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# Chief Justice William Rehnquist's Swedish Forebears

Christopher Olsson\*

## Introduction

In early 1988 Swedish Council of America announced that it would present its "Great Swedish Heritage Award" to Chief Justice of the United States William H. Rehnquist at ceremonies to be held on November 18, 1988 at the Dolley Madison Hotel in Washington, DC. Rehnquist, who is half-Swedish, was to be honored for achieving his status as the nation's chief jurist, a position he was appointed to by President Reagan in 1986.

In a meeting with the Chief Justice's administrative assistant, I mentioned casually that if Rehnquist desired, the Council would research his Swedish genealogy. A week later I received a call saying that he would be delighted and within a short time the Chief Justice had supplied the necessary information so that I could begin the research. Much of the information on his father's mother's history came from a brief visit to the *landsarkiv* in Vadstena in August, 1988. The kind people at SVAR in Ramsele supplied the genealogy of his father's father. Although this line begins in Gävle, it quickly gets back to Värmland where Olof Andersson Renqvist (Chief Justice Rehnquist's father's father) was born in Frykerud parish on October 6, 1855. Five generations back we find the first of several ministers, Andorus Jonæ Renström, born ca. 1669 in Boda parish. Four generations further back gets us to the earliest antecedent to Chief Justice Rehnquist, Håkan Werme. This forefather was a sheriff (bailiff) in Kronoberg in the 1540s and later served in the same capacity in the judicial district of Trögd in Uppland. For reasons yet to be ascertained, he was beheaded in Uppsala in 1558.

This report is concerned solely with the Swedish ancestry of William Hubbs Rehnquist. Research was carried out in the summer and fall of 1988 on Rehnquist's paternal grandfather and grandmother, both of whom were born in Sweden. This report is not complete but does contain information on some of Rehnquist's antecedent family lines back to the mid-16th century (eleven generations). Most of the work has been done through parish records, now stored in the district archives in Vadstena and Gothenburg, and at the Research Center at Ramsele (SVAR, as it is known in Sweden).

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Each person in this report is assigned a unique number, beginning with the subject (1), parents (2,3), grandparents (4,5,6,7), etc., according to the Kekule System, invented by the German genealogist, Stephan Kekule. These numbers are also used in the accompanying family trees.

## Ancestral Table (Ahnentafel)

1. **William Hubbs Rehnquist** b. October 1, 1924 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (the subject of this report).
- I. 2. **William Benjamin Rehnquist** b. May 26, 1894 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (not researched).
3. **Margery Peck** b. March 5, 1897 in Berlin, Wisconsin (not researched).
- II. 4. **Olof Andersson Renqvist** b. October 6, 1855 on the farm Lene in Frykerud parish in the province of Värmland. (Frykerud is about 19 miles northwest of the city of Karlstad.) He was the son of Anders Nilsson (8) and Kajsa Olsdotter (9). By the age of 20 he had become an apprentice tailor and moved to Linköping in the province of Östergötland where he worked for a tailor named Österberg. On November 3, 1875 he moved to Norrköping in the same province where he was rejected for military service. A year later he moved to Motala where he lived for two years. He arrived in Motala a few days after November 25, 1876, or just about the same time as Adolphina Ternberg. Two years later, on October 4, 1878, he moved to the city of Gävle, staying there about 18 months before emigrating from the port of Gothenburg on March 26, 1880, at age 24.
5. **Adolphina Ternberg** b. April 16, 1852 at Nykvarn (a mill) in the parish of Vreta Kloster. (Vreta Kloster, 6 miles north of Linköping in the province of Östergötland, is Sweden's oldest cloister church, begun in 1120 A.D. originally as a monastery for Benedictine monks but soon changed to a nunnery for Cistercian nuns.) Adolphina was the second daughter of a farm hand by the name of Nils Johan Ternberg (also spelled Tärnberg) (10) and his wife Inga Lena Bengtsdotter (11). When Adolphina was 24 she moved to the city of Motala (about 18 miles west of Vreta Kloster). She arrived on November 22, 1876 and began work as a school teacher at the Motala Factory (Motala Mekaniska Verkstad). She lived in Motala for 3 1/2 years, leaving on April 27, 1880 for North America.

- III. 8. **Anders Nilsson** b. August 4, 1824 on the farm Lene in Frykerud parish in the province of Värmland. He was the son of Nils Larsson (16) and Maria Olofsdotter (17). He was a farmer (*hemmansägare*) on the farm Renstad in the parish of Boda where his wife Kajsa Olsdotter (9) came from. (Boda is a neighboring parish to Frykerud.) Anders died at Renstad on December 5, 1880, nine months after his son Olof Andersson Renqvist (4) had left for America.
9. **Kajsa Olsdotter** b. December 19, 1831 in Renstad in Boda parish in Värmland. She was the daughter of Olof Andersson (18) and Marit Nilsson (19). She apparently emigrated to America on August 20, 1886 at the age of 54 and nearly six years after her husband's death.
10. **Nils Johan Ternberg** b. May 2, 1816 at Nykvarn in Vreta Kloster parish in Östergötland province. He was the son of the crofter Göran Tärnberg (20) and his wife Brita Nylander (21). He was the oldest of four children. On November 19, 1848 he married Inga Lena Bengtsdotter (11) and the couple had their first child, a daughter named Brita Sofia, on August 16, 1849. In 1862 the family moved to the farm Kohagen No. 1 in the same parish of Vreta Kloster. Here Nils Johan died on October 3, 1876 of unspecified causes. Adolphina Ternberg (5) left for Motala less than a month later.
11. **Inga Lena Bengtsdotter** b. December 27, 1816 on the farm Svicebacken in the parish of Flistad. (Flistad is about 4 miles west of Vreta Kloster.) She was the daughter of the crofter Bengt Persson (22) and his wife Anna Brita Nilsson (23). Inga Lena had five older brothers and three older sisters. Another brother was born in 1820. Inga Lena moved from Flistad in 1844 to the farm Sjögestad Norrgård in Vreta Kloster parish and then to Nykvarn in 1848 when she married Nils Johan Ternberg (10).
- IV. 16. **Nils Larsson** b. March 2, 1791 on the farm Norra Ås in Frykerud parish in Värmland province. He was the son of Lars Nilsson (32) and Marit Jönsdotter (33). He was a farmer (*bonde*) on the farm Lene in the same parish.



17. **Maria Olofsdotter** b. September 26, 1786 on the farm Ås in Frykerud parish. She was the daughter of Olof Anderson (34) and Katarina Andersdotter (35). She married Nils Larsson (16) on December 24, 1823, probably already pregnant with their first son Anders (8). Maria died at the age of nearly 58 on September 15, 1844 on the farm Lene in Frykerud parish.
18. **Olof Anderson** b. September 27, 1785 on the farm Renstad in Boda parish. He was the son of Anders Olofsson (36) and Brita Olofsdotter (37). Olof was a farmer at Renstad and died there on October 4, 1844.
19. **Marit Nilsdotter** b. January 1, 1805 on the farm Östra Takene in the parish of Brunskog. (Brunskog is about 10 miles northwest of Boda and Frykerud parishes.) Marit was the daughter of Nils Olofsson (38) and Brita Nilsdotter (39). She survived her nearly 20-year-old husband Olof Andersson (18) by nearly 30 years, dying at the age of 73 on April 16, 1878 in Renstad.
20. **Göran Tärnberg** b. May 29, 1785 in Örsätter in Vreta Kloster parish. He was the son of Jonas Göransson (40) and his wife Caisa Andersdotter (41). In 1808, at the age of 23, Göran moved to Linköping to begin an apprenticeship as a tanner. This apparently did not work out as he returned to Vreta Kloster in 1815 with his wife Brita Nylander (21). They had been married on September 29 of that year. When Nils Johan (10) was born, Göran is listed as a crofter (*torpare*). He stayed at Nykvarn until his death of unspecified causes on February 2, 1862.
21. **Brita Nylander** b. May 10, 1789 at Nykvarn in Vreta Kloster parish the daughter of crofter Nils Nilsson (42) and Greta Larsdotter (43). She was the oldest of seven children, two of which died in infancy. She survived her husband Göran Tärnberg (20) by eleven years, dying on May 10, 1873 on her 84th birthday.
22. **Bengt Persson** b. October 23, 1770 on the farm Svikeybacken in Flistad parish. Bengt was the son of the parish shoemaker Per Bengtsson (44) and his wife Catrina Johansdotter (45). He served for a while as parish shoemaker himself but is most often listed as "crofter". He married Anna Brita Nilsdotter (23) on July 8, 1796.

23. **Anna Brita Nilsson** b. February 10, 1777 supposedly in Flistad parish. (Not confirmed.)
- V. 32. **Lars Nilsson** b. September 21, 1759 at Långstad in the parish of Grums. (Grums is about 13 miles south of Frykerud Parish.) He was the son of Nils Larsson (64) and Margareta Nilsson (65). He farmed at Lene in Frykerud parish and died there on May 31, 1824.
33. **Marit Jönsdotter** b. 1756, she was the daughter of Jöns Eriksson (66) and Kerstin Jönsdotter (67). She married Lars Nilsson (32) on October 24, 1788 and died at Lene in Frykerud parish on April 12, 1829.
34. **Olof Andersson** b. January 4, 1748 on the farm Väsby in Frykerud parish. He was the son of Anders Andersson (68) and Ingegerd Andersdotter (69). Olof was a farmer (*bonde*) and died on August 16, 1801 at Ås in Frykerud parish.
35. **Katarina Andersdotter** b. December 2, 1745 at Ås in Frykerud parish. She was the daughter of Anders Svensson (70) and Karin Persdotter (71). Katarina died on May 29, 1830 at nearly 85 years of age, having survived her husband by nearly 29 years.
36. **Anders Olofsson** b. February 12, 1749 at Renstad in Boda parish. He was the son of Olof Bengtsson (72) and Anna Katarina Renström (73). He was a farmer at Renstad and died there on February 16, 1835, more than 44 years after his wife's death.
37. **Brita Olofsdotter** b. April 25, 1752 at Östra Takene in the parish of Brunskog. She was the daughter of Olof Persson (74) and Kerstin Persdotter (75). Brita married Anders Olofsson (36) on December 26, 1784 but lived only six more years, dying on October 31, 1790 at Renstad in Boda parish.
38. **Nils Olofsson** b. December 3, 1758 at Östra Takene in Brunskog parish, the son of Olof Olofsson (76) and Brita Kristoffersdotter (77). He farmed at Östra Takene and died there on January 23, 1809.
39. **Brita Nilsson** b. April 9, 1769 on the farm Finnebäck in the parish of Brunskog. Brita was the daughter of Nils Andersson (78) and Ingeborg Persdotter (79). She married Nils Olofsson (38) in 1793.

40. **Jonas Göransson** b. September 18, 1747 in Heda in Vreta Kloster parish. He was the son of Göran Månsson (80) and Chierstin Andersdotter (81). He was a shoemaker.
  41. **Caia Andersdotter** b. July 13, 1749 in Sandbäcken in Vreta Kloster parish. She was the daughter of Anders Pålsson (82) and Margita Olofsdotter (83). She married Jonas Göransson (40) in 1775 and bore him at least six children.
  42. **Nils Nilsson** b. April 1, 1760 at Kohagen in Vreta Kloster parish. He was the son of the crofter Nils Jonsson (84) and his wife Brita Jansdotter (85). With wife Greta Larsdotter (43), he had 12 children. According to the minister, Nils had good health until 15 days before his death at age 71 on April 22, 1831. His first wife having died in 1810, Nils married Maja Larsdotter on December 27, 1811. They moved from Nykvarn to Blomelund in the same parish in 1816 where Nils died 15 years later.
  43. **Greta Larsdotter** b. May 5, 1766 in Ljung parish. (Ljung is about 4 miles northwest of Vreta Kloster parish.) Greta came to Vreta Kloster and the farm Nykvarn in 1783 and married Nils Nilsson (42) in 1787. She died in 1810.
  44. **Per Bengtsson** b. May 17, 1739 in Sörby in Vreta Kloster parish. He was the son of Bengt Johansson (88) and his wife Hedwig Hansdotter (89).
  45. **Catrina Johansdotter** b. May 10, 1739 in Brunneby parish. (Brunneby, now only a church ruin, is 8 miles northwest of Vreta Kloster.) Catrina died on November 18, 1812.
- VI.
64. **Nils Larsson**
  65. **Margareta Nilsson**
  66. **Jöns Eriksson** b. January 4, 1723.
  67. **Kerstin Jönsdotter** b. 1716.
  68. **Anders Andersson**
  69. **Ingegerd Andersdotter**
  70. **Anders Svensson** b. 1717.
  71. **Karin Persdotter** b. January 6, 1720. Died March 8, 1797 in Frykerud parish.

72. **Olof Bengtsson** b. June 28, 1714 in Renstad in Boda parish. He was the son of Bengt Nilsson (144) and Ingeborg Larsdotter (145). He farmed at Renstad and died there on August 22, 1776.
73. **Anna Katarina Renström** b. May 10, 1712 in Boda parish. She was the third of seven children, three of which died in infancy. Her father was Andorus Jonæ Renström (146) and her mother was Maria Åman (147). She married Olof Bengtsson in Boda parish on June 16, 1736 and died there on March 2, 1800, nearly 88 years old.
74. **Olof Persson** b. September 6, 1716 at Östra Takene in Brunskog parish. He was the son of Per Gudmundsson (148) and Malin Olofsdotter (149). He farmed Östra Takene and died there on October 27, 1790.
75. **Kerstin Persdotter** b. September 17, 1721 at Östra Takene in Brunskog parish. She was the daughter of Per Nilsson (150) and Karin Olofsdotter (151). She married Olof Persson (74) on December 26, 1743.
76. **Olof Olofsson** b. February 7, 1731 at Östra Takene in Brunskog parish. He was the son of Olof Persson (152) and Ingrid Olofsdotter (153). He died at Östra Takene on April 26, 1802.
77. **Brita Kristoffersdotter** b. February 15, 1730 at Bruket in Brunskog parish. She was the daughter of Kristoffer Kristoffersson (154) and his wife Kerstin Månsdotter (155). Brita married Olof Olofsson (76) on December 24, 1755.
78. **Nils Andersson** b. January 25, 1740 at Nussviken in Brunskog parish. He was the son of Anders Olofsson (156) and Ingegärd Olofsdotter (157). He farmed at Finnebäck in Brunskog parish and died there on April 7, 1805.
79. **Ingeborg Persdotter** b. September 21, 1746 at Finnebäck in Brunskog parish. She was the daughter of Per Olofsson (158) and Brita Nilsson (159). She married Nils Andersson (78) on December 26, 1765. Ingeborg died at Finnebäck on April 25, 1815.
80. **Göran Månsson** b. December 20, 1718 in Vreta Kloster parish, the son of Måns Jönsson (160).
81. **Chierstin Andersdotter** b. January 1, 1726 at Bjällösa, a large farm in Vreta Kloster parish. Her father was Anders Jönsson (162) and her mother was Kerstin Haraldsdotter (163).
82. **Anders Pålsson**



83. **Margita Olofsdotter**
84. **Nils Jonsson** b. November 19, 1726 on the farm Kohagen in Vreta Kloster parish. His father was Jan Hemmingsson (168) and his mother was Sara Nilsdotter (169). He was a crofter. Died in 1799.
85. **Brita Jansdotter** b. April 2, 1726 at Tullan in Vreta Kloster parish. Daughter of Johan Olufsson (170). Mother's name is not given in the church book. She was the mother of at least eight children including Nils Nilsson (42).
88. **Bengt Johansson**
89. **Hedwig Hansdotter**
- VII. 144. **Bengt Nilsson**
145. **Ingeborg Larsdotter**
146. **Andorus Jonæ Renström** b. ca. 1669 in Renstad in Boda parish, Värmland. He was the son of the farmer Jon Elofsson (292) and his wife Birgitta Pålsdotter Brunskogia (293). After studies in Karlstad's school and *gymnasium*, Andorus studied in Åbo (in Finland) 1694 and was called to Brunskog parish on June 30, 1702 to become the assistant to the vicar's assistant (*komministeradjunkt*) on the condition that he marry the vicar's assistant's daughter. He was also promised the position of vicar's assistant when it became vacant. Three months later the dean for that region Daniel Lagerlöf visited the parish to ascertain if there was to be a marriage. Apparently everything was in order as Andorus was ordained on October 10 of that year. He did not marry Maria Åman until June 24, 1704 in Boda parish church. On April 10, 1705 he succeeded his father-in-law as vicar's assistant in Brunskog and remained in that post until his death 36 years later. He was buried on June 21, 1741 and was called in the official death notice "the very famous vicar's assistant in Brunskog parish".
147. **Maria Åman** b. ca. 1687 in Boda parish, the daughter of the vicar's assistant Andreas Andreæ Åman (294) and his wife Brita Brunell (295). She gave birth to seven children, of which three died in infancy. One son became a vicar's assistant in Blomskog parish. She died in Brunskog October 11, 1751 and according to the church books "lived a very beautiful life and had been patient in affliction 64 years". What the affliction was we do not know.

148. **Per Gudmundsson**
  149. **Malin Olofsdotter**
  150. **Per Nilsson**
  151. **Karin Olofsdotter**
  152. **Olof Persson**
  153. **Ingrid Olofsdotter**
  154. **Kristoffer Kristoffersson**
  155. **Kerstin Månsdotter**
  156. **Anders Olofsson**
  157. **Ingegärd Olofsdotter**
  158. **Per Olofsson**
  159. **Brita Nilsdotter**
  160. **Måns Jönsson**
  162. **Anders Jönsson**
  163. **Kerstin Haraldsdotter**
  168. **Jan Hemmingsson**
  169. **Sara Nilsdotter**
  170. **Johan Olufsson**
- VIII. 292. **Jon Elofsson** b. ca. 1611. Farmer at Renstad in Boda parish. Died in 1710, 99 years old.
293. **Birgitta Pålsdotter Brunskogia** b. ca. 1622 in Brunskog parish. The daughter of Paulus Nicolai Wermius (586) and Anna Andersdotter (587). She died in 1705.
294. **Andreas Andreæ Åman** b. in Åmått in Brunskog parish, the son of a farmer. He began his education in Karlstad's schools and was a student at Uppsala University in 1653 and was there till at least 1656. Called as an assistant in the parish of Kil in Värmland in 1658 and was ordained there in 1660. On March 8, 1669 he became vicar's assistant in Brunskog parish. He married Brita Brunell (295) and together they had at least five children, one of them being Maria (147). Died March 10, 1705.

295. **Brita Brunell** b. ca. 1648 in Brunskog, the daughter of the vicar in Brunskog Nicolaus Pauli Brunskogius (590) and his second wife Margareta Svensdotter Wibelia (591).
- IX. 586. **Paulus Nicolai Vermius** b. supposedly in Värmland province, the son of Nils Håkan Werme (1172). Paulus was first a vicar's assistant in the parish of Värmskog in Värmland province at the end of the 1590s. He lived at Hungvik in Högerud parish, also in Värmland. He was the first vicar in the newly-created parish of Brunskog carved out of the parish of Stavnäs. He began his duties in 1621, being named to his post in a letter signed February 25, 1621 by Queen Kristina, the widow of Charles IX. He died on March 27, 1642 in Brunskog.
587. **Anna Andersdotter** alive in 1661. Had at least four children including Nicolaus Pauli Brunskogius (590) and Birgitta (293).
  590. **Nicolaus Pauli Brunskogius** b. probably in Högerud parish September 8, 1615. Son of Paulus Nicolai Vermius (586) and Anna Andersdotter (587). Studied in Karlstad and Skara and later was enrolled in the school in Västerås where he is listed as a pupil in 1632 and in 1635. He is listed as a student at Uppsala University in 1635 and 1638. Became vicar's assistant in Brunskog in 1640 and vicar in the same parish on March 9, 1668. He died in 1677. Married for the first time to Birgitta Brunia, the daughter of the vicar in Kil Parish, Christophorus Svenonis. They seem to have had three children. His second marriage was to Margareta Svensdotter Wibelia (591) and with her he had at least 10 children, the third of which was Brita Brunell (295).
  591. **Margareta Svensdotter Wibelia** b. ca. 1626, the daughter of Sveno Andreæ Wibelius (1182) and his first wife (name unknown). Probably born in Sunne parish. Died in Brunskog on June 18, 1699.
- X.1172. **Nils Håkan Werme** lived in Värmland province. Supposedly the son of Håkan Werme (2344).
1180. (same as #586)
  1181. (same as #587)
  1182. **Sveno Andreæ Wibelius** b. ca. 1592 in Bulltorp, parish of Viby in the province of Närke (the parish lies about 20 miles SSW of the city of Örebro). His father was a farmer. He was a vicar's assistant in Sunne and Ämtervik (in Värmland province) in 1618 and became vicar of Brunskog parish on February 12, 1643. He resigned his

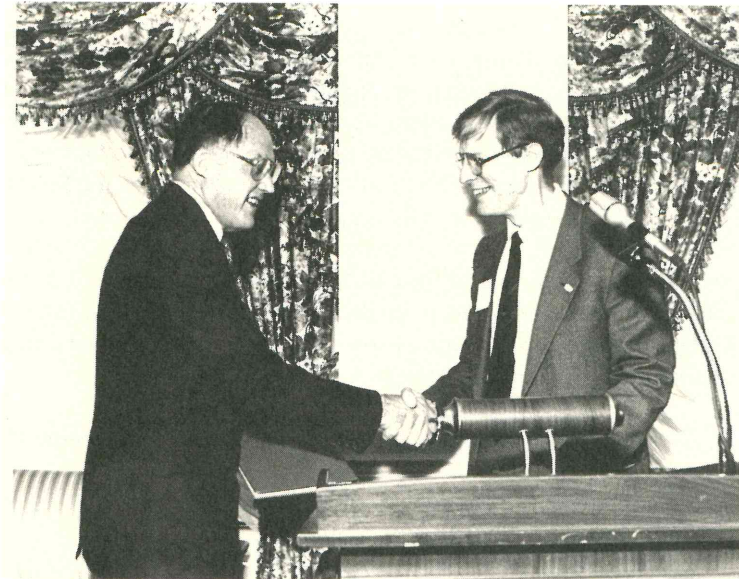
position on February 18, 1668 because of "the infirmities of old age" and died August 10, 1668. He called himself Sveno Andreae, Sveno Andreae Wibelius and Sveno Andreae Nericius at different times in his life. His children all took the name Wibelius (females: Wibelia), however. He had eight or perhaps nine children by his first marriage. His second wife was Anna Andersdotter (587), the widow of Paulus Nicolai Wermius (586), his predecessor.

- XI.2344. **Håkan Werme** was a sheriff on the royal estate of Kronoberg in Växjö in the province of Småland. (The county of Kronoberg takes its name from this estate.) Later he held a similar position in the judicial district of Trögd in the province of Uppland. He was beheaded in Uppsala in 1558.

### Sources

Parish records at the District Archives of Gothenburg and Vadstena, as well as the SVAR Collection in Ramsele. Anders Edestam, *Karlstads stifts herdaminne från medeltiden till våra dagar*, I-V (Karlstad 1965-1975).

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The author, Christopher Olsson, congratulates Chief Justice William Rehnquist