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# Who Was Soldier John Berg from Färila?

Glenwood Lundberg\*

I have been actively involved in a project to update cemetery records held by the Republic County (Kansas) Historical Society and, eventually, to put this information into a computerized database. The project also involves the collection of cemetery records from townships in counties adjoining Republic County.

In June of 1999, while visiting a friend in Jewell County to take a look at his wheat fields, I was taken to two sites in the area that he thought would be of interest to me—a small, abandoned cemetery and a solitary grave marked by a small tombstone. The latter, located in the corner of a field in Buffalo Township (see figure 1)<sup>1</sup> really caught my attention and piqued my curiosity. The inscription on the stone read: JOHN BERG / Born in / Farila [*sic*] Socken / Sweden / Dec. 26, 1805 / DIED / Sep. 16, 1872 / 14 years / a Swedish soldier.

I decided that I wanted to find out more about this mysterious Swedish soldier. It wasn't until November of 1999 that I actually took photographs of the tombstone. After that, I started to make inquiries about the tombstone and John Berg among local residents. At the time, it never entered my mind that I already had information about this family in my Swedish immigrant files in Republic County. Eventually I made the connection—John Berg the soldier was the father of the John Berg who moved to a farm near Courtland, KS, where he raised his family. Many members of the John Berg family are buried in the Ada Lutheran Church Cemetery just a short distance from my farm!

## The American Story: The Soldier's Son

Since I grew up in this part of Kansas and was aware of individuals who were descendants of the soldier John Berg, the basic American story was fairly easy to uncover. From various sources,<sup>2</sup> I was able to piece together the following information about the family of the soldier's son, John Berg (he had the same name as his father!), and his wife Sigrid:

**John Berg**, b. Färila, Gävleborg *län*, 10 Nov. 1831; d. Scandia, Republic Co., KS, 31 May 1912; bur. Ada Lutheran Ch. Cem., Courtland, KS; m.

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<sup>1</sup> The tombstone is located approximately 5 miles off of U.S. 36 in the SE 1/4 of section 11, T 4S, R 74, Buffalo Township, Jewell Co., KS.

<sup>2</sup> Luella (Nelson) Vincent-Taylor, who had married a son of Addie (Berg) Vincent, and her granddaughter, Vickie Vincent, compiled most of the information that was made available to me.

**Sigrid ---?**, b. Ytterhogdal, Jämtland *län*, 4 March 1838; d. Scandia, Republic Co., KS, 7 Jan. 1914; bur. Ada Lutheran Ch. Cem., Courtland, KS.

Children:

1. **Martha**, b. Sweden, 18 Dec. 1865; d. Kansas, 19 Aug. 1902; bur. Ada Lutheran Ch. Cem., Courtland, KS.
2. **Sigrid**, b. Sweden; d. at sea en route to America.
3. **Selina**, b. Iowa, 17 April 1870; d. 24 Sept. 1958; bur. Ada Lutheran Ch. Cem., Courtland, KS; m. 1) George Churchill 17 Sept. 1892 and 2) Dave Summers 28 July 1909.
4. **Addie Matilda**, b. Kansas, 12 June 1874; d. 28 Dec. 1960; m. Ben Vincent 3 Jan. 1895.
5. **Ellen E.**, b. Kansas, 13 Dec. 1879; d. California, 2 June 1926; bur. Ada Lutheran Ch. Cem., Courtland, KS; m. Truman S. Evans 29 Dec. 1915.



**Fig. 1.** The author at the gravesite of the soldier, John Berg (1805-1872), from Färila Parish. The lone tombstone is located in the corner of a field in Buffalo Twp., Jewell Co., Kansas, on land that was once part of his son's homestead.

I also discovered that John and Sigrid and their two daughters, Martha and Sigrid, emigrated from Sweden ca. 1866-1869 and that Sigrid had died at sea while en route to the U.S. The family first settled in Boone County, Iowa, and didn't arrive in Kansas until 1873-74. John Berg's death certificate lists his father's name as John Berg and his mother's name as Martha (---?). John Berg

homesteaded 160 acres in the SE 1/4 of section 11, T 4S, R 7W, Buffalo Twp., Jewell Co., Kansas. His homestead certificate is dated 10 February 1875.<sup>3</sup> John sold his land for \$1,000 to Jacob Libhart on 22/24 October 1879.

### The Swedish Story: The Soldier

Locating John Berg, the soldier buried on the Kansas prairie, in the Swedish records should have been a straightforward task. After all, his tombstone provided both a birth date (26 December 1805) and a parish name (Farila, i.e., Färila) with which to start. In the birth records for Färila Parish in the province of Hälsingland, I found an entry that seemed to be correct (see figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

*Mamn Dons Bock 1806*

<u>N<sup>o</sup></u>	<u>Namnet</u>	<u>Född</u>	<u>Döpt</u>	<u>Föräldrar och deras Hemvist</u>	<u>Modrens ålder</u>	<u>Faddrar</u>
64	Johannes	Decemb. 10	10	Bond. S. Eric Johansson och Hustru Sofia Lehnrdotter i Käftebo.	21	Bond. Mans Lehnfors och Hustru Gretta Johansdotter i Käftebo. Bond. Olof Persson och dets Hustru Marg. Arvidsdotter i Käftebo och Hustru Sofia Lehnrdotter i Käftebo.
65	Pehr	20	22	Torp. Anders Ericson och Hustru Karin Persdotter i Föne.	23	Anders Ericson i Föne och Bond. S. Marg. Persdotter i Föne.
66	Johannes	25	26	Bond. Olof Johansson och Hustru Ella Mansdotter i Föne.	31	Torp. Mans Johansson och Hustru Brita Mårtensdotter i Föne. Anders Simsson alla 3 i Föne, och Pigan Karin Andersdotter i Swedja.

**Fig. 2** Portion of 1805 birth and christening record for Färila Parish (Häls.). Transliteration and translation of column headings (underlined) and the information listed for child 66: No. (birth number): 66 / Namnet (the name): Johannes; Född månad dag (Birth month/day): Decemb. 25 / Döpt månad dag (Christening month/day): Decemb. 26 / Föräldrar och deras Hemvist (Parents and their residence): Bond[e]: Olof Johansson och Hust[ru]: Ella Månsdotter i Föne / Modrens ålder (Mother's age): 31 / Faddrar (Witnesses): Torp[are] Måns Johansson och Hustru Brita Mårtensd[otte]r, Bonde S[onen]: Anders Simsson alla 3 i Föne, och Pigan Karin Andersd[otte]r i Swedja.

The fact that the birth date for this particular Johannes was off by one day (i.e., the 25th, not the 26th) was, at the time, not particularly bothersome. The fact that the father listed had the surname *Johansson* instead of *Berg* was also not unexpected, for Berg is clearly a soldier's name that would not be associated

<sup>3</sup> Homestead Certificate/Patent, John Berg, Vol. 116, page 121, 10 February 1875. - Register of Deeds, Jewell County Courthouse, Mankato, KS.

<sup>4</sup> Birth and Christening Record (*Födelse- och Dopplängd*), Färila (Häls.), C:3, No. 66, 25 Dec. 1805.



with an individual until he enlisted in the army. I traced this particular Johannes through successive household examination rolls and, after following him for a period of over seventy years, discovered that he never joined the army and he never emigrated. The Johannes born in Färila Parish on 25 December 1805 and the John Berg buried on the Kansas prairie were clearly not one and the same.

I then turned my attention to the other clue on the tombstone, i.e., "14 years a Swedish soldier." In the five-year period 1827-31 (when the soldier John Berg would have been in his early to mid twenties), the names of all soldiers in Färila Parish were recorded at the end of the household examination roll (see figure 3).<sup>5</sup> There, a Johan Berg was listed under number 85. His name (Johan Berg) and birth year (1805) were right, but his day (14th) and month (May) of birth were not. Nonetheless, this particular soldier looked like a promising candidate.

89	Johan Wall	1812 <sup>10</sup> / <sub>11</sub>	p. 25	64	21	69	
85	Johan Berg Martha Svensdotter	1805 <sup>14</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	p. 263	64	69	64	Föne
	Karin Berg	1809 <sup>29</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	p. 61	6	6	6	
	Johan Berg	1828 <sup>15</sup> / <sub>7</sub>					
	Son Johan	1831 <sup>19</sup> / <sub>7</sub>					
82	Per Berg	1810 <sup>10</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	p. 51	61	69	72	

**Fig. 3.** Portion of page 259 of the household examination roll for Färila Parish (Häls.) covering the period 1827-31. Among the soldiers (*soldater*) listed is No. 85, Johan Berg, with his wife Martha Svends[otte]r, her daughter Karin, and their son Johan. Note on the far right the word Föne, which was their residence.

Turning once again to the birth and christening record, I found that the Johannes born at Ygsbo in Färila Parish on 14 May 1805 (the birth date listed on the household examination roll; see figure 3) was the illegitimate son of the maid (*pigan*) Ella Johansdotter at Ygsbo (see figure 4).<sup>6</sup> Four generations of this family are recorded at Ygsbo during the time period 1800-1806, including I) the widow, wife, and mother, Emphrid Mårtensdotter, II) the tailor, Johan Högborg, III) the daughter, Ella Johansdotter, and IV) her son, Johan.<sup>7</sup> Ella Johansdotter later married soldier Erik Wall and they had two sons—Jonas and Per.

<sup>5</sup> Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörlängd*), Färila (Häls.), AI:11, 1827-31, p. 259.

<sup>6</sup> Birth and Christening Record (*Födelse- och Doplängd*), Färila (Häls.), C:3, No., 30, 14 May 1805.

<sup>7</sup> Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörlängd*), Färila (Häls.), AI:7, 1800-06, p. 159.

30.	Johannes oägta	14	14	Pigan Ella Johansd[otte]r i Ygsbo och ygsbo. ---	Sold. Halfvard Borg och dess Hustru Anna Olsd[otte]r. Dräng: Jonas Högberg och dess Syster Anna Johansd[otte]r alla i Ygsbo.
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**Fig. 4.** Portion of 1805 birth and christening record for Färila Parish (Häls.). Transliteration (see figure 2 for column headings): 30 / Johannes, oägta / 14 [May 1805] / 14 [May 1805] / Pigan Ella Johansd[otte]r i Ygsbo / 23 / Sold[at]: Halfvard Borg och dess Hust[ru] Anna Olsd[otte]r. Dräng: Jonas Högberg och dess Syster Anna Johansd[otte]r alla i Ygsbo.

Johan worked as a farmhand at Stocksbo and Föne and went by the name Johan Olofsson Wall before he became soldier No. 85 Berg on 8 April 1831. He married Martha Svensdotter, who had a daughter named Karin. While living at Föne, they had a son, Johan, on 10 November 1831 (see figure 3).

On 13 December 1835, Johan Berg and his family moved from Färila Parish to neighboring Ljusdal Parish.<sup>8</sup> Here, soldier at Järvsö Company, No. 85, Johan Berg, and his family lived in the village of Bår. In 1847 he was discharged from the army. The following is a translation of his discharge paper (see figure 5):

As the soldier of Järvsö Company of the Royal Hälsingland Regiment, No. 85, Johan Berg, has asked me for his discharge, to be able to get better support for himself, and the Ljusdal Parish men at a legally summoned parish meeting on the 13th of May last, for their part, have agreed to allow the farmhand Jon Olofsson Hedström from Sunnanås to become a soldier in Berg's place; Thus, and as the aforementioned Hedström, [according] to presented testimonies, has been found to be of good conduct and able to do service, he has been accepted by me to become [soldier (paper missing)]; So, the aforementioned soldier, Johan Berg, who is 42 years old and 5 feet, 8 1/2 inches tall and has served for 16 1/6 years, during which time he has been on two detachments [soldiers were used as laborers for building canals, roads, prisons, etc.], is now discharged from the Regiment and the Company *ad interim* [for the time being], with the testimony that he, during his term of service, has shown good conduct; But he must be present at the next general muster, to get the officer of the general muster's [i.e., *Generalmönsterherren*]<sup>9</sup> confirmation of this [discharge]. Which is to be observed by anyone concerned.

Mohed, 18 June 1847

Leijonhufvud  
Chief of the Regiment

<sup>8</sup> Household Examination Rolls (*Husförhörslängder*), Färila (Häls.), AI:12, 1832-36, p. 265; Ljusdal (Häls.), AI:9, 1832-40, p. 97 and 247; AI:10, 1841-45, p. 246.

<sup>9</sup> *Generalmönsterherren* was somebody with the rank of general, sometimes even a prince or the king himself.

Åldersstämde Soldaten vid Järsö Kompani af Kongl. Häl-  
 singe Regementet N: 85. Johan Berg har mig förhållit om  
 afsked, för minnande af bättre sällskaps, och Guds nåd  
 minnande med lugligen utlyst. Sockenstämman den 13 juldagen  
 Maja, för sin del samtyckt, att Orången för Olofsson Hed-  
 strom i Lannanäs, sänd till Soldat i stället för Berg  
 antagas; Fördensskalle och som bemänt Hedstrom, i  
 ingifne och öfrige krig, samt vid fredad och till  
 gänt duglig, hvaran han vid kriget af mig till  
 anlagos; Alltså warden förutnämnde Soldaten Johan  
 Berg, hvilken är 42 år gammal, och 5 fot 8 to  
 gänt högt 168 år, härunder hans bemänt 2  
 deringar, härigenom från Regimentet och Kom-  
 ad återom föratskadd, med det vittnesbörd, att  
 under tjänstetiden sig väl förhållit; dock har till  
 mig varit värdtblewandes General Wänström inga  
 för att General Wänströms stadsfästelse härnär anställd  
 Husbildet Wädesboranda, till eller att till lander.

Måned den 18. Junii 1847.

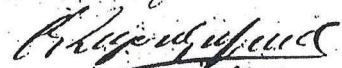
  
 Regimentis Regalköparen.

Fig. 5. Discharge paper for soldier at Järsö Company of the Royal Hälsinge Regiment, No. 85, Johan Berg, dated 18 June 1847.



The family moved to Västra Ramsjö in Ljusdal Parish in 1848, only to leave the parish in 1853 for Ramsjö Parish, which is situated in the northwest corner of Hälsingland.<sup>7</sup> Here Johan Berg became a settler at a village called Getkölen.<sup>8</sup> Here his daughter Karin gave birth to a girl in 1855 and later became betrothed to *dräng* Lars Halfvarsson. They married and had another daughter. Seven people lived at the settlement by 1856 (see figure 6).

*Getkölen*

Namn.	Född.	Döpt.	Föräldrar.	Flyttade.	
				Fra	Till
<i>Johan Berg</i>	<i>Färila</i> 1805 <sup>12</sup> <del>1804</del>		<i>Påre</i>	<i>1848</i>	
<i>Karin Johansdotter</i>	1804 <sup>24</sup>		<i>dit</i>	<i>dit</i>	
<i>Lars Halfvarsson</i>	1828 <sup>12</sup>			<i>dit</i>	
<i>Lars Johan</i>	1831 <sup>12</sup>			<i>dit</i>	
<i>Märtha Cajsa</i>	1855 <sup>12</sup>	<i>— 12/5</i>			
<i>Lars Halfvarsson</i>	<i>1828</i> 1828 <sup>12</sup>				
<i>Märtha Cajsa Johansdotter</i>	1828 <sup>12</sup>		<i>Johan Berg i Hållstas församling</i>		
<i>Märtha Cajsa</i>	1855 <sup>12</sup>	<i>— 12/5</i>			
<i>Lars Halfvarsson</i>	1856 <sup>12</sup>	<i>— 2/6</i>			

Fig. 6. Portion of page 63 of the household examination roll for Ramsjö Parish for the period 1853-58. Here we find that the discharged soldier (*avskedad soldaten*) Johan Berg has become a settler (*nybyggare*) at the village of Getkölen. Note that his daughter, Karin Johansdotter, and her illegitimate (*oäkta*) daughter, Märtha Cajsa, are listed twice. At the top she is listed with her father, mother, and brother; at the bottom, with her husband, Lars Halfvarsson, and two daughters, Märtha Cajsa and Ingeborg.

<sup>7</sup> Household Examination Rolls (*Husförhörslängder*), Ljusdal (Häls.), AI:11, 1846-50, p. 271; AI:12, 1851-55, p. 283.

<sup>8</sup> Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Ramsjö (Häls.), AI:1, 1853-58, p. 63.



In 1859 the Johan Berg family (except for Karin and her family) moved to the village of Ede in Järvsö Parish, where Johan Berg became a farmer (see figure 7).<sup>7</sup> His son, Johan Johansson Berg, and the maid, Sigrid Mathsdotter, were married here on 24 June 1865. At the time of the wedding, Sigrid already had an illegitimate (*oägta*) daughter, Märtha, who was born at Ede on 10 December 1864.<sup>8</sup> Two years later, the couple had a daughter, Sigrid, who was born at Ede on 23 March 1866.<sup>9</sup> Johan, his wife, and two daughters emigrated in 1866.<sup>10</sup> The baby, Sigrid, died on the ship during the voyage to America.

Although the names of both Johan Berg and his wife, Margtha Svensdotter, appear in the household examination roll from Ede for the time period 1871-75 (see figure 8),<sup>11</sup> other evidence in the same document suggests that Johan Berg was actually not there. First, there are notations that indicate that Margtha took communion but not Johan. Second, there is a notation that Johan died on 12 September 1871. Finally, there is a notation suggesting that he died in America in 1872.

What is to be made of this evidence? From 1866 to 1884, there are no notations in the household examination rolls about Johan Berg going to America. There are also no indications that he took communion during this time period. Neither is he to be found in the death records of Järvsö Parish. Did he leave Sweden with his son in 1866? We may never know! The double death dates make me think that he had been away for so long that he was declared legally dead in 1871, and after that came the message from America that he died in 1872.

Farmer Johan Berg's widow lived in Järvsö Parish until she died on 16 March 1884 (see figure 9).<sup>12</sup>

### Acknowledgments

Much of the research presented here was undertaken while I was a participant at the annual SAG Workshops in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1999 and 2000. I would like to especially thank Ulla Sköld, a genealogist from Västerås, Sweden, and other staff members at the SAG Workshops, for their assistance in the preparation of this paper.

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<sup>7</sup> Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Järvsö, AI:20, 1861-65, 480.

<sup>8</sup> Birth and Christening Record (*Födelse- och Doplängd*), Järvsö (Häls.), C:7, p. 440.

<sup>9</sup> Birth and Christening Record (*Födelse- och Doplängd*), Järvsö, C:7, 482; AI:21, 1866-70, 482.

<sup>10</sup> Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Järvsö, AI:21, 1866-70, 348, 482, and 795.

<sup>11</sup> Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Järvsö (Häls.), AI:22, 1871-75, p. 513.

<sup>12</sup> Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Järvsö (Häls.), AI:24, 1881-85, p. 340.

Personernas namn, stånd, ålder, yrke, och påringsfång (äktenskap, inhyses- och fattighjon), nationalitet (om främmande), lyden (svaginta, blinda, döftimmna).	Födelse		Återetabliering		Flyttad från (socken i Län, stad etc. pag. i Husförhöll.)	År utnådd och dag	Längd i åren	Död
	År och dag	Ort (socken i Län, stad)	Gift	Bildning etc. Färd.				
<del>M. Henrik Johan Berg</del>	<del>1861</del>	<del>12/1</del>						
<del>H. Martha Lundström</del>	<del>1861</del>	<del>21/7</del>						
<del>J. Johan</del>	<del>1861</del>	<del>19/1</del>						
<del>P. S. Sigrid Mathsdotter</del>	<del>1838</del>	<del>25/5</del>						
<del>P. D. Märtha</del>	<del>1865</del>	<del>22/6</del>						
<del>J. Peter Erik Sigfrid Lundqvist</del>	<del>1859</del>	<del>14/4</del>						
<del>Martha Maria Alfredsdotter</del>	<del>1852</del>	<del>21/1</del>						
<del>P. Christina</del>	<del>1865</del>	<del>23/5</del>						
<del>P. S. Sigrid Mathsdotter</del>	<del>1857</del>	<del>24/5</del>						
<del>P. Märtha (oägte)</del>	<del>1865</del>	<del>22/6</del>						

**Fig. 7.** Portion of page 480 of the household examination roll for Järvsö Parish for the years 1861-65. Here we find the farmer (*bonde*) Johan Berg listed with his wife and his son, Johan. On line 4, Sigrid Mathsdotter is listed as *S. H.* (*sonhustru* = son's wife) and Märtha as *S. D.* (*sondotter* = son's daughter). Note also on line 4 that the column labeled "Flyttad" includes the notation "vide infra (see below) / 24 June 1865." At the bottom of the page, *Pig[an]* Sigrid Mathsdotter is listed with her illegitimate (*oägte*) daughter, Märtha. Sigrid had evidently been a servant girl in Johan Berg's household before her marriage, and it is quite likely that the father of Märtha is Sigrid's future husband, as they were married fairly soon after the birth of the daughter. When Sigrid married Johan on 24 June 1865, the names of both mother and daughter were crossed out and they were moved to the top of the page.

Personens namn, stånd, sälls. yrke och näringstyg (bäckstyg-, inhyses- och fattighjón), nationalitet (om främlings), lyden (svogrinta, blinda, döfstumma).	Födelse		Ålder		Flyttat		Död
	År	Mån. och dag	Ort (viden i läri, stad)	Gift, Enka	År	Månad och dag	
<i>Joh. Berg</i>	<i>1808</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>Färila</i>				<i>1871</i>
<i>Margta Svensdotter</i>	<i>1804</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Färila</i>				

Läsar	Födelse	Bevisat förhör och begätt II, II, nattvard.					Fräjd och särskilda anteckningar.	Flyttat		Död	
		1871		1872		1873		1874			1875
		F.	N.	F.	N.	F.	N.	F.	N.	F.	N.
<i>Joh. Berg</i>											
<i>Margta</i>											

*Äro i Amerika död '72.*

Fig. 8. Portion of both sides of page 513 of the household examination roll from Ede in Järvsö Parish for the years 1871-75. Note the following: 1) The farmer Johan Berg is listed as “Död, 12/9 1871” (see last column of top image); 2) Johan has no dates listed for taking communion during the five-year period 1871-75; and 3) in the remarks column is the phrase “i Amerika död '72.”

<i>17</i>											
<i>18</i>	<i>Margta Svensdotter</i>										
<i>19</i>											

Fig. 9. Portion of page 340 of the household examination roll for the village of Sörvåga in Järvsö Parish for the period 1881-85. Listed on line 18 is Bond[e] (farmer) Joh[an] Berg's E[nk]a (widow) Margta Svends[otte]r, who was born in Färila on 21 July 1804 and died at Sörvåga on 16 March 1884.