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SwedGen Workshop in Washington, D.C.

Olof Cronberg

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SwedGen Workshop in Washington, D.C.

A group of Swedes helps people find their roots

BY OLOF CRONBERG

Early this year, the Swedish Embassy contacted me and asked if I could help them with a genealogy event at the House of Sweden in Washington, D.C. For the spring, they were developing an event schedule around the theme, "Discover Sweden," and they thought a workshop "Find Your Swedish Roots" would fit in.

The House of Sweden, which also houses the Swedish Embassy, is situated by the Potomac River in Georgetown, which is one of the oldest parts of Washington. Watergate and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts are in sight. Gert Wingårdh and Tomas Hansen designed the building, opened in 2006, with the Nordic themes of openness, transparency, and light. If you are in Washington, the House of Sweden is worth visiting.

The Swedish genealogists

Together, Anneli Andersson, Anna-Lena Hultman, Charlotte Börjesson, and I traveled to Washington for a weekend in the end of May to hold a SwedGen Workshop with lectures and one-on-one sessions. Kathy Meade, the U.S. rep for Genline, presented one of the lectures, and Kelly Keegan, a DIS member who lives in Washington, helped out. Reservations were not required for the lectures, so immediately before sessions started on Saturday, we were a little nervous because only two visitors had shown up. However, it turned out that the House of Sweden did not open its doors until noon; a few minutes later some fifty visitors filed down the stairs to the lecture room. The topics of the lectures were: Finding Your Swedish

Roots; Church Records On-Line; Resources on CDs and the Internet; and Facts about Emigration.

The workshop

The one-on-one sessions were fully booked in advance, half an hour for each. In many cases they came in pairs: man and wife, mother and daughter, or researcher and the old uncle who knew a few words of Swedish. Half an hour was a good amount of time. In most cases, we were able to solve the research problems and figure out where in Sweden the person's immigrant ancestor had come from. On the other hand, it would have been possible to look much further into each research problem. With the resources available today on CDs and the Internet, there is almost no limit to research capability, even for you on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Some examples of solved cases:

Yvette Kolstrom's husband's great-grandfather had emigrated from Finland. Before that, in the 1870s, the family had moved from Sweden to Pori (Björneborg) in Finland, but she did not know from where in Sweden the family had come. The case was easily solved, since Karl Gustaf Wilhelm Kohlström appeared on the *Emibas* CD. He was born in Rättvik parish in Dalarna, where his father was a blacksmith at Dådran's *bruk* (iron works). The family was then found in the *Disbyt* database and on the *Smed-skivan* (the CD of blacksmith families). We also found a



The House of Sweden in Washington, D.C. Photo by Kelly Keegan.



The one-on-one session. Photo by Kelly Keegan.

query concerning the family at the on-line discussion forum, *Anbytarforum*, from a genealogist in Finland. Thus it was possible to create contact with a Finnish relative who was researching the same family.

Another interesting story came from Nancy Thompson. Her ancestor Magnus Öring was supposed to have been born in Kalmar, Småland, 1781. He became a sailor and ended up marrying Catherine Louisa Brown in Charleston, SC, in 1806. He died in approx. 1819. This time I used the CDs of indexes of births, marriages, and deaths for Kalmar län, published by *Person- och Lokalhistoriskt Forskarcentrum* (PLF) in Oskarshamn. The good thing about the PLF CDs is that they are complete for the area. I soon found a merchant, Axel Henrik Öring, with a son Karl Magnus Öring born in 1765 in the town of Kalmar. However, the birth year did not match ours, and it turned out that this Karl Magnus died young.

The next interesting hit was an Ingemund Öring, who was a merchant sailor, and who married in Madesjö parish outside Kalmar in 1797. My guess was that Ingemund was a brother to Magnus. However,

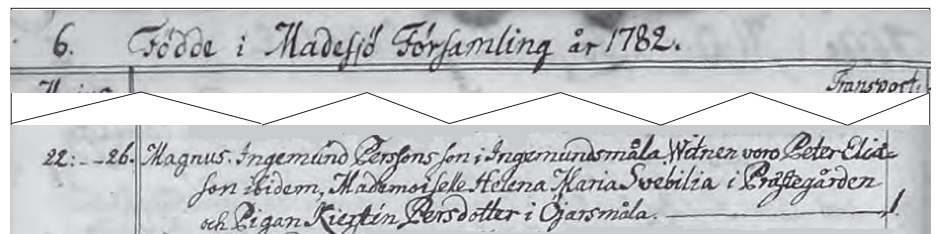
according to the household examination roll, he was born in 1762, and he was a son of Per Ingemundsson at Öjarsmåla, Madesjö parish. According to household examination roll of Öjarsmåla, Ingemund was the youngest child and his mother Kajsa Olofsdotter was born in 1733, so she could not have a son in 1781.

That was as far as we had gotten when Nancy's time was up, but I was unsatisfied that I had not solved the case. The next morning, when I woke up much too early because of jet lag, I realized that Ingemund was 35 years old when he married in 1797 and it was possible that he had been married before. This track proved to

be correct, and I then found that an Ingemund Persson had a son Magnus in Madesjö 1782. At that time, Ingemund was not called a sailor and did not use the name of Öring. That was the reason that we had not found the record at once. The possible brother turned out to be the father!

We will be back!

We, the SwedGen group, are considering another trip to the U.S. next year. We are thinking of going to New York and then plan to follow the East Coast north. If schedule and financing works out, we plan to go in September 2009.



Birth records from Madesjö 1782. Photo from ArkivDigital.

Text: *Magnus, Ingemund Perssons son i Ingemundsmåla. Witnen woro Peter Eliasson ibidem, Mademoiselle Helena Maria Svebilja i Prästegården och Pigan Kierstin Persdotter i Öjarsmåla.*

Olof Cronberg lives in Växjö, Sweden.
His e-mail is <olof.cronberg@abc.se>