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Höganäs, Sweden, in the 1800's and the coal mines

BY P. ROBERT WILLEY

Sometime during our 46-year genealogy journey as we were learning about ancestors who lived in Höganäs, came the discovery that four generations of family members had worked in the local coal mines from 1797 to 1890.

History of the Coal Mines

Höganäs began to change in the 1700's when a high concentration of pit coal was discovered in the area, leading to coal being quarried from an open pit and from the beaches at low tide.

In 1797 Thomas Stawford, an engineer from Castle, England, came to Höganäs and founded "Höganäs *Stenkolsverk*," also known as "The Company."

From 1795–1831 he kept a meticulously written 961-page diary of his work. Today known as "Höganäs AB," it has become the world's largest producer of metal powders. Stawford also invented the first railway (horse-drawn) in Sweden. By 1802 a channel was dug from Ryd (a mine village) to the harbor to transport enormous amounts of water pumped from the mine as well as being a transport way for small horses pulling barges down to the harbor. The mine shaft for this company was in use from 1876 to 1929.

Over time, coal proved to not always be a successful business enterprise since it was difficult to mine and often of poor quality.

However clay was plentiful. Consequently mining clay to be used in the production of bricks, earthenware, and roofing tiles became the growing industry. The kilns were fired with the coal from the mines.

In the 1800's due to the growing brick & ceramic industry, Höganäs continued to have a shortage of labor, so potters from other towns in Skåne were encouraged to move to Höganäs. However, more workers were needed so Russian prisoners-of-war from the 1808–1809 war with Russia, children from the orphanages in Gothenburg, as well as local children from the

nearby towns were recruited to work in the mines.

In 1909 a separate company *Höganäs Keramik* was founded and continues to this day. Eventually the town became famous for its ceramic products. Our family has purchased items from this factory during our two visits to see relatives in Höganäs and learn about our Swedish heritage.



A typical "Höganäskrus," a stoneware ceramic jar. Possibly a 12 liter one.

Ancestors who worked in the coal mines:

Over the years we discovered seven ancestors who worked in the coal mines.

August Karlsson, employee #708, b. 20 Nov. 1845 in Voxtorp.

Per Larsson as a "murare" or mason employee #91, b. 8 Aug. 1856 in Höganäs.

Ernst Larsson employee #1057 in 1900, b. 31 July 1885 in Höganäs.

Daniel Qvistberg; we believe he was the first foreman appointed by Thomas Stawford and worked in the mine when it opened in 1797. He was b. 2 Jan. 1774, and d. 6 April 1818. The funeral was on 12 April 1818.

Jonas Qvistberg, employee #182, b. 24 May 1805 in Väsby, d. 30 Aug. 1873 in Höganäs.

Johannes Svensson, employee #276 in 1871, b. 6 Mar. 1835 in Billeberga. He died on 19 June 1901 in Höganäs as an invalid.

Martin Svensson, employee #235 in 1884, b. 20 Jul. 1872 in Höganäs.

Sigfrid Svensson, employee #841 in 1890, b. 17 Feb. 1878 in Höganäs.

We have no record identifying which coal mines our ancestors worked in.

The medal

In 1898 our great-grandfather Johannes Svensson received a medal commemorating the 100th anniversary of the "Höganäs *Stenkolsbolag* (HBS) Coal Company."

100th Anniversary Medal



Front side – "Oscar II, King of Sweden and Norway". Sweden & Norway were united 1814–1905.



Back side - "From Royal Patriotic Society to Johannes Svensson for long and faithful service."

för <i>Höganäs braks</i> Församling. 1890		De utflyttades namn, stånd, embete, yrke.		Ställe, hvarifrån utflyttad.	Ort, hvarthän inflyttad, (socken i Län, stad.)	Manor.	Qvinnor.
46	9/10		<i>Papst</i>			33	31
		283	<i>Arb. Anton Julius Grotten 72</i>	91	351	<i>Nickarika</i>	1
>47	9/10	205	<i>Martin Svensson 72</i>	235			1
48		202	<i>Karl Johan Henrik Höglund Ag (fr)</i>	229			1
49		220	<i>Böken Olof Engvall 74</i>	265			1
50		281	<i>Thickum Peter Jönsson Jönsson 75</i>	396			1
51		281	<i>Arbet Carl Larsson</i>	703			1

Höganäs (M) BI:3 (1874-1894) Page 77 (Höganäs Moving-out records 1890) (Arkiv Digital).



Thomas Stawford (1766-1831).

Our grandfather Martin (Svensson) Swanson in 1890 immigrated to Worcester, Massachusetts, and brought with him a copy of the book “*Minnesblad till 1797 Höganäs 1897 100-års-jubileum Samlade af H A Muller*” (in Swedish) published in 1897 commemorating the 100th anniversary of this company. This work contains historic photographs of Höganäs, the ceramic factory, and men working in the coal mines.

There were 48 mine shafts in Höganäs from 1797 to 1961.

The largest mine was “Shaft Prins Gustav Adolf” 1895-1961, and it was 100 meters deep. It was a double shaft mine (one shaft for coal, one for pumping). This shaft is now a part of the Höganäs museum, and open to visitors.

The “Brors Backe” shaft was worked from 1804 to 1854, and was 53 meters deep.

The shaft “King Oscar II” was opened in 1872 (the year he became king) and was 101 meters deep. No information on when it was discontinued.

The “Alströmer” shaft was worked from 1877 to 1909. It was 78 meters deep.

The oldest shaft was just called “A,” and was worked from 1794 to 1799. It was excavated in 2011, and the coal seam was found on the 5 meter level, under a thick layer of sandstone. The shaft was so low that the miners could not work standing, but had to work on their knees. It was dark in the shaft and the miners might have had a tar stick in their mouths to provide a little light.



This picture from the Höganäs museum shows some of the working conditions for the miners.

Bibliography:

Daily Diary 1795 to 1831 (Stawford's Dagböcker-Swedish); Höganäs Stenkolsverk; Thomas Stawford; Höganäs, Sweden.

Höganäs Stenkolsbolag Coal Company (HBS) 1898: 100th Anniversary Medal given to Johannes Svensson (Swedish); Höganäs, Sweden.

Höganäs AB: röster under 200 år / by Roland Möllerfors (in Swedish, 1997). Also in English as *Höganäs-Voices Through 200 Years*, also by Roland Möllerfors (1997).

Minnesblad till Höganäs 100-års-jubileum: 1797-1897 / samlade af H. A. Mueller (in Swedish, printed in 1897).

Note:

In 1997 a revised copy of this book was published in English titled *Höganäs-Voices Through 200 Years* commemorating the 200th anniversary using many of the original photographs in the earlier ver-

sion. This book was loaned to me for review in 2004. Our communications at that time with the Information Specialist at the Höganäs AB Library was significant in our genealogy research because he shared a detailed history of the company and its historical impact within the community.

Höganäs

The modern logotype of the present Höganäs company.

See web address on p.26.

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