

6-1-2007

The Old Picture

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Recommended Citation

(2007) "The Old Picture," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 27 : No. 2 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol27/iss2/9>

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The Old Picture

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This picture was sent in by Erica Olsen, 1000 Rim Dr., FLC 7015, Durango, CO 81301, e-mail: <ericaolsen@earthlink.ne>

This photograph of the Söderfors Sångarförbund in 1923 has traveled far from home. The photo originated in Söderfors, an ironworks village, or *bruk*, in the Uppsala region. The name of the choral group and the date are written on the lower left corner of the card on which the photo is mounted.

According to Sven Sjöberg's history, *Söderfors: en historisk framställning* (Stockholm, 1956), the Sångarförbund was a large choral group that united the members of

various other singing groups in the community, including the *Tjänstemannakören* (clerks or employees chorus), *Arbetarkören* (workers chorus), the Odeon quartet, men from the church choir, and individual singers – altogether, 50 to 55 men. Between 1920 and 1923, the united chorus gave a number of concerts in Söderfors church and also traveled to perform at other churches nearby. Perhaps this photo was the group's last formal portrait.

More than 80 years later, an antiques dealer in Sebec, Maine, listed the photo on eBay, where I purchased it. Since my great-grandmother came from Söderfors, I was curious whether any Bergström or

Lindquist relatives might be in the picture. The antiques dealer had found it in a box at an auction and had no information about its origin. Coincidentally, Sebec is near Katahdin Iron Works State Historic Site in Maine. That ironworks had shut down by 1890, before the time that most Söderfors ironworkers immigrated.

How did the photo cross the Atlantic? There is a clue written on the back, the words "Jerlstrom/dark/narrow," recorded by someone in a later generation who wrote *-strom* not *-ström*. According to Sjöberg, in the 1930s there were a number of Söderfors reunions in U.S. cities such as Buffalo, New York, and Cleveland,

Ohio. The reunions featured performances by a male chorus formed in Cleveland in 1930 whose members were immigrants from Söderfors. The founding members of this chorus were Frans Berglund, Herbert Gevert, Sven Jerlström, Ernst Lantz, Artur Lundström, and Fritz Ramsten. Perhaps all of them, and not only the “dark, narrow” Jerlström, are in the *Sångarförbund* photo.

Ellis Island records reveal that Sven Fritiof Jerlström, age 19 and unmarried, arrived from Söderfors on October 23, 1923. With two other men he was joining Oskar Jerlström in Worcester, Massachusetts. Here the manifest may have an error, as Oskar Jerlström is listed as Sven’s friend, and Sven is coming for only three years. However, Oskar is listed as the uncle of one of the other men, who is coming “forever.” Presumably Oskar was the uncle of Sven – and Sven did stay forever. According to the Social Security Death Index, Sven Jerlstrom, born November 21, 1903, died in November 1987; his last residence was Northridge, California.

It seems likely that Sven Jerlström was a member of the *Sångarförbund* in 1923 and brought the photo with him when he immigrated. When I purchased it on eBay, the photo was still in its old frame, a valued possession that had been protected and displayed. While these voices have been silent for a long time, the photo speaks of the connection that lasted for some years between Söderfors and its former residents who found new homes in America.

Ed.’s note: In the database *Emi-hamn* Oscar Jerlström is found as emigrating from Söderfors in 1902 at age 24. He left Göteborg on 26 September with a ticket for Worcester, Mass.

The *Swedish Census 1900* shows that Oskar Valfrid Jerlström was born 1877 in Nora, (Öre.), son of Gustaf Ferdinand Jerlström and Johanna Matilda Nyquist. In 1900 Gustaf Ferdinand was a smelter foreman at Söderfors iron works.

New: Swedish Death Index 1947–2006

Recently a new version of the *Sveriges Dödbok* (Swedish Death Index) arrived, now covering the years 1947-2006, which means that about 275,000 individuals have been added for the years 2004-2006, and also that the older ones from 1947 are now much more complete. Married women up to 1970 have also had their maiden names added. The

pictures below show all the search possibilities that can be used – either separate or in combination with others.

The CD costs 595 SEK + handling and postage (about \$90), so it best to send an e-mail to <info@genealogi.se> and ask for the correct amount.

Famous author Astrid Lindgren has been used as an example. Here is the “Search screen.”

The “Result screen” for Astrid Lindgren (a little edited).