

3-1-1991

The Nathorst Brothers in America

Elisabeth Thorsell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Thorsell, Elisabeth (1991) "The Nathorst Brothers in America," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 11 : No. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol11/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

The Nathorst Brothers in America

Elisabeth Thorsell*

My mother's paternal family, the Nathhorst/Nathorst clan, in the United States known as Nathurst, descends from a city physician in Stockholm, Johan Teofil Nathhorst, who probably was born in Silesia, Germany, 1723, and according to a family tradition, in the city of Breslau, today known as Wroclaw in Poland. He and his younger brother, Gottlieb Erdman, settled in Stockholm in the middle of the 18th century, where Johan Teofil II, the son of the city physician, was born 1760. He followed in his father's footsteps, became a surgeon and then regimental physician of the Royal Småland Cavalry Regiment.

During his service with the Swedish army he became acquainted with Hedvig Meurling, the daughter of the dean of the Lutheran Church in Stora Åby in Östergötland, a member of the well-known clergy family of Kristdala Parish (Kalm.). Through her contacts with her maternal family, the Wrangels of Lindeberg, Nathhorst was able to buy an estate, Knutstorp, in Flisby Parish (Jön.), which earlier had belonged to the Wrangels.¹

The young people now settled in at Knutstorp, where two sons were born, and everything seemed to be going quite well. Nathhorst, the regimental surgeon, then initiated the purchase of the old estate of Näs in Adelöv Parish (Jön.), but before he could complete the transaction, both he and their younger son, Axel Ludvig, died. Hedvig Meurling, now a widow, moved to the city of Jönköping, where she could supervise the education of her remaining son, Johan Teofil III. But already in 1804 she also died, leaving as an orphan a son, barely ten years old.

The young Johan Teofil now was placed in the home of his maternal aunt, Maria Juliana Meurling, and her husband, Claes Livijn, a councillor in Sweden's War Department, who resided at Säby Norregård in Säby Parish (Jön.). Ultimately Johan Teofil matriculated at the University of Uppsala, where he came in contact with some of the literary lights of the day, people like Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom and Samuel Hedborn.

*Elisabeth Thorsell, a professional Swedish genealogist, resides at Hästskovägen 45, 175 39 Järfälla, Sweden

He finished his studies, took the civil service examination, in order to enter one of the civil administration's many sections, among these, the National Archives. Being a young man of considerable financial means, he did not take his duties too seriously, spending most of the time traveling or at his estate of Näs in Småland.

At the home of his maternal aunt, Maria Juliana Meurling, he eventually became acquainted with one of her young and attractive maid servants, Lovisa Sophia Jönsdotter, who according to *Biographiskt Lexicon*, was known for her "beauty and noble virtues", but nevertheless was the fatherless daughter of a simple soldier.² Despite family opposition, Johan Teofil married Lovisa Sophia in Copenhagen 1817 and settled down at Näs, where, between the years of 1817 and 1839 a number of children were born - in all sixteen of them, eight sons and eight daughters. In the meanwhile Johan Teofil had turned his attention to his estate, which he began to develop in a scientific manner. In 1822 he established a sheep breeding station and spent much of his time abroad for the purpose of improving his land and upgrading the quality of his farm stock. By and by he became well-known in his field and in 1844 was elected permanent secretary of the Royal Swedish Agricultural Academy in Stockholm. In this connection he eventually moved from Näs to the capital, but by this time the oldest children had left the parental home and some had left for America.³

1. Johan (John) Teofil Nathurst.

The oldest son was Johan Teofil IV, born at Näs 2 Oct. 1817, who emigrated to America 1837, having received a passport in Visby 23 July for travel to Boston. He settled in Ohio and resided there at a number of places - 1846 in Mount Pleasant, 1848 in Finneytown, near Cincinnati, and according to the Federal Census of 1850, in Millcreek Township in Hamilton County.

Later John moved to Nashville, TN with his family and is to be found in the Federal Census of 1860 as residing there as a "gravel roofer", employing a Swedish maid, Sofia Swenson, 34 years old.

After 1860 John moved to Rising Fawn in Dade County, GA, just south of Chattanooga, TN and very close to the Alabama border. By the time the 1880 Federal Census was taken, dated 8 June, he had separated from his wife, and was residing with his daughter Fannie and her husband in Rising Fawn, James Russey, as well as his daughter Kate. The census names him as being born in England and his occupation as that of a gardener.

Oddly enough, John is also listed under the date of 9 June 1880, absent from the city, but spending part of his time living with his wife Charlotte in La Porte, IN, together with his daughters Hattie and Jennie, and part of the time living in a boardinghouse in the same city with his daughter Louise.

The Chattanooga city directories show that John arrived there before 1894, when his name occurs for the first time. He remained in Chattanooga the remainder of his life, residing with his son-in-law James Russey, who in 1887 had become a widower, but who had remarried. Despite this fact, he took care of John until John's death 21 May 1896, which occurred after he had been fatally injured in a streetcar accident.

John was married in Ohio 9 April 1844 to Charlotte Ross, who was born in Cincinnati 22 Nov. 1816, and died in La Porte, IN 21 July 1906. The couple had the following children:

- Louise Marie, born in Ohio 31 July 1845.⁴
- Fannie Sophia, born in Ohio 16 June 1848.
- Harry Ross, born in Ohio 7 Oct. 1850.
- Charlotte Hattie, born in Tennessee 29 Dec. 1853.
- Kate Jennie, born in Nashville, TN 27 Sept. 1857.

2. Axel Reinhold Nathurst.

Axel Reinhold was born 27 Dec. 1818 and on 18 Aug.. 1839 he procured an exit visa from his home parish of Adelöv, destined for America. It was not until 9 June 1840, however, that he received a passport from the authorities in Stockholm for travel abroad.⁵ He arrived in New York 15 Sept. that year aboard the vessel *George*, of Göteborg.

On the ship's manifest he is listed as a mechanic.⁶ When his mother died in 1854 he was back in Sweden and remained there until 1865, when he returned to the United States and settled in Humboldt, KS, where he supposedly died unmarried 13 Aug. 1881. He can not be found in the 1880 Federal Census. According to Charodotes Meurling's work on the Meurling family, he became a civil engineer and superintendent of an agricultural school.⁷

3. Rudolf Amadeus Nathurst.

Rudolf Amadeus was born at Näs in Adelöv 24 June 1820 and when but a baby supposedly was dropped by a nursemaid, so that he became a hunchback. He became a student at the University of Uppsala 1843 and in 1849 emigrated to America, arriving in New York 3 Nov., aboard the *Gleanor* out of Stockholm. On the manifest he is listed as as chemist.⁸

According to the 1850 Federal Census he was living with his brother John in Millcreek Township in Hamilton County, OH. He then moved to Nashville, TN and in the 1860 Federal Census is listed as living there at a boardinghouse as as "roofer". According to the Meurling genealogy he operated a delicatessen, whereas Örnberg's genealogical tables say that he was the manufacturer of roofing materials.

Both sources agree, however, that he died in Nashville 26 Dec. 1861.⁹

4. Hjalmar Otto Nathorst.

He was born at Näs in Adelöv 10 Sept. 1821. At the age of 17 he decided to emigrate to his brother John in America, but the vessel, aboard which he was journeying, foundered off the coast of Skagen, Denmark and he returned to Sweden. He devoted his life to agriculture and among other things became the founder of the Alnarp Agricultural Institute in Skåne. Because of the shipwreck he experienced, his descendants remained in Sweden, including the author of this article.

Hjalmar Otto's oldest son, however, Hjalmar Teofil Nathurst, born in Bergshammar Parish (Söd.) 19 July 1848, emigrated to the United States 1871, settling in Philadelphia as a dentist.¹⁰

A younger son, Carl Evert Nathurst, born in Ödeborg Parish (Älvs.) 20 June 1861, emigrated to the U.S. 1881. He worked at several railroad construction projects in America. During the Spanish-American War he volunteered his services and went to the Philippines.

He eventually settled there, entered the Philippine constabulary, rising in the ranks to become a brigadier general. He and his family were captured by the Japanese forces during World War II, and all of them perished when the prison camp, where they were incarcerated, was set afire by the Japanese in 1945.¹¹

5. Ejnar Oswald Nathurst.

Ejnar Oswald was born at Näs 22 May 1836, the 14th of 16 children. In 1853 he emigrated to the United States in the company of a male servant, Anders Andersson. They departed from Stockholm and came first to Mobile, AL. Eventually he settled in Nashville, TN, where, according to the Federal Census of 1860, he was employed as a bookkeeper. Later he became the superintendent of a coal mine in Tracy City, Grundy County, TN. He died there during the autumn of 1903.

While on board the ship to America he met his future wife, Metta Gossman, born in Bremen, Germany 11 June 1836, whom he married 23 July 1857. She died in 1911. In this marriage there were seven children:

Emilie Louise, born in Tennessee 29 Nov. 1858; died 1863.

Eliza Sofia, born 1860; died 1863.

John Teofil, born 1861; died 1863.

Charles William, born 1864; died 1865.

Hugh Lee, born 7 July 1866.

Metta Henrietta, born 13 Dec. 1868.

Agnes Theresia, born 29 March 1871.

Through Oswald Nathurst's son Hugh Lee, the Nathurst name is carried on in America.¹²

Several members and descendants of the Nathorst family, some with variant spellings of the surname, have emigrated to the United States. I would be very grateful for information concerning such individuals.

¹ Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, I-IX, (Stockholm 1925-1936), IX, pp. 19-20.

² *Biographiskt Lexicon öfver namnkunnige svenska män*, I-XXIII (Örebro and Uppsala 1842-1857), IX, p.330.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.329-335.

⁴ According to the Federal Census of 1860 for Nashville, TN.

⁵ Ch(arodotes) Meurling, *Olof Meurlings stamträd* (Lund), p.67; Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in U.S. Ports (except New York)* (Stockholm and St. Paul, MN 1979), p. 100; Edward Neville Emmons, *The Emmons Genealogy* (Syracuse, NY 1905).

⁶ Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York (SPANY)* (Stockholm and Chicago 1967), pp. 34-35; 209.

⁷ *Olof Meurlings stamträd*, p.67.

⁸ Olsson, *SPANY*, pp.35; 208-209.

⁹ *Olof Meurlings stamträd*, p.67; (L.M.V.Örnberg), *Svensk släktkalender och Svenska ättartal*, I-XIV (Stockholm and Vadstena 1885-1908), V, p.357.

¹⁰ *Olof Meurlings stamträd*, p.67.

¹¹ I am grateful to Mrs. Rita W. Beine of Atlanta, GA, who has furnished much of the information for this article from census records, vital records and other materials. I am also indebted to Dr. Erik Wikén of Uppsala, who has been helpful in furnishing information regarding the emigration of the Nathorst brothers.

¹² Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Svenska släktkalendern* (Stockholm 1913), pp. 810-813.