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My Swedish Connections

Frances Froberg Wooley*

This is the story of how I found my Swedish relations.

Shortly after the beginning of my search a few years ago in order to fill the gaps on my husband's pedigree chart, I decided I would try to obtain information concerning my Swedish grandfather.

At this point in time, the only thing I actually knew was that Olof Froberg (Fröberg), my grandfather, had gone to sea as a young man. The story I had been told was as he left Sweden, his mother stood on a hill above him waving her apron in farewell. He was never able to return to his home in Sweden. On one of his sea voyages he had met my grandmother who was traveling from Norway to the United States. They were married in Chicago, Cook County, IL in 1880.

With only the above information and the year of his birth, obtained from his marriage license, which was 1856, I submitted a query to *SAG*. A response was received sent by the late Dr. Jan Vegelius of the Department of Statistics at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He provided some information about the name Froberg (Fröberg) and gave me names and addresses of nine individuals bearing this surname. I wrote letters to all these people but received only one reply, which turned out to be a non-relative.

In the meantime, in a collection of postal cards, which my grandmother Froberg had given me when I was a child, I found two which had been sent from Sweden and which were written in the Swedish language. I located someone who could translate them and learned that they had been sent from Härnösand in northern Sweden. They mentioned some changes which had occurred in a building which had been done since my grandfather last had been there (the restoration of the Cathedral of Härnösand). They were signed by Hanna Fröberg. This was exciting and so I sent this information to Dr. Vegelius together with the one reply I had received from the listing he had sent me.

Dr. Vegelius wrote again. He had continued to work on my query and with the additional information I had furnished him, he made several inquiries on my behalf. The following is the text of his next letter:

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“I went to our city library and asked to be shown the telephone directory for the province of Ångermanland, located in the north of Sweden. In the Ullånger telephone area, which also contained the listings for Nora Parish, I found a dozen people named Fröberg.

In the afternoon I called the church in Nora and the person who answered, (probably the clergyman), mentioned that the only Fröberg he found in Nora having a telephone was Per Fröberg in Frök.

I phoned Per Fröberg, who said that there had been Fröbergs in Utvik, a village in Nora Parish, but he did not know where their descendants lived. He recommended that I call Sture Frölén in Härnösand, whose uncle had married a daughter of Dora Fröberg from Utvik. After a long search in the telephone book he found Sture’s number.

I called Sture Frölén and he could give me telephone numbers to several children of Dora Fröberg Nilsson.

Finally I called Dora’s daughter, Aina Nilsson Lindström, who confirmed that her grandparents had lived in Utvik in Nora Parish. She became very interested in getting a letter from you. She says she is not too good at reading English, but she has a daughter who could help her.”

I assure my readers that I will always be deeply indebted to Dr. Vegelius as Aina Lindström and I have corresponded for several years. From the pedigree that follows one can determine our relationship.

Then on Christmas Day 1991, an early morning call announced that Aina’s daughter, Gun-Marie Sohlin had just arrived in Ft. Myers (where I live) and she wanted to meet me. She was on leave from her duties as a member of the Swedish delegation of the United Nations interim forces stationed in Lebanon. My husband and I immediately went to the motel where she was staying and after introductions, invited her back to our home for the balance of her visit in Florida.

Then another surprise. Gun-Marie’s daughter, Charlotte, was attending high school as an exchange student in Spokane, WA. Her mother made a few phone calls and arrangements were made for her to fly into Ft. Myers. Within hours we had met two Swedish relatives, whom we had not known of before. Soon after these two relatives had returned to their respective homes, a phone call from Sweden informed us that Gun-Marie’s mother, Aina Lindström, was planning to fly to Florida on 1 June. My Swedish family just kept growing and growing.

It was a long time from the first part of January until 1 June. Many overseas telephone calls were made - many letters and maps were sent and received. Explicit directions had to be given as Aina and her party would fly into Ft. Lauderdale on Florida's East Coast, rent a car and then drive across the state to Ft. Myers. It would be after dark before they would reach our home. None of the party had ever been to America before. The hours of 1 June 1992 passed very slowly.

Finally, a car pulled up outside our home, The doors opened and for the first time in my life, I met my half-cousin from Sweden - a relative, who until a couple of years ago I hadn't known even existed. It was truly an exciting and awesome experience.

Those who came were Aina and her husband Werner Lindström. Neither of them speak English although they do understand a little. Aina's sister, Esly Syrén, sometimes acted as a translator, but it was difficult. Aina's granddaughter, however, Petra Sohlin, and her fiancée, Peter Westin, speak very good English, since they had learned it in school and they did most of the translating.

Not only did Aina bring me many gifts, typical of Sweden, she even brought me several jars of home-made jam, that she had made in her own kitchen. She also brought the name and address of yet another member of our mutual family - a granddaughter of my grandfather's sister. Since my grandfather's sister had thirteen living children, I now shall have many more Swedish cousins to attempt to find.

Aina and I poured over photo albums and exchanged notes on what we each knew of our grandparents and their families. We talked of her grandchildren and of mine. She taught me a few words of the Swedish language and I tried to teach her some English phrases. Getting acquainted with each other was not difficult. We had a most enjoyable time together.

The visit with my Swedish relatives has ended and they have returned to their homes in Härnösand and Uppsala. To say that this was one of the most important and exciting events in my lifetime is an understatement. From not ever knowing of any Swedish relatives, I now have dozens! And now is the time to begin planning my trip to the land of my forefathers.

Should anyone reading this account be a relative or have information that can be added to my family history, I would certainly be interested in hearing from them. And again, my thoughts go to the late Dr. Vegelius, grateful for all the time and energy he spent on my behalf. It was he who encouraged me to write this account of how I found my Swedish connections.

Pedigree of the Fröberg Family

Tab. 1

Olof Fröberg, born in Springare, Säbrå Parish (Vn.) 25 Jan. 1824; d. in Härnö (Vn.) 21 June 1879. M. (1) 19 Nov. 1847 **Anna Brita Strindholm**, b. in Härnö 22 Nov. 1825; d. in Härnö 1 Jan. 1876. M. (2) in March 1877 **Brita Greta Lindström**, b. 21 July 1845; d. 8 July 1921.

Children in the first marriage:

1. Johan Fröberg, b. 3 March 1848; d. the same day.
2. Israel Fröberg, b. 4 April 1849; went to sea 1870.
3. Johanna Fröberg, b. 10 June 1854; d. 12 Jan. 1935; m. 10 Feb. 1876 Jonas Fredrik Lundin.
4. **Olof Fröberg**, b. 3 Sept. 1856 (see Tab. 2).
5. Brita Cajsa Fröberg, b. 29 Sept. 1861; d. 17 Feb. 1872.

Children in the second marriage:

1. **Anders Gustaf Fröberg**, b. 22 Feb. 1878 (see Tab. 3).
2. Johan Fröberg, twin, b. 8 June 1879; d. 24 July 1879.
3. Louisa Fröberg, twin, b. 8 June 1879; d. 26 July 1879.

Tab. 2

Olof Fröberg, called himself **Froberg** in America. Born in Härnö (Vn.) 3 Sept. 1856 (s. of Olof Fröberg in his first marriage, see Tab. 1); d. in Benton Harbor, Berrien County, MI 25 Feb. 1925. Went to sea 21 Aug. 1872; arr. in the U.S. about 1873; settled in Chicago, where he resided at 2457 Ontario Street; naturalized a U.S. citizen in Cook County, IL 6 Oct. 1896; moved to Benton Harbor, MI 1908, where he became a patternmaker at Star Pattern Co. M. in Chicago, Cook County, IL 21 Sept. 1880 Helena Andersen, b. in Norway. He is the grandfather of **Frances Froberg Wooley**.

Tab. 3

Anders Gustaf Fröberg, b. in Härnö (Vn.) 22 Feb. 1878 (s. of Olof Fröberg in his second marriage, see Tab. 1); d. ?; m. ca. 1899. He was the father of Dora Fröberg Nilsson, who in turn was the mother of **Aina Nilsson Lindström**.

Aina Nilsson Lindström's grandfather and Frances Froberg Wooley's grandfather were thus half-brothers.