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# The Alfred Gävert story

## A blacksmith and laborer tells his life story

BY ALFRED GÄVERT

TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER OLSSON  
AND ELISABETH THORSELL

Sometimes there was light; sometimes there was darkness. In Saxehammar (Dala)<sup>1</sup> I was a blacksmith in a smelter. On 1 November, 1898, I had to move because of wicked and evil comrades, so I rented a couple of rooms in Stora Saxe (W)<sup>2</sup> for a year during which time I continued at Fagersta (U) (iron works) as an extra worker. In the fall of 1899 we moved to Nor (W)<sup>3</sup> and rented a couple of rooms. I continued to work at Fagersta until Easter 1900 when I moved to Jäder's *Bruk* (U)<sup>4</sup> as a scrap smelter. In May of that same year my wife and two youngest sons came to Jäder and at the first Christmas we had our older sons Edvin, Valfrid, and Karl there to visit us, which was quite fun.

Edvin is in Fagersta, Valfrid is in Västerrås, and Karl is in Eskilstuna. But this place – namely Jäder – was not a long stay because there were layoffs due to the poor times with no orders. I and several around me were without work. In the winter of 1901, in February, son Carl came home, even he was without work. On the third of April that same year he traveled to America but I, his father, still lived in Jäder despite many difficulties, and worked on the railway at Vanneboda (Väsm.)<sup>5</sup>, traveling there Mondays and home on Saturday evenings until the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1901 when my family and I moved to Avesta (W)<sup>6</sup> and rented two rooms without having a job, a grim and melancholic time for us (but) I found temporary work as an assistant for fourteen days. Then I moved to Engelsberg, Västervåla (U)<sup>7</sup> and smelted scrap metal. The first of August 1901 I had my oldest son with me as a smelter but there was a lack of water after we had smelted for several weeks. Then we dug out slag from a disused blast furnace. Edvin, Alrik, and I lived together in Engelsberg, where I had grown up as a child and now I am 49

years old. On 6 April 1908 I broke my right leg in the smithy in Engelsberg; I was then in my 55<sup>th</sup> year. Then in the fall when I could work it was over for smithy work because of the poor economic conditions.

I got temporary work in a small smithy as a sledger for several weeks until I became ill with severe hemorrhoids. I was operated on at the hospital in Norberg (Väsm.)<sup>8</sup> and was laid up for four weeks until I came home on 21 January 1909, weak and emaciated. But I recovered quickly. I worked here and there wherever there was work available and rented lodgings from the landlord, iron works owner Timm.

On 15 June 1909 Carl came home from America where he had been for over eight years. He was home until 21 August when he returned. It was a short time, but dear. He is now a pastor in Salina, Kansas, in America. When he was home there was the general work stoppage, the so-called Big Strike throughout Sweden.

These children God has blessed us both with. Johanna and Alfred Gäfvert, Jan. 12, 1902. Our betrothal day was not determined, but our marriage was celebrated Saturday 4 Sept. 1875. On Saturday 4 September 1900 we marked 25 years together, which I myself bore witness to on 18 July 1901.

*Alfred Gäfvert*, and on 4 September 1925 is our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of living together.

Alfred's son *Carl* became a Covenant pastor in the U.S. He married and had a family. His daughter Dagmar (1913–2008) married Nils William Olsson (1909–2007), founder of SAG. During WW II Nils William spent time in Sweden, and met with his wife's uncles. He copied Alfred's story, which he had written in son Alriks's family Bible and which has now been preserved by daughter Karna Olsson.



*Alfred and Johanna and their sons. Photo taken by Gustaf Ahlström in Norberg. Photo in Karna Olsson, Belfast, ME collection.*

### Footnotes:

- 1) Söderbärke (W) AIIa:1 (1896-1909) Image 1270 / page 114.
- 2) Söderbärke (W) AIIa:1 (1896-1909) Image 1070 / page 94.
- 3) Söderbärke (W) AIIa:1 (1896-1909) Image 3440 / page 331.
- 4) Arboga *landsförsamling* (U) AIIa:1a (1899-1907) Image 2440 / page 230.
- 5) In Näsby parish, (U) quite close to Jäder.
- 6) This very short-time move does not show up in the Avesta church records.
- 7) Västervåla (U) AII:1b (1900-1914) Image 880 / page 307. Alfred is now called a farm worker. Modern spelling is Ängelsberg.
- 8) Norberg is a town about 12 miles from Ängelsberg, and had the closest hospital then.

## Alfred Gävert and family

**Father.** Johan *Alfred* Gävert was born 4 Jan. 1853 in Larsbo, Söderbärke, (W), son of the charcoal worker (*koldräng*) Anders Johan Gävert and his wife Greta Lisa Pällander (Söderbärke [W] C:8 [1827-1858] Image 279 [Arkiv Digital]).

As a small boy he and his family moved to Ängelsberg iron works in Västervåla parish in Västmanland (U). After this move Alfred is always recorded as having been born in Västervåla.

As Alfred's own story ends mainly in 1910, even though he mentions his and Johanna's 50th anniversary in 1925. They both lived long lives. In 1914 he and Johanna and grandson Karl Edvin Gävert, born 10 June 1901 in Söderbärke, moved to a cottage Hvilan #6 on Stabäck lands, close to Ängelsberg (Västervåla (U) AII:1b (1900-1914) Image 1260 / page 345 [Arkiv Digital]).

Alfred died there 8 Apr. 1933 (Swedish Death Index 7).

**Mother.** Johanna Abrahamsdotter was born 29 July 1853 in Stora Saxe, Söderbärke, (W), daughter of charcoal burner Abraham Jacobsson and his wife Anna Persdotter (Söderbärke (W) C:8 [1827-1858] Image 287 [Arkiv Digital]).

Johanna and Alfred were married in Söderbärke on 4 Sept. 1875.

Johanna died 12 July 1937 at the Old Folk's Home (*Ålderdomshemmet*) in Västervåla (Swedish Death Index 7).

### Children:

Son *Johan Edvin*, born 14 May 1876 in Saxehammar, Söderbärke. Died 10 April 1948 in Änglikbenning, Västervåla (U). He was the father of Karl Edvin Gävert, who was a foster child with Alfred and Johanna. His mother Hilda Sofia Eriksson seems to have died young, and was not married to Johan Edvin.

Daughter *Anna Alfrida*, born 18 Sept. 1877 in Saxehammar, died there 6 Sept. 1878 of scarlet fever.

Son *Walfrid Emanuel* born 13 Dec. 1879 in Saxehammar. He emigrated on 2 May 1903 from Västerås Domkyrkoförsamling to America. He left Göteborg on 15 May 1903 with destination Bridgeport, CT, U.S.A.

Son *Carl Adolf* was born 17 June 1882 in Saxehammar. He emigrated in 1901 from Eskilstuna (D) with destination New York.

Son *Paul Alexander* was born 12 Dec. 1884 in Saxehammar, he died there 15 Oct 1885 from stroke.

Son *Alrik Alexander* was born 16 April 1887 at Saxehammar, he died 25 Aug. 1954 at Stabäck 2:80, Västervåla (U). Son *Paul Sigfrid* was born 1 Jan. 1891 in Saxehammar, he died 1 March 1962 in Änglikbenning, Västervåla, (U).

### The Gäfvert family

The Gäfvert family is one of the largest blacksmiths' families in Sweden. Judging from the spelling of the surname it is supposedly of Flemish origin. The first member of the family in Swedish records is Andreas Gävert, who around 1627–32 worked at the Forsmark iron works in Uppland. He had at least three sons, Anders, Klas and Jakob, who all started different branches of the family.

Anders had sons Jakob, b. around 1600, son Henrik, alive in 1660, and Jost, b. around 1605.

Alfred, b. 1853, seems to belong to the Anders' branch.

The name can be spelled many ways: Gaevent, Gevert, Gäfvert, Gävert, Jäfvert. In the U.S. the spelling Gavert seems to be the mostly common one.

Source: *Släkten Gevert*, by Örjan Hedenberg, in "Svenska Smedsläkter", volume 1 (2003). Published by the Blacksmiths Society.

### The Engelsberg /Ängelsberg iron works in Västmanland, Sweden. One of the Unesco World Heritage Sites.



Buildings still stand at the Ängelsberg former iron works (bruk). This picture shows to the, left the oven for roasting ore, and, to the right the blast furnace (masugn). Photo by Bengt Oberger.



The smithy, where Alfred and his father might have worked. Photo by Bengt Oberger.