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# A Swede in Joliet prison

BY ELISABETH THORSELL

How many of your 19th century ancestors do you know this much about?

This young man evidently ran afoul of the law and ended up in Joliet Prison, Joliet, Illinois.

This is what the prison records tell about him:

*Name:* Otto Nord  
*Date of reception:* 23 Dec. 1886  
*Number:* 8044  
*County Court:* Knox  
*Crime and sentence:* Horse stealing, 3 years 6 months  
*Age:* 26  
*Height:* 5 ft 8½  
*Weight:* 170  
*Complexion:* Medium dark  
*Eye color:* blue  
*Hair color:* brown  
*Nativity:* Sweden  
*Occupation:* farm laborer  
*Religion:* catholic [!??]  
*Education:* R & W 4 years  
*Habits (alcohol):* moderate  
*Are parents living? Or age of prisoner when parents died:* Mother living, father age 25.  
*Father's POB:* Sweden  
*Mother's POB:* Sweden  
*Age of prisoner when he left home:* 22  
*Conjugal staus:* single  
*When discharged:* 23 Oct. 1889

## In Sweden

What was Otto's background? According to *Emibas* Otto Ludvig was born 23 March 1860 in Fliseryd in Kalmar län, one of at least seven children of the homestead owner Erland Nord (b.1823 in Döderhult) and his wife Maria Persdotter (b. 1831 in Döderhult). When Otto left home in 1882 for the trip to the U.S., they all lived at Kvarntorp 1 in Fliseryd.

In the prison record it says that Otto's father died when Otto was 25 years old, and Erland Nord did die 7 Aug. in 1885, according to Fliseryd AI:11, p. 338.

Of Otto's siblings his sister Maria Sofia, born 9 May 1863, left on 11 Nov. 1883 for Galesburg (*Emihamn*). A few years later sister Emma Julia, born 23 July 1866 in Fliseryd, left for America on 5 Sept. 1887 (not found in *Emihamn*).

## In America

Otto had a ticket for Galesburg when he left from Göteborg on 19 May 1882, and so far nothing more is known about his early life in the U.S., except that he was sentenced in Knox County in 1886. If he for some reason had to steal a horse, then he probably was wise to do it in the more civilized part of the country; further out west he might have been hanged from a tree.

As he was released after less than

3 years in prison, he probably showed good conduct.

He is not found in the 1900 U.S. Federal Census, but in 1910 he is living in Rockford, Winnebago County, IL, and works as a finisher in a furniture factory. He is married to Mathilda Christine, a fellow Swede, born ca 1871, and they had been married for seven years (ca 1903). She probably was a widow as there were children in the family older than that: Edward (18), Walter R (16), Norma M (14), and Harold E (10). The youngest was Ture L. Nord, born ca 1904. By 1930 they are still in Rockford; Otto is now a janitor in an apartment building, and stepson Edward S. Olson is an assistant in a bottling factory.

So after his time in prison Otto Nord came back to an ordinary life, which probably was a blessing for him, instead of becoming one of the many "missing Swedes."

*A link to the prison records is found on page 30.*



*Joliet Prison, where Otto Nord spent almost 3 years.*