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Höganäs, Sweden--Bloomington, Illinois

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Höganäs, Sweden - Bloomington, Illinois

Collaboration in Connecting with Our Swedish Ancestors

BY P. ROBERT WILLEY

This article is about two “distant” cousins’ genealogical searches. When we began our respective journeys, each was unaware that, first, the other existed, and second, the other had also been researching his ancestors for years. One began his search in Höganäs, Sweden (1960), and the other in West Hartford, Connecticut (1971). In the summer of 1981 through a combination of luck, research, and overseas travel we discovered each other. Since our initial meeting we continued, intermittently, to research independently and share “bits and pieces of information.” Then in May, 2004, with both of us retired and having the time to increase our genealogy search, we realized that if we merged our data we would greatly enrich and preserve information about our shared ancestry. This decision now enabled us to “organize the loose ends of our mutual family history” that included independent memories, identifying “family treasures” stored in our respective homes, and sharing “family stories.”

Some of the initial problems we encountered in our search were unforeseen official name changes, numerous errors by ancestors and public agencies in the record keeping process, cloudy family memories, translating correspondence and documents into English, and most importantly, understanding how to merge the American and the Swedish record keeping genealogical systems. Further problems emerged so we needed to make use of paleography (the art of reading handwriting) to decipher old records.

Collaboration is a necessity

Merging our independent research efforts was paramount in clarifying and understanding information we already had. When we began, the task seemed overwhelming. Collecting and interpreting information written in another language or identifying individuals in unlabeled photographs is a tedious and difficult process. However, excitement began to emerge as we shared documents, photographs, and memories. With newly identified connections and confirmations, more specific clues led to new productive sources.

The challenge of our task was greatly eased by exchanging documents and photographs via e-mails over an eighteen-month period. The use of current computer technology greatly enhanced our research. We found that our individual records contained pieces of information that previously seemed unrelated or meaningless, but collectively now revealed significant glimpses into our ancestral family life.

Collaboration is productive

Organizing and validating previously found “family searches” as well as identifying, sorting, and prioritizing family information into an understandable record were crucial collaborative tasks that needed to be carefully done. Some examples:

An opportunity for “Transatlantic Family Collaboration” occurred when recently discovered post cards were discovered in an album that Robert’s mother had saved (written in Swed-

ish) dating back to 1898. They had been sent by family members from various cities in the United States and Sweden. In six weeks we completed the task of scanning, electronically sending, and translating 60 post cards. This has resulted in five genealogical libraries receiving a CD for their archives.

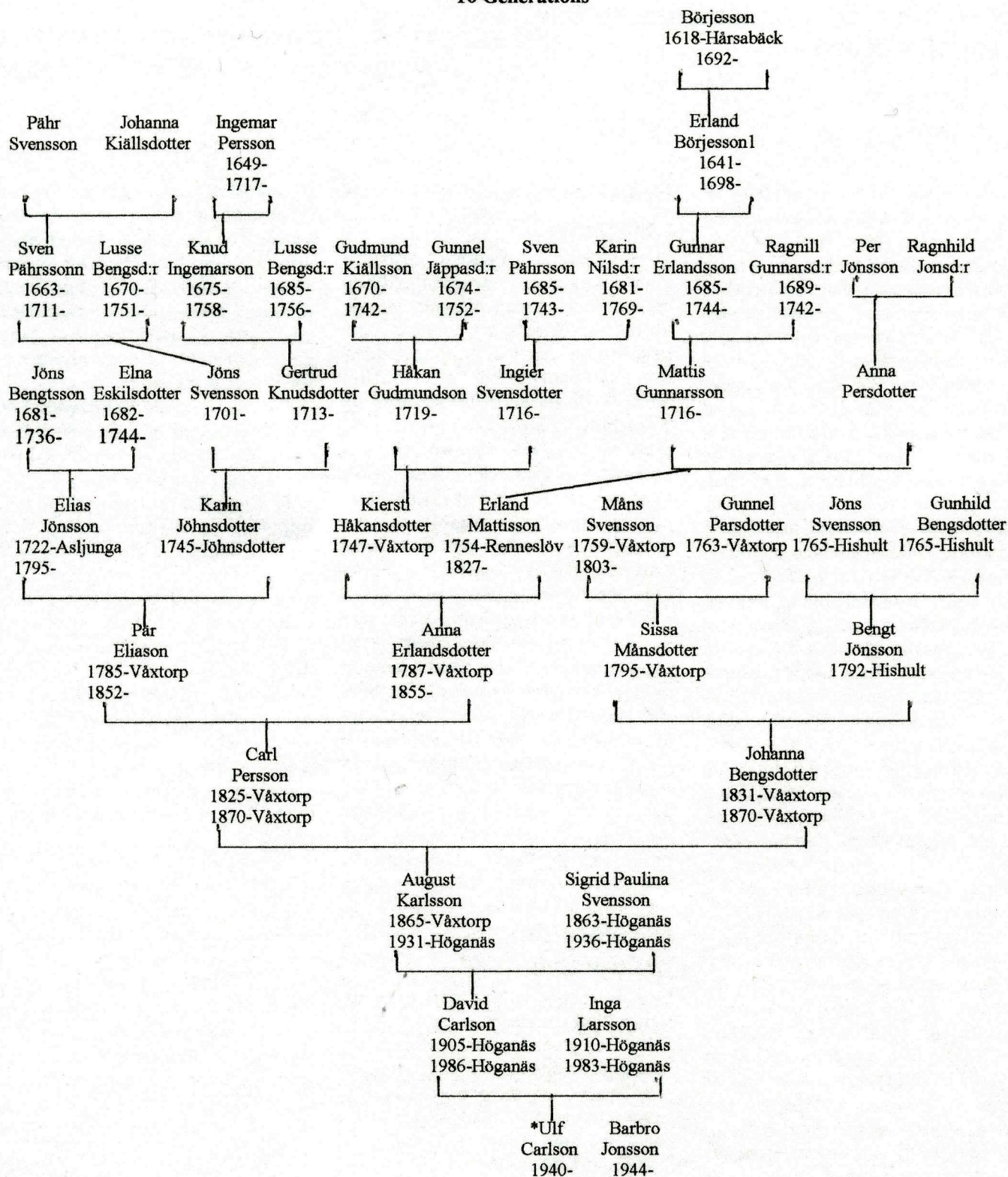
We each had old unlabeled photographs of individuals we did not know. Gradually as we shared photographs and information we were able to identify individuals and make important family connections. When viewed together, the photographs and post cards conveyed significant “snap shots” into the daily lives of our ancestors one hundred years ago.

Validating information on all individuals has been laborious but a necessary step to eliminate incorrect information. Rethinking who were our ancestors, where they had come from, and where they traveled assisted us in further identifying and clarifying our respective ancestral roots.

An example of the importance of doing this was we both assumed that our information re Johannes Svensson was correct. Upon further investigation it was discovered that he was not born in Billeberga but in Kvenneberga. The puzzle was solved when it was discovered that there were two individuals with the same name born on the same day in that town. Correcting this error led us to identify several previously unknown ancestors.

In 1982 relatives of Johannes Carlsson (brother to August Karlsson) who immigrated to California in 1886, visited Ulf in Höganäs. Together they traveled to Våxtorp in Hallands län

**Ulf Carlson Family Chart
(1618-present)
10 Generations**



*Protecting privacy of living relative

to locate the farm where Carl Persson and Johanna Bengtsdotter (parents of the above mentioned August and Johannes) had lived in the 1860's. After searching the countryside for several hours, excitement came when the home was found down an old pathway in the woods. This visit was significant for it was his relatives' first and only trip to make personal connections in Sweden.

Collectively we thought it might be interesting to research our ancestors school records for the years 1870-1880. The search began at the Höganäs Town Hall. After numerous discussions with school officials, the location of the records was identified. Our task was made more complicated due to relocations by local school board offices that significantly jeopardized the record keeping process. The records we sought were discovered in unlabeled or mislabeled boxes stored in an unpainted, poorly lighted basement not conducive for research. Since we did not know which schools our ancestors attended, our search necessitated reading through all students' files of every school. Fortunately, records were kept in chronological order. Some school records were carefully recorded in books or individual pieces of paper. Many were incomplete. Ultimately the records of Martin Svensson were discovered. He attended *Folkskolan* (1st and 2nd grade) and then *Kyrkskolan* (3rd through 6th grade). Patience, perseverance, and coincidence were crucial ingredients in locating this chapter in our genealogical search.

Collaboration in the future

We now view genealogy as a challenging ongoing search leading to new discoveries and ancestral revelations. Our goal in writing this article was to organize over 300 years of family life that collectively documented glimpses of our shared heritage. This has been and continues to be an ageless journey for present and future generations to pursue.

Notes

- The population of Höganäs was approximately 3,000 in 1890.
- August Karlsson's family moved (1880) to the *Bruket* section (the factories) in lower Höganäs and Martin Swanson's family moved (1854) to the *Gruvan* section (the mines) in upper Höganäs. These neighborhood names are still used today. Further reading on Martin Swanson "Höganäs to Worcester: Discovering My Swedish Ancestors" in the *Swedish American Genealogist* Volume XXV March, 2005 No. 1.
- Depositories having copies of the "Swanson Post Card CD" are:
- Kullabygden Genealogical Society (Kullabygdens *Släktforskare*) Höganäs, Sweden
www.kullabygdens.se

- New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts
www.newenglandancestors.org
- Swedish American Museum in Chicago, Illinois
www.samac.org
- Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois
www.augustana.edu/Swenson
- Worcester Historical Museum Worcester, Massachusetts
www.worcesterhistory.org
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