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# My Search for Carin Norquist: From Melrose (MN) to Forsa (Häls.)

Pamela J. Racey\*

My interest in Swedish genealogy began when I was eight years old, in an unusual setting—the local cemetery. One beautiful sunny summer morning in the late 1950s, I accompanied my maternal grandfather, Arthur Youngquist, to the Lakeview Cemetery in Ludington, Michigan, in order to care for the flowers on the graves of his father and stepmother, John and Mary Youngquist. After we had finished, we drove around the cemetery, when suddenly Grandpa stopped the car. Directly in front of us was an unused portion of the cemetery and, beyond that, a densely wooded area. Grandpa took me by the hand and we walked towards the woods, and it was there that I first heard his sad story.

Arthur Youngquist was born September 1887 in Ludington, the first-born son of John and Carin (née Norquist) Youngquist. In January 1890, Carin gave birth to a second son, William Carl. Carin died three weeks later, due to childbirth complications. The baby died the following August. Both mother and son were buried side-by-side in this wooded section of Lakeview Cemetery. Because of costs involved, John was unable to purchase stone markers for the graves, but instead fashioned wooden crosses to mark the burial plots. Unfortunately, a fire later swept through this cemetery section and, afterwards, John was unable to remember precisely where his wife and son were buried. Not knowing the exact location of his mother's grave, as well as being denied the honor to care for her final resting place, always troubled my Grandpa Youngquist, and this caused friction between himself and his father for many years. After Grandpa finished his story, there were tears in his eyes. This episode in my young life marked the beginning of my interest in Swedish ancestors. Later in life I determined to learn all I could about Carin Norquist, my maternal great-grandmother, and her family, who came to America so long ago.

In March 1893, John Youngquist married his second wife, Mary Steinick, a godly Swedish woman. She was a very loving wife and a kind compassionate stepmother to Arthur. In later years Mary became a warm and gracious grandmother to Arthur's four children. Mary and John had no children of their own. Mary Youngquist died in December 1937 and, for the remaining fourteen years of his life, John lived with his son Arthur and wife Minnie and their four children (Vera, Elaine, Robert and Alice). As a young person, it was Robert who often quizzed his Grandpa John about life in Sweden and also about the Norquist family.

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During the 1960s my fascination with Norquist family history deepened. Whenever the subject came up in conversations at Youngquist family gatherings, I always listened. Usually I found myself talking about genealogy with my Uncle Robert, who also shared a deep interest in his Swedish grandparents. Basically, Robert knew three things about Carin Norquist's family: 1) they had lived in Melrose, Minnesota; 2) Carin had at least two brothers who lived in/near Brainerd and Thief River Falls, Minnesota; and 3) the brothers worked for the Minnesota railroads.

Sometime during my early teen years, my mother (Alice) presented me with a very precious and meaningful memento that had belonged to my great-grandmother, Carin Norquist—a gold friendship ring. The story was told that Carin and her best friend in Sweden, Betty Werner, exchanged rings during their teenage years, probably in the mid 1870s. The ring has a delicate pattern etched around the outside and the initials "BW" engraved on the inside. There is an understanding that this ring is to remain within the Youngquist family, since it is the only personal item belonging to Carin still in existence.

It was not until 1995, however, that I actually began a serious, methodical search of my Swedish ancestry. I started reading many "how-to" books and also visited the local Family History Center on numerous occasions, hungry for any advice. Very soon it became apparent that the Norquist family history was going to be a challenge. Since my grandfather, Arthur Youngquist, had no personal recollection of his mother, he had depended upon his father to share what little information was known about the Norquists. Unfortunately, John never talked in much detail to his son; thus my grandfather knew precious few facts. Where in Sweden did the family live? What were the names of Carin's parents and siblings? When did the family come to America? These important questions filled my mind.

In December 1995, I became acquainted with the journal *Swedish American Genealogist* and subscribed in the hope of acquiring a better understanding of Swedish genealogy. Each time an issue arrived, I read the various articles and empathized with those people who, like me, were struggling for answers.

In summer 1996 my mother loaned to me a very special piece of Norquist memorabilia—a photo album that John had presented to Carin before they were married. It contains a wide variety of pictures, including photos of Carin's parents and brothers, a photo of Carin and Betty Werner, plus many pictures of friends both in Sweden and in America. Inside the front cover is John Youngquist's handwritten inscription: "Christmas Present To Carin Norquist Melrose 1884." What a priceless gem to have in our family's collection!

Beginning in August of 1996, I wrote a series of letters to the Stearns County (Minnesota) Historical Society, in an attempt to secure hard facts on the Norquists. They kindly searched many different sources, including obituary indexes, photo indexes, various census records, plus parish, biographic and subject files. Nothing was found. It was a most discouraging time, since I had confirmation that Carin was living in Melrose in 1884.



**Fig. 1.** Portrait of Peter and Helena Norquist, Carin Norquist's parents, taken in Melrose, Minnesota. Date unknown.

As previously mentioned, I was a subscriber to *Swedish American Genealogist* and one day in August I was casually glancing at a previous issue. After reading an article written by James E. Erickson (then associate editor and now editor of *SAG*), I noticed that his home address was listed. Since he lived in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, I knew he would have access to some Swedish-American genealogical repositories and I began to consider that perhaps he might assist me in my search. I composed a brief letter telling him of my plight, and sent it with guarded optimism.

Some weeks passed and then one evening I received a personal phone call from Dr. Erickson, saying he believed he had found my family. He briefly explained some of his discoveries and, much to my surprise, I learned that Carin's family had moved from Melrose, which is in Stearns County, to Elmdale Township, which is located in the adjacent county of Morrison. Several days later a packet of information arrived from him, which contained copies of four census records, information from the index of Göteborg police (emigration) records for 1883 and 1884, and a letter of explanation.

The 1885 Minnesota census of the city of Melrose proved to be interesting and yet somewhat surprising.<sup>1</sup> In reading it, I learned that Carin's parents were Peter and Helena. My first mystery was solved! Underneath their names were listed twenty-two-year-old "Kate" and her four younger brothers—Peter, John, Gustav and Emil. Lastly, and *most* unexpectedly, was the name of "Bessn Wenner," a twenty-two-year-old female, which I immediately concluded was Carin's good friend from Sweden. I had no idea that Betty had come to this country and, for a time, lived with Carin and her family. I always assumed they had parted forever in Sweden. This was such a unique piece of information to know!

The 1895 Minnesota census of Elmdale Township in Morrison County listed Pehr Norqvist, wife Helene [*sic*], and sons Gustaf and Emil.<sup>2</sup> It noted that the family had lived in this area for nine years, so their move must have taken place sometime in 1886. Pehr was a farmer, Helene a housewife, and their sons were farm laborers.

The 1900 U.S. census of Morrison County again showed Pehr and Helena Norqvist living as farmers in Elmdale Township.<sup>3</sup> It also noted their birthdays and year of marriage. Their two sons were no longer living with them.

The 1905 Minnesota census of Morrison County showed son Gustav Norquist as head, wife Anna, three young sons, brother Erik, plus parents Pehr and Helen living on a farm in Elmdale Township.<sup>4</sup> It appears that Gustav had taken over the farming operations.

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<sup>1</sup> 1885 Minnesota State Census, Roll 42, Minnesota Historical Society (hereafter MHS), Stearns Co., Melrose, 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1895 Minnesota State Census, Roll 77, MHS, Morrison Co., Elmdale Twp., 28.

<sup>3</sup> 1900 United States Census, Roll 776, MHS, Morrison Co., Elmdale Twp., E.D. 98, 82A.

<sup>4</sup> 1905 Minnesota State Census, Roll 136, MHS, Morrison Co., Elmdale Twp., E.D. 26.



The following information was included in the indexes for Göteborg police (emigration) records for the years 1883 and 1884:<sup>5</sup>

- Nordqvist, Per, age, 50; son Erik, age 22; son Johan, age 11; from Forsa X [Gävleborg län] to Quebec, 25/5 1883; Contract Number 22:693:4904.<sup>6</sup>
- Nordqvist, Helena, age 48; daughter Carin, age 21; son Petter, age 17; son Gustaf, age 11; son Emil, age 10; from Forsa X [Gävleborg län] to Melrose, 18/7 1884; Contract Number 25:183:4062.<sup>7</sup>

This passenger list information was the most crucial in my research, because it opened the door to Sweden. I *finally* had a parish name for the Norquists and could move forward in finding birth and marriage records, as well as household examination rolls. In addition, it finally answered the nagging question as to when the family arrived in this country. It was also interesting to learn the entire Norquist family did not come to the United States at the same time. They all entered North America by way of Quebec, Canada, rather than through the port of New York. I will always be grateful to Dr. Erickson for providing me these significant facts.

He ended his letter by saying he had checked the membership registers of two Lutheran churches in/near Elmdale Township, hoping to find Pehr and Helena Norquist as members. Unfortunately, he did not locate them at either place.

After receiving all this pertinent information by January 1997, I began to make rapid progress. Because I knew the port of entry as well as the approximate arrival dates of the family, it was rather simple for the Family History Center to provide me microfilms of the ships' passenger manifests. Both of the ships were part of the British Allan Line, Royal Mail Steamers to Canada and the United States. Pehr Nordqvist and sons Erik and Johan left Liverpool, England, on 31 May 1883, after a six-day journey from Göteborg. They sailed to Quebec on the S. S. *Sardinian*. Helena Nordqvist, daughter Carin, and sons Petter, Gustaf and Emil left Liverpool, England, on 24 July 1884 and sailed to Quebec aboard the S. S. *Sarmatian*.

The Family History Center kindly provided me a partial photocopy of the book *Ships of our Ancestors* by Michael J. Anuta. On page 297 are pictures of the S. S. *Sardinian* and the S. S. *Sarmatian*. What an unforgettable moment it was for me to actually see pictures of the ships on which my ancestors sailed.

I then turned my attention to the Swedish records for Forsa Parish in Gävleborg län. Carin's birth and christening record is shown in figure 2 below.

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<sup>5</sup> The Göteborg police (emigration) record information was extracted from microfiche at the archives of the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis.

<sup>6</sup> Poliskammaren GBG, Personregister Emigranter 1883, S1459, 17/17, p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> Poliskammaren GBG, Personregister Emigranter 1884, S1460, 12/12, p. 121.

Födde och Döpte år 1862.						
N:o	Namn.	Född.		Döpt.	Influtne Lasarettmedel.	Föräldrarne och deras hemort.
		Månad.	dag.			
	<i>N</i> <i>Jonas</i> <i>äkt.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>	<i>12.</i>	<i>Den 14 Sept.</i> <i>ehurivillig</i> <i>hörs till utlåning</i> <i>2. 17. 1862.</i>		<i>Hönd. Åskås, Halfvarn, Half</i> <i>vartson, fru. e. Halung och</i> <i>Anna Mo, och H. Ålant, Åskås</i>
<i>38.</i>	<i>Catharina</i> <i>äkt.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>	<i>15.</i>	<i>Den 15 Sept.</i> <i>ehurivillig</i>		<i>Dagard. Johr, Johrson, i</i> <i>Hamre, H. Hel. Ahlberg, Öst</i>
Äktning	Kyrkoställning m. m.	Faddrar.			Föräldrarnas och förmyndarnas	
		<i>a) Hönd. J. Åskås, Johrson, H. Åskås, Åskås, utlåning till 1862.</i> <i>b) Hönd. Johr, Johrson, utlåning till 1862, m. m. och H. Åskås, Åskås, utlåning till 1862, m. m.</i>			<i>Hönd. Mikkel, H.</i> <i>Hamre.</i>	
<i>16.</i>	<i>Den 26 Oct.</i> <i>Östfrin.</i>	<i>a) Dagard. Johr, Johrson, H. Åskås, Åskås, utlåning till 1862, m. m.</i> <i>b) Hönd. Johr, Johrson, H. Åskås, Åskås, utlåning till 1862, m. m.</i>			<i>H. Åskås, Åskås, utlåning till 1862, m. m.</i>	

Fig. 2. Birth and christening record (födelselängd och doplängd) for child No. 38—Catharina (i.e., Carin Norqvist)—from Forsa Parish (Häls.). The top image is the left-hand part of the page; the bottom image, the right-hand part.

A complete transliteration and translation of figure 2 is as follows:

- Heading: Födde och Döpte år 1862 (born and baptized/christened in the year 1862)
- Column 1: N:o. (Number): 38 (the 38th child born in the parish in 1862)
- Column 2: Namn. (Name): Catharina / äkta (legitimate)
- Column 3: Född/Månad/dag. (Born/Month/Day): Sept. 15 (September 15)
- Column 4: Döpt. (Baptized/Christened): Den 15 Sept. (on September 15) / [by the minister] Aurivillius
- Column 5: Influtne Lasarettmedel. (paid to hospital):

- Column 6: Föräldrarna och deras hemvist. (The parents and their residence): *Sågarbet[are] Pehr Pehrsson i Hamre, H[ustr]u Hel[ena] Margr[etha] Ersd[otter]* (Saw[mill] worker Pehr Pehrsson from Hamre, Wife Helena Margretha Ersdotter)
- Column 7: Modrens Ålder. (Mother's age): 26
- Column 8: Kyrkotagning m. m. (Introduced into the church after childbirth): *Den 26<sup>te</sup> Octob[er]* (October 26 is the date that the mother, i.e., Helena Margretha, was "taken to the church and introduced anew to the congregation, signifying a cleansing sacrifice after the birth, which was considered unclean."<sup>8</sup>) / [by the minister] *J. Offrén*.
- Column 9: Faddrar. (Sponsors/Godparents): *a) Sågarb[etare] Pehr Ersson Lindh, H<sup>a</sup> [= Hustru] Karin Hedman, Hamre / b) Bond[e] Pehr Eric Ersson, H<sup>a</sup> [= Hustru] Lena Kajsa Olds[otte]r, Harmånger och Vattlång.* (a) Saw[mill] worker Pehr Ersson Lindh, Wife Karin Hedman, [from] Hamre / b) Farm owner Pehr Eric Ersson, Wife Lena Kajsa Oldsdotter, [from] Harmånger [a parish in Häls.] and Vattlång (a village in Harmånger).
- Column 10: Närverande vid förlossningen. (present/attending at this birth): *Sa Bamorska* (the same midwife), i.e., the same as mentioned for the previous child, namely, Husm[an](?) Wiklunds Hu[stru] i Hamre (the crofter Wiklund's wife from Hamre).

In the household examination roll (*husförhörslängd*) for Forsa Parish covering the years 1871-1880 (see top image of figure 3),<sup>9</sup> I found the Norquist family listed as follows: *Arbetaren* (the laborer/worker) Pehr Pehrsson Nordqvist [note the Swedish spelling], b. Ny (Värm.) 1832; *H[ustr]u* (wife) Helena Margretha Ersdotter, b. Harmånger [Häls.] 1835; *son* Eric, b. 1861; *d[otte]r* Catharina, b. 1862; *son* Petter, b. 1867; *son* Carl Johan, b. 1869; *son* Gustaf, b. 1871; and *son* Emil, b. 1874. Pehr and Helena Margretha were married in 1861. It is interesting to note that by this time (i.e., 1871-1880) Carin's father was using the surname *Nordqvist*, whereas at the time of her birth (i.e., 1862) he only went by his patronymic *Pehrsson*.

This household examination roll also provided valuable insights regarding the religious convictions of the Nordqvist family. On the right hand side of the page (see bottom image of figure 3) in the columns labeled 1871 through 1880 under the heading *Bevstat förhör och begått H. H. Nattvard* (attended examination and celebrated/partook of Holy Communion), the parish minister could indicate the date(s) when an individual attended the annual examination (under column F[örhör]) and/or communion (under column N[attvard]). Note

<sup>8</sup> Carl-Erik Johansson, *Cradled in Sweden*. Rev. Ed. (Logan, UT: The Everton Publishers, Inc., 1995), 101.

<sup>9</sup> Household Examination Roll (*husförhörslängd*), Forsa (Häls.), 1871-80, 183.



how many times the abbreviation *abs* (= *absens* = absent) is used to indicate that a family member did not attend the annual examination. Note also that none of the Nordqvist family members celebrated communion in the church during this ten-year period. Furthermore, in the column *Fräjd och särskilda anteckningar* (civil status and special notes/annotations), Pehr and his daughter Catharina are listed as "*Baptist.*" Eric is listed as being *Adm[mitterad]* (admitted) 1877, but the interpretation of this phrase is uncertain. Finally, in the same column, the two youngest children (Gustaf and Emil) are characterized by the comment "*Barnet ej döpt*" (the child isn't baptized). The Nordqvist family clearly belonged to the dissenting Baptist movement! This undoubtedly explains why they were not found in a Lutheran church register in Minnesota.

My focus then shifted back to Minnesota. I wrote a letter to the Morrison County recorder, requesting the dates of death for both Pehr and Helen Norquist. A response was mailed promptly stating that Helen had died on 23 August 1907 and Pehr on 18 October 1907. I have yet to learn where they are buried, but I assume it is in/near Elmdale. Years ago I remember my Grandpa Youngquist telling me that his maternal grandmother never stopped grieving over the death of her only daughter, Carin.

Genealogy is a never-ending hobby and I have much to discover regarding my Swedish ancestors. It has been rewarding not only to learn all that I have in the last few years but also to solve so many of the questions that have puzzled me for such a long time. It has also been a pleasure to meet other people who also share an interest in genealogy. Whether I find myself cranking a microfilm reader in a library or sitting in the back corner of a county clerk's office poring over old musty record books, there always seems to be a friendly face to offer help or share in my joy over a new discovery.

My ultimate goal is to provide my two sons an accurate and interesting family history of their mother's ancestors. I continue to enjoy this pursuit, knowing that many challenges and answers lay ahead of me. And this one valuable lesson I have learned from researching my Swedish great-grandmother, Carin Norquist, and her family—*never give up.*

