identify the person in the church or emigration records. The complete name, date of birth, and the name of the parish is needed, but with only parts of that information it might still be possible to identify the person. It is common that the first name is known, year of birth, and the parish. With that information it is, in most cases, possible to find the person. But to be sure, the person must be traced through the years to see that he or she actually left Sweden as we expect. If the person we are looking for has a common Swedish name, for example Per Svensson, the parish often had more than one Per Svensson born the same year and living in the same village. Within a parish or area some names

are used more frequently and some names are more popular within the parish and within the family.

Another challenge is that both the first names and the surname were often changed when arriving in the new country. Some names were common and easy to pronounce in the new country but other names like *Karl* and *Johannes* were changed to Charles and John. This can be a problem if both the first name and surname were changed. If the surname was changed from a common "son" name (patronymic), like Andersson, to Alman (for example), it may require additional time to identify the person in the Swedish church records.

### The example

An example of this is a case from the research we have been doing this last year. Augusta Albertina Nilsson left Sweden and found a husband in the new country and returned with her family some years later.

Augusta Albertina was born on the farm Markusgården in Täng, Skaraborg County, November 30, 1867, the daughter of the farmer Nils Andreasson and Inga Brita Andersdotter. Her father Nils died in 1882 and of the 9 children, 4 died at a young age. Five of them immigrated to America between 1887 and 1893. Augusta Albertina left Täng parish on July 28, 1890.

In the census for 1900 we find that Augusta is living with her family in Newark City, Essex Co., NJ. Her husband is Oscar Johnson, born in Sweden in July 1871. They have three daughters: Annie, born 1892,

Lillie, born 1897, and Elizabeth, born 1899, and a son: Gunhilt born in 1894. All children were born in Newark. Oskar is a laborer in a grease refinery and the oldest daughter is of school age.

After more than 10 years in the United States, the family moved back to Sweden. On September 4, 1902, Augusta Albertina and five children moved from Newark to the farm Markusgården in Täng parish, which was her parental home. From the records we can now see that the son Gunhilt was actually a daughter named Gunhild Teresia. The daughter Agnes Florner is now also in the family. A note states that "Her husband (is) in America." When looking in the household record we see that 6 more children were born from 1904 to 1911. Since the household record covers the years from 1900 to 1916, we also find Oskar there and that he moved to Täng on Nov 11, 1903. In the household record the name is Oskar Alexius Jansson (the name had been Johnson). The family has changed the surname from Johnson to Jansson. There is also a note that his surname earlier had been Alexandersson! The household records also stated that the birth parish was Acklinga and the date of birth was July 20, 1869, and not 1871 as seen in the census for 1900. According to the household record, as well as in the migration record, he came from North America Nov 11, 1903, which puts a question about the paternity of the daughter Edit born in Täng Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1904.

## Where was Oscar born?

To find parents and siblings to Oskar we now go to Acklinga parish and check the birth record. But no Oskar Alexius Johnsson, Jansson, or Alexandersson can be found and no one else that with any certainty can be Oskar. He is neither born in another year nor in another parish. Why not check if the information from census that says that he was born in July 1871? But there is nothing found on this date either. We know from the census of 1900 that he had been in America since 1888 and maybe left Acklinga for America about 1888.

When we check emigration and household records, there he is! He is living at the farm Källebacka. We also get the information that he is born in Hömb parish (Skar.) from the household record. The date of birth is also here, July 20<sup>th</sup> 1869. Now we check the birth record in Hömb and find that the twins Gustaf and Albert were born July 20<sup>th</sup> with parents

Alexander Jonsson and Maria Greta Andersdotter. Not really what was expected. Is our Oskar the boy Gustaf or the boy Albert or none of these? When looking a little bit more we see that the family moved shortly after the birth of the twins and is later living at Källebacka farm as seen earlier. The interesting thing now is that one of the twins is named Gustaf Albert and the other twin is named Oskar Alexius! Around 1878 the family moved to Acklinga, which is why Oskar got his parish of birth wrong.

This example shows how the name can change both when moving to and from the United States but also when living in Sweden. It also shows that information is not always correct and that to get to the truth several sources of information must be checked and judged.

Oskar Alexius and his family stayed in Sweden. Oskar Alexius Jansson died on January 15, 1948 at

Fritorp in Sparlösa parish (Skar.). His wife Augusta Albertina died January 23, 1958, in Tengene (Skar.).



Täng Markusgården.

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Mr. Lönegren is in charge of the research team.

10	<i>Olme Alexius Jansson (född i Acklinga)</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>20/7</i>	<i>Acklinga</i>	<i>v.</i>	<i>1/1</i>	<i>America</i>	<i>1903</i>
11	<i>h. Augusta Albertina Nilsdotters</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>11/30</i>	<i>Täng</i>	<i>v.</i>	<i>1892</i>	<i>America</i>	<i>1903</i>
12	<i>d. Gunhild Teresia Jansson</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>2/2</i>	<i>New York, N.Y.</i>	<i>v.</i>		"	"
13	<i>d. Maria Emilia</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>18/5</i>	<i>New York, N.Y.</i>	<i>v.</i>		"	"
14	<i>d. Lilla Augusta Henrietta</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>18/4</i>	<i>New York, N.Y.</i>	<i>v.</i>		"	"
15	<i>d. Ellen Elisabet Josefina</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>5/3</i>	<i>New York, N.Y.</i>			"	"
16	<i>d. Agnes Flomen</i>	<i>01</i>	<i>23/18</i>	<i>New York, N.Y.</i>			"	"
17	<i>d. Edit Gertrud</i>	<i>04</i>	<i>3/1</i>	<i>Täng</i>	<i>v.</i>			
18	<i>d. Signe Sofia Olivia</i>	<i>06</i>	<i>28/13</i>	<i>Täng</i>	<i>v.</i>			
19	<i>d. Elsa</i>	<i>08</i>	<i>2/1</i>	<i>Täng</i>				
20	<i>d. Gustaf Oskar</i>	<i>09</i>	<i>23/1</i>	<i>Täng</i>				
21	<i>d. Beata Erik Joosten</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>18/1</i>	<i>Täng</i>				
22	<i>Att dödfödd flyghabarn</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>22/12</i>	<i>Täng</i>				

Täng församlingsbok (Täng AII:1 (1900-1916) Bild 37 / sid 25) from Arkiv Digital. Youngest children died as infants.