Elinor and Vincent Ostrom

Elisabeth Thorsell

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag
Part of the Genealogy Commons, and the Scandinavian Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol32/iss2/13

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.
Nobel Prize Laureate and her husband with Swedish roots dies

– Elinor and Vincent Ostrom

By Elisabeth Thorsell

In the middle of June 2012 there was a notice in the newspapers in Sweden that Elinor Ostrom had died 2012 June 13 in Bloomington, IN. In 2009 she was awarded the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, which she shared with Oliver E. Williamson, Mrs. Ostrom was born 1933 Aug. 7 in Los Angeles, CA.

Her surname sounded like a Swedish name, which would have been spelled Äström in Swedish, but it was not her maiden name, which was Awan.

The Ostrom name came from her husband Vincent A. Ostrom, whom she married in 1963. Vincent A. Ostrom was the founding director of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, based at Indiana University and the Arthur F. Bentley Professor Emeritus of Political Science.

Vincent Ostrom died just 16 days after his wife on 2012 June 29 in Bloomington, IN.

According to biographical information on the internet, Vincent Alfred Ostrom was born 1919 Sep. 25 in Whatcom County, WA, son of Alfred Ostrom and Alma Knutson. Alfred and Alma married in 1918 May 9 in the city of Bellingham, Whatcom County, WA.

An Alfred Ostrom was not found in the Swedish immigration databases, but what did the U.S. censuses tell about his family?

In 1920 Alfred, Alma and little Vincent lived in Maple Falls in Whatcom County, WA. Alfred was 25 years old, born in Sweden. Alma was 20 years old, born in Washington with Norwegian parents, and little Vincent just 3 months old. Alfred is said to be a laborer in a logging camp.

In 1930 the Ostroms lived at Nooksack, also in Whatcom County, and now had two more children, d. Lena C. H., 8 years, and Gordon S., 6 years. Alfred is recorded as having immigrated in 1901. On the same census page is found an older Ostrom woman, Kristina, 69 years old, born in Sweden, and a widow. She lived with her son Peter Ostrom, 30 years old, also born in Sweden.

Going back in time to 1910 an Ostrom family was found in Nooksack, which looked interesting. The head of household was Peter Ostrom, 57 years old, born in Sweden, his wife Christine 47 years old, and
children Alfred, 15; Peter, 13; Otto, 10; all born in Sweden. They also had a son Oscar, age 4, born in Washington.

As they still could not be found in the Swedish records, the next step was to look for a family consisting of father Peter, mother Christina, sons Alfred, Peter, and Otto, in the CD database “Swedish Population 1900,” as Alfred was said to have come to the U.S. in 1901.

A search for a child Alfred, born around 1894, with parents Per (Swedish version of Peter) and Christina, did not give any good hits. But by trying different spellings of names a likely family turned up.

This was the Per Olofsson family of Kläppe #2 of Marby parish in the province of Jämtland.

According to the clerical survey, Per owned a very small farm in Marby, and as the family grew it might have been very difficult for them to survive in this rather poor farming area. The children had not been baptized, and that might also have contributed to the decision to emigrate – in many communities belonging to a “free denomination” was not popular. Also it is shown that the parents were married in 1883 Feb. 8 in a civil ceremony (borg. = borgerlig), another indication that they had left the Church of Sweden.

Son Karl Johan, born 1897 Jan. 30, died already on 1897 Mar. 2. The oldest son Olof, born 1883 Apr. 24, seems to have enlisted in the Jämtland Rifles (Fältjägare), where he was given the soldier’s name of Eklund. To be able to emigrate legally he must apply for the King’s permission, which he did not bother with, so he is recorded as “run away to America in 1901.” In 1918 he was a witness at his brother Alfred’s marriage.¹

Per Olofsson and his family left for America on 1901 Sep. 2 and travelled by way of Trondheim in Norway, which was their closest port of departure. On Sep. 18 they left Liverpool on the S/S Germanic and arrived in New York on Sep. 27. Their destination is given as New Watcom in Washington State.⁶

They travelled as the Olofsson family, but probably changed their surname soon to Ostrom.

The final dates
Per Olofsson a.k.a Peter Ostrom died 1913 Sep. 5 in Whatcom Co., WA.⁷ His widow Christina died 1936 Dec. 1 Eversen, Whatcom Co., WA.⁷
Alfred Ostrom (Ostrum) died 1931 Sep. 24 in Eversen, Whatcom, WA.⁷
Alma Ostrom, widow of Alfred, died 1996 Dec. 12 in Lynden Co, WA.⁷

Notes: