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George A. Akerlof: Nobel Prize Winner with Roots in Dalarna!

Stenåke Petersson et al. and Elisabeth Thorsell

The Bank of Sweden prize in economic sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel 2001 was shared by three American researchers. One of them, George A. Akerlof, is a descendent from Husby in Dalarna on his father’s mother’s side.

His roots have been traced by Släktforskarnas Hus (The House of Genealogy) in Leksand. As is evident from the genealogical table [see page 184], the roots are deeply buried in Husby’s fertile soil.

The proband is Vilhelmina Gustafsdotter, who was born 18 December 1865 at the Baltzar farm in Koberga, Husby. Vilhelmina moved to Stockholm in 1887. She is listed as living in Johannes Parish in 1894. This is also where she was married, that same year, to the office janitor Karl Georg Alfred Åkerlöf of Adolf Fredrik Parish.

The newlyweds moved to Västmannagatan in Adolf Fredrik Parish. Georg advanced to become an office clerk for the state railroad system. Aside from his daily work, he was very interested in art. He created drawings and paintings and was also very good at copying.

Georg and Vilhelmina’s children included two daughters, Constance Margareta Isab (b. Stockholm/Adolf Fredrik, 2 September 1895) and Siri, and one son, Gosta (b. June 11 1897).

Constance remained unmarried. She built a big house in Husby, which, after her death on 5 May 1975, went to the senior citizen’s association in Husby. The house later became the start of an association. Siri married and made her home in Karlstad. Gosta traveled to the U.S. the first time in 1924. On his second trip, his title was “doctor.”

The name Åkerlöf became Akerlof in the U.S. In 1940, a son George was born. Today, he is the [Goldman] Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley, and it is he who will travel to Stockholm in December to accept his prize. Presumably, he will bring his wife Janet L. Yellen, also a professor of economics, as well as their twenty-year-old son Robert, a student at Yale University.

Släktforskarnas Hus sent a letter to the recipient of the prize congratulating him and inviting him to visit and personally accept the genealogical table. If he does not have the time to come here in person we will send it to him with greetings from Dalarna!

Stenåke Petersson and colleagues

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Continuation by the Editor

As I am a curious person—the best (or worst?) characteristic of a genealogist—I wanted to know if it was possible to easily glean more information about the Åkerlöf family in Stockholm.

I did not find anything on [the CD] Söder-skivan but was successful using Klara-skivan.¹ Here I found Georg Åkerlöf, his parents, and siblings. The father, Karl Reinhold Åkerlöf, born 24 July 1842 in Yttergran (Uppsala län), worked as a gas lighter and carpentry journeyman. His wife’s name was Wilhelmina Sandberg. She was born 2 December 1837 in Orkesta (Stockholm län), and died 4 May 1904 in Klara. On 6 March 1907, Karl Reinhold remarried the divorced wife of a brush maker, Emma Kristina Dahlgren, born 20 February 1860 in Källa (Kalmar län). The Åkerlöfs moved to Brännkyrka in 1911.

Two of Karl Reinhold’s children—a daughter, Maria Georgina Wilhelmina (b. 2 July 1875), and a son, Carl Wilhelm Gustaf (b. 30 April 1882)—emigrated to the United States on 15 April 1902, with New York as their destination. Unfortunately, they could not be found in the Ellis Island database.

But Gösta Åkerlöf’s journey in 1924 was included and it is evident that he arrived in New York on 6 September, with plans to continue to a friend in Philadelphia. He is reported to be a chemist, Ph.D., and the recipient of a DuPont award. The father, Georg, is listed as living on Fleminggatan 37 in Stockholm.

Finally, we found Gösta Akerlof in the Social Security Data Index, listed as deceased in May 1966 in Princeton, New Jersey. We also found that on 5 March 1991, a woman by the name of Rosalie C. Akerlof of New Jersey and possibly Gösta’s widow had passed away.

-Elisabeth Thorsell

¹ The CD Söder-skivan (the actual title is Söder i våra hjärtan) was published in 1998 by the Stockholm City Archives et al. The Stockholm City Archives published the CD Klara-skivan (Klara. En databas med personuppgifter) in 2000. Söder-skivan contains information on everyone living on Söder (parishes of Maria, Katarina, Högalid, and Sofia) for the years 1878-1926. The information is found in Rotemanna-databasen, which was a special system for keeping track of the people of Stockholm during a period when so many moved into the city that the church system could not handle them in a proper way. There was a roteman in every block who noted when people moved in (with dates of birth, etc.) and when they left and also if they had special needs (as, for example, for shoes or clothes). Söder-skivan also has maps of the area, hundreds of pictures of houses and businesses, hundreds of articles, and much more. Klara-skivan has only Rotemanna-databasen for 1878-1926 and a map, but that is what we basically need. — Elisabeth Thorsell, e-mail to editor, 14 November 2002.
Fig. 1. Pedigree chart for Vilhelmina Gustafsdotters arbete, utarbetat på Stålkeförrådets hus i Leksand.