

The Roots of Nels Swenson and his Family



Nels Swenson's native farm around 1900

In front Nels' brother Johannes, who then was the owner. The picture was taken about 20 years after Nels left.

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July, 2011

The farm that Nels came from

Introduction

Nels Swenson was born on a farm in Sweden in 1860. On that farm his ancestors had lived as long as since 1696. Relatives of Nels actually still live on it. The writer of this is the grandson of a brother of Nels' and the 9th generation that lives on the farm.

Nels left this farm in 1881 to emigrate to Minneapolis. His name in Sweden was Nils Svensson. In America he named himself Nels Swenson. Among his descendants are probably persons who might like to know about their Swedish heritage.

Personally I was brought up on the farm, but then I have had jobs in other parts of Sweden. In 1985 I could return to live here. Now I am retired and have had the opportunity to do research on the history of my farm and my ancestors. That resulted in a rather extensive report in Swedish. This is shorter report in English, written for Nels Swenson's descendants. Readers, who will find mistakes in the use of the English language are kindly asked to report them to me.

Background information

The place Tjörnarp

The farm buildings and its surroundings can be viewed on Google Earth at the position of 56°00'12" N and 13°37'08 E. The land belonging to the farm stretches from the buildings to a point at 56°00'22" N and 13°35'27".



Areal picture of the farm about 1990

Tjörnarp is situated in southern Sweden, in Skåne. Large parts of Skåne have very good fertile soils. It is probably the most important agricultural area in Sweden. In Tjörnarp, in Mid-Skåne not far from the fertile area, the situation is quite different. It is a stony and hilly landscape. In the old days, many people lived from farming even here. Now few people can do that. Forests are now dominating.

The nationality

Until 1658 this part of Sweden belonged to Denmark. After that, until about 1710, Denmark tried to get it back, while the Swedish authorities tried to introduce Swedish law and language. But the lower classes did then hardly have any idea of nationality. For them the change just meant new people to be obedient to, a new language, new taxes and new risks for being drafted to the army of the new king. That was what caused a resistance movement.

The church

In Sweden, until recently, there was a state church. It was Lutheran since about 1530. Around each church building there was a parish that everybody had to belong to.

The church also served the civil administration. The parish ministers kept books with records of births, marriages and deaths. Until about 1896 there were examinations on people's knowledge in Christianity as well as their ability to read, and all that was recorded in special books. When moving to another parish (or e g to America) one had to register it with the minister. Most of these "Church books" still exist, and they are now used for genealogic research. Some have got lost e g by fire. But most of them are now scanned and are available on internet.

It was compulsory to attend the church services. In the church the minister announced proclamations from the king and other authorities.

The society

In the old days the Swedish society was strictly divided into social classes. The nobility class owned large parts of the land. The farms that they owned, could only be owned by noblemen. All farms were subject to certain taxes (mostly specified in commodities, e g butter, cereals, fatted pigs and so on). But a farm owned by a nobleman had smaller taxes. Such farms were rented out to farmers at specified rents (also in commodities). Other farms were owned by the farmers themselves, who then paid higher taxes. Still other farmers rented their farms from the state, and paid the rent and the tax to the state.

There was no democracy. One had to obey and look up to the king and other authorities.

Naming customs

In Sweden the farmers seldom had family names. The nobility had and also some merchants and craftsmen. Soldiers had special family names, which however not always were inherited to the next generation. A farm boy got his father's name + "sson" and a girl got her father's name + "sdotter" as second names. When a girl married, she kept her second name. People's first names were taken after some ancestor according to local rules. The result of this could be very small variations in names in an area.

The farm in the 17th and beginning of the 18th century

A nobility farm

Our farm was a nobility farm as far back as can be traced. It should be owned by a member of the nobility, and our ancestors were just tenants on it. This situation remained as long as until 1920, when my grandfather bought the farm. A reason why our family has lived so long on the same farm is probably, that they did not own it. They could not sell it, and the right to be a tenant seems to have been inherited.

The people on our farm were lucky enough not to live in the vicinity of the owners' estates. Because of that, they did not have to work on these estates, which for many other tenants were heavy burdens. The tax and the rent of the farm were specified, in commodities, by the court of the district. The owner could not raise the rent. In that way the situation was advantageous for the tenant. A skilled farmer, who got better results, kept it.

The farm is recorded in a tax registration book, “Decimantboken” in 1651, when the area still was Danish. It was actually a Swedish nobleman who then owned it. His name was Toer Bonde. There were two tenants on the farm, Niels Jennssenn and Peder Gunnessen. (The spelling was very variable in the old days.)

According to a record from 1663, five years after Skåne became Swedish, the farm was owned by a Måns Swab, a Danish nobleman, who had remained in Skåne, when Denmark had lost it.

A farm owned by the parish ministers

Oddly enough the farm later was owned by the minister of the parish, Arnoldus Arnoldii de Fine (Latin writing). He seems to have been the son of the conductor of the Royal Court Orchestra in Copenhagen. The fine family can be the reason why he was allowed to buy a nobility farm.

The farm was sold to the next minister, David Svensson Möllestedt, a tender and skillful man, who is said to have been successful in the difficult task of introducing the Swedish language and laws into the parish. Then his heirs sold the farm, in parts, to the next minister, Nicolaus Erman, who bought the last part of it in 1695. In 1696 there was a change of tenants and our ancestor Oluf Svensson moved in.

Erman is said to have been a very rigid minister. At one time he took the members of his parish to court for not fulfilling their duty of attending church services.

Erman owned two more farms and in 1707 he sold all three to a nobleman, Erich Magnus Lillienberg, for a certain amount of money and a big brown horse. The document of sale still exists. It specifies the rent and the tax that had to be paid by the tenant, in commodities and some money. This gives an idea of what was produced on the farm. It was certain amounts of butter, barley, rye, half a slaughtered fatted bull and other things.

Lillienberg owned a lot of farms around Tjörnarp, an estate in the neighboring parish and several estates in other parts of Sweden. He made his possessions a “fideikommiss”, which meant that it was protected by law from being sold out. It should be inherited according to specified rules, and the holders should only have the right to the yield. This system lasted until 1920, when the holder of the “fideikommiss” got the permit to sell it out.

A description of the farm in 1733

From 1733 there is a very thorough description of our farm and the neighboring farms. It consists of a map that shows every little field and the buildings. Every field was then given a specified value in a list. That was made by an official surveyor, and the object was to lower the tax.



Central part of Tjörnarp in 1733

There were only three farms around the church. Our's is no 2, which is situated on the same place as now. The church has been moved.

The description tells about bad sandy soil, low cereal yield, small hay yields, so that it was not possible to breed fatted bulls for sale and so on. Apparently not all of that was true but the tax was lowered.

In these days almost everything, that was needed, was produced on the farm. But to get some money to buy special things, it was common to breed bulls, which were sold to the cities. There was even an organized trade for that, all over the country and into other parts of Europe. Below is the evidence that the farm actually could produce bulls.

On the map can be seen, that the farm buildings at that time were situated on the same place where they still are. But those buildings are now replaced long ago.

The family in the 17th and beginning of the 18th century

Oluf Svensson's family

In Norra Rörum, Tjörnarp's neighboring parish in the northwest, Oluf Svensson and Gunilda Bentsdotter married in 1696. A note in the marriage book says that they then moved to Tjörnarp, and in a record covering our farm they can be found there. The parents of both of them were from Norra Rörum. The records are not complete, but they probably got the son Bengt, in 1697. In late 1698 Gunilda seems to have passed away, giving birth to a daughter, who survived and got her mother's name, Gunnil. (Spelling varied.)

In the year 1700 Oluf married Karna Swensdotter from Norra Rörum. But she passed away in about 1709. Then Oluf married once more, to Anna Månsdotter, a widow.

From the children Bengt took over the farm and Gunnil got married in Norra Rörum. Then there was at least one more child, a girl Boell, probably the daughter of Karna. Her further life is unknown.

The family of Oluf Svensson and Gunnill Bengtsdotter

Oluf Svensson

Born about 1669 in Norra Rörum, Eke.
Died after 1736 in Tjörnarp.
Married: May 3rd, 1696.

Father: **Sven** Nilsson.
Mother: **Hanna**.

Children:

- 1 **Bengt**, born about 1697 in Tjörnarp, died after 1768 in Tjörnarp.
- 2 **Gunnil**, born probably in 1698 in Tjörnarp, died in 1752 in Norra Rörum.

(Bent is the Danish form of the name Bengt in Swedish.)

Gunnill Bengtsdotter

Born in Norra Rörum, Syrkhult.
Died probably in 1698.

Father: **Bent** Nilsson, died before 1683?

The family in the later part of the 18th century

Bengt Olsson's family

The "Church books" of Tjörnarp's parish before 1783 were destroyed by fire. But it is possible to get information from the tax registers. They are however incomplete. It seems that Bengt's wife's name was Sissa and that they had seven children, Kierstina, Gunnel, Jäppa, Sven, Clemmed, Ingar and Nils. The oldest son, Jäppa, probably died early, as it was the second, Sven, who later took over the farm.

Besides the large family, still more people lived on the farm. A woman, Bengta, took care of her blind mother, whose name is not mentioned.

In 1758 the tax register seems dramatic. The son Sven Bengtsson had taken over the farm. He was still not married, which was unusual for that situation. But about the father, Bengt, there is a note, that he was old and that his body was quite broken. Some accident might have occurred, but probably he recovered, as he can be traced until 1769.

Sven Bengtsson's family

In 1762 Sven Bengtsson had married Kjerstina Pålsson from the village of Gunnarp in the parish of Tjörnarp.

Kjerstina did however pass away already in 1779, and after her death a very detailed inventory was made. It includes everything on the farm down to the tiniest tool. It gives a very interesting view of the life on the farm. There is page after page with specifications and with estimation of the values. Only the clothes and personal things of the husband and the children were excluded.

There were four horses and a foal. Two oxen were other draught-animals and there were five 3 and 2-years bulls. (Probably intended for sale.)

Five cows with five calves gave milk.

Twelve swine of different age gave pork.

Eleven sheep gave wool.

The clothes of the deceased are well specified as well as all other textiles in the house.

There are long lists starting with a few silver objects and followed by things made from tin, copper, iron and wood. Furniture, wagons and all kinds of big and small equipment are specified. Some of these equipment were actually such, that were still used on the farm about 60 years ago.

Inventories as the one above should always be done when somebody had passed away. Comparisons with other inventories show that this one was rather similar to others. It seems to have been a common farm, neither poor nor rich.

In all there were about 10 persons on the farm at the time of the inventory. That included five children. The oldest, Ola, was 15.

Sven Bengtsson later married Boel Nilsson, coming from a place about six miles north of Tjörnarp.

In 1791 Sven Bengtsson passed away. His son Ola Svensson was then 27 and not married. His brother and sisters Johan, Sissa, Anna and Elna were all alive. They later went for jobs on other farms and all married.

Family and descendants of Bengt Olsson

Table 1

Bengt Olsson, born about 1768.

Wife: **Sissa**.

Children:

Kierstina, born probably before 1728.

Gunnel, born about 1729.

Jäppa, born about 1730.

Sven, born about 1733, died in 1791. Table 2.

Clemmed, born about 1735.

Ingar, born about 1740.

Nils, born about 1745.

Table 2

Sven Bengtsson, born about 1733, died in 1791.

Wife 1: **Kerstina** Pålsdotter, born about 1735, died in 1779.

Children:

Ola, born in 1763, died in 1840. Table 3.

Johan, born about 1765.

Sissa, born in 1771.

Anna, born about 1773.

Elna, born in 1777.

Wife 2: **Boel** Nilsdotter, born in 1745.

Table 3

Ola Svensson, born in 1763, died in 1840.

Wife: **Elsa** Nilsdotter, born about 1757, died in 1814.

Children:

Kiersti, born in 1794, died in 1882. Table 4.

Hanna, born in 1798, died in 1871.

Table 4

Kiersti Olasdotter, born in 1794, died in 1882.

Husband: **Måns** Svänasson, born 1789, died in 1869.

Children:

Sissela, born in 1818, died in 1894.

Else, born in 1821, died in 1829.

Johanna, born in 1827, died in 1902.

Sven Månsson, born in 1831, died in 1886.

Else, born in 1834, died in 1923.

A new inventory of was made after Sven Bengtsson's death. It was rather similar to the previous one. In it was also the recognition of the owner, Lillienberg, that Ola Svensson was accepted as the new tenant.

Ola Svensson's family

In 1793 Ola married his stepmother's younger sister, Elsa Nilsdotter. They got the two girls Kiersti and Hanna but no son.

Elsa Nilsdotter died in 1814. Ola then became a widower with no son to take over the farm after him. A woman was not allowed to be the farmer. She never could get that right according to the law. However, in 1818 Kiersti Olasdotter married Måns Svänasson, who seems have been a worker on the farm since 1815.

After the marriage Måns Svänasson became the farmer. But Ola still lived on the farm as “an old man” until he died in 1840. Ola’s stepmother Boel Nilsson also lived there until her death in 1827.

Ola’s second daughter, Hanna, never married but remained on the farm until she died in 1871.

Måns Svänasson’s story

Måns Svänasson father, Sväne Persson, was the tenant on another nobleman’s farm in Gunnarp about a mile east of our farm. His wife was Sissa Johansdotter. They had three sons: Erland, Måns and Sven. In June 1792 Sväne died from “Red fever”, probably dysentery. Sissa was pregnant and in October she gave birth to twins. The mother and one child died. The other child, a girl, who got the name Bengta, survived. The boys were 15, 12 and 11 years old at that time.

The inventory after the deaths showed a farm of the same or maybe a little bit better standing than ours. But another tenant had to take over. Everything on the farm was then sold by auction, and the money was deposited for the children. (As customary the girl’s share was half of every boy’s.)

The children were taken care of by relatives, but probably the boys soon started working. To leave home to have a job being 14 or 15 was rather common in these days.

Måns seems to have been on our farm since 1815. The other brothers and the sister are also recorded to have lived here later, temporarily.

At the age of 34 Erland, the oldest of Måns brothers, was married to a widow, age 66, in Häglinge about 10 miles east of here and then got a farm. Later, as a widower, he married once more and had two sons.

Sven bought a farm in Ella about two miles northeast of us. His descendants still live there. The girl Bengta mainly lived in Erland’s home until she married.

Måns Svänasson and Kiersti Olassdotter did first have three daughters, Sissela, Else and Johanna.

In 1831 they got a son, Sven Månsson, my great grandfather.

In 1829 the girl Else had died and then, in 1834, they got another daughter. According to a very widespread custom the new girl then was named Else after her dead sister.

Måns Svänasson’s name is still found in documents from 1856 and -57 when he represented the farm. In 1857 however Sven Månsson married and at that time he probably took over. Måns lived here until 1869 and Kiersti until 1882. As her sister Hanna lived until 1871, there were several old people on the farm during a period.

Changes in living conditions

The agriculture

Until the beginning of the 19th century the development in Tjörnarp probably was very slow. Then the process of shifting of land between the farms started and things began to change.

In the old times, when a new field was cleared, neighboring farmers worked together, and then they got a part of it each. This resulted in farms with a lot of small intermixed fields. In the 19th century it became compulsory to shift the fields so that each farm should get only one or a few coherent areas. Around our farm this shifting was performed during 1855 to -58. In most parts of Sweden it was earlier. After this procedure there was a rapid development of agriculture. The fields became larger, and more land was cleared for farming. Production grew.

But other improvements also came, e.g. use of some fertilizer, better equipment, plant varieties and races of farm animals, new marketing possibilities and much more.

In areas with more fertile soils the start was earlier, but in Tjörnarp with its stony soils and comparatively small, uneven fields, the start of a further development seems to have been at about the same time as Sven Månsson took over the farm.

In Tjörnarp this development lasted for about 60 years. Then after another period of 20-30 years the agricultural conditions were not good enough, and a period of diminishing of the farming started.

Only 20 – 30 miles south of Tjörnarp are the fertile soils. There the development of the agriculture still goes on.

Housing

From the beginning a house only had one room with an open fireplace and a hole for the smoke and light at the top of the roof. Later big ovens by masonry and with chimneys were built. The light openings were then moved down on the roof or to the walls. (Glass windows came around 1800, but they were then subjects to a special tax.) People also started to build small rooms (“chambers”) at the ends of the houses.

In the houses were benches where people could sit during the day and sleep during nights. Closed sleeping places existed sometimes for some people, but for long most of the inhabitants in most houses had very little privacy. There was also no possibility to keep clean in the way that we are used to.

The situation improved of course, but the growth of the population during the 19th century resulted in new houses, which often also were small and where people still were crowded.

Communications

The roads improved of course with time. Of special interest for Tjörnarp was that one of Sweden’s main railways was drawn through it, only about ½ Mile from the farm. The railway came already in 1858, and a station in Tjörnarp came in 1875. A new village then developed there with shops and craftsmen. This resulted in new possibilities for business and jobs.

Sven Månssons period

Sven Månsson married Anna Månsdotter in 1857, November 18th. Anna was born on a farm in Stavaröd, about three miles north of our farm. Her father was Måns Nilsson and her mother was Ingar Nilsson. Sven and Anna got five children: Olof, Nils, Emelie, Johannes and Martina.

Sven Månsson and Anna Månsdotter family

Sven Månsson, born on April 10th 1831 on the farm, died on September 21st 1886 on the farm.

Anna Månsdotter, born on June 8th 1834 in Tjörnarp, Stavaröd, died on September 26th 1926 on the farm.

Children:

Olof, born on October 5th 1858 on the farm, died on January 18th 1925 in Tjörnarp village.

Nils, born on August 28th 1860 on the farm, died on March 15th 1933 in Minneapolis.

Emelie, born on December 2nd 1862 on the farm, died on February 6th 1924 in Tjörnarp, Torup.

Johannes, born on January 26th 1865 on the farm, died on February 16th 1935 in Tjörnarp village.

Martina (Tina), born on January 15th 1873 on the farm, died on December 25th 1936 in Tjörnarp village.

The farming

We have no details, but Sven Månsson must have been the one, who brought the former very small fields together and widened them. Of course he must also have used the new possibilities for farming that came during that period. He also had official tasks. As member of the board of the school he had to visit it several times a year. There still is a list with his signature when that occurred. He seems to have been a successful farmer. The inventory after his death shows that.

Like his ancestors Sven Månsson was just the tenant on our farm. The neighboring farm, owned by the farmer himself, was in 1858 bought by a merchant from Lund. After some years of having it farmed by employees, the owner rented it out. The first tenant, in 1863, was short of money. But the problem was solved by Sven Månsson and another farmer, who bought his goods for a sum of money and rented it back to him at an interest of 6%. That seems to be an old example of leasing. When that man later moved to another farm, Sven Månsson took over in 1870, and he then was the tenant of two farms. But it lasted only for five years, then the rent was raised and Sven Månsson quitted.

But in the spring of 1886 the family was back on that farm. The son Olof rented it, guaranteed by his father Sven.

New buildings

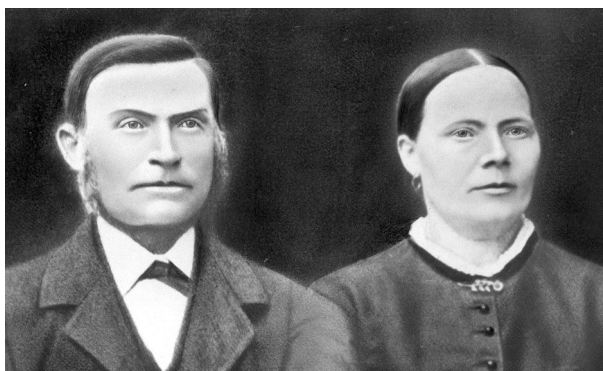
From 1879 there is a document stating that the living house on our farm in Tjörnarp was ruled out. According to the contract the tenant had to build a new one, carefully following the drawing approved. For his help a representative of the owners had marked out 110 oak trees. The house should be ready for inspection on December 1st 1881. The document was undersigned by the representative and Sven Månsson.

This is the house where we still live. No really fundamental changes have been made on its shape.

It is told that the previous house was open inside to the ridge of the roof. It is also told that people thought that the new house was too large for a tenant, and that they believed, that someone in the owner's family should have it. Another rumor says, that Sven's father, old Måns Svånasson looked at the many windows and asked his son, if he was going to live in a glass house.

Later came a similar decision on one of the outhouses. The other outhouse, the stables, is presumably older.

In the late Summer of 1886, at an age of 55, Sven Månsson passed away. It seems to have occurred suddenly. His son Johannes was at that moment on a job about 15 miles north of Tjörnarp. He has told that he got the message via a telephone that somebody had at that place. That was a new experience.



Sven Månsson och Anna Månsdotter

Many persons have become unusually old on the farm but not Sven Månsson. His wife Anna Månsdotter however survived him with 40 years to 1826 and became 92.

Sven Månsson's and Anna Månsdotter's children

Olof

Olof Svensson (*Svensson after his father's first name*) was the oldest of the children and was for some years the tenant of the neighboring farm, where he started while his father still was alive. He later moved to the village at the railway station. His wife's name was Gunilda, called Nelly.

Their daughter Anna was born in 1887 and never married. During many years she was in charge of the post office in Tjörnarp and became famous for her faithfulness to her duty. She passed away in 1956. Since then there are no descendants to Olof.

Nils – Nels

Nils Svensson, later called Nels Swenson was the second child. He emigrated to Minneapolis and his story will be told later.

Emelie

Emelie and her husband Olof had a farm about 2 miles south of here. They had seven children that grew up and still some that passed away at early ages.

The oldest boy was Gunnar Nilsson. In 1924 he bought a truck, which then was something new in Tjörnarp. Soon the truck also was used for excursions. Benches were placed on the platform. Later he had a truck that could be converted to a bus. Then real buses came.

The company "Tjörnarpbuss" now has many buses, making tourist trips all over Europe and is also in charge of many of the local bus lines. The family still owns it and one of Gunnar's grandchildren is now the president of it.



Two cousins

Nels' daughter Carlie and Olof's Anna. A picture taken about 1910, when Nels, Maria and Carlie visited Sweden.

Ida, a daughter of Emilie's, worked at a bank office in a place outside Älmhult in south Småland. As a customer there she had Ivar Kamprad, who later, in Älmhult, founded IKEA.

Johannes and his family

Johannes was the third son and should normally not have been the one to take over the farm. But when their father died, Olof had another farm and Nils had emigrated. Johannes therefore took over the farm, of course still as a tenant.

Johannes married Alma, the daughter of the teacher in the school nearby, and they had the children Ivar 1899, Martha 1900, Frans 1902, Ernst 1904, Olga 1906 and Erik 1910.

In 1920, when the "Lillienbergska fideikommisset" was sold out, Johannes bought the farm, where his ancestors had lived since the year of 1696.

The oldest son Ivar later took over the farm. He kept his father's second name.

The other three brothers took the new family name Tägil. Frans studied airplane engineering at the Technical University of Berlin in the 20-ies. He later had a position in the Swedish Air Force.

Ernst became the president of an ABB subsidiary. At least once he met our American relatives here on the farm

Erik was a teacher and lived until 2007 when he was 97. He met our American relatives at some occasions, when they visited us. At one time also his daughter Agneta and a granddaughter Malin were with him.

Besides this farm Johannes had bought a forest nearby. That was later taken over by his daughter Martha. Her two sons, Sven and Nils-Erik, who also have taken the family name Tägil, now own that forest.

Sven Tägil is now a retired professor of History from the University of Lund. He also owns a little farm in Tjörnarp, where another ancestor once lived. There he and his wife spend the summers. He has also met our American relatives here.

Nils-Erik Tägil studied music at "Musikaliska Akademien" in Stockholm and became a church organist in Ljungby in Småland. He is now retired, but he and his daughter Ingela, who is a singer, still make concert tours in Sweden. Earlier they have also made concerts abroad. A couple of the tours have even been to America. Nils-Erik also has a house in Tjörnarp.

Martina

Nels' youngest sister Martina, called Tina, married Anders Paulin, a railway officer. His carrier made the family move rather much. Their children were not born in Tjörnarp. But at last Anders had the position as the head of the railway station here and remained here after his retirement.

My own story

My father was Ivar, Johannes' oldest son. He took over the farm in 1928.

He married my mother Anna Holm in 1929. She had many ancestors in Värmland, a province further north.

I was born in 1930 and grew up on the farm. At that time the future of farming there did not seem favorable, and my parents later advised me to do something else.

Our family

(Hans and Bengt have taken their mothers maiden name Ramne. The numbers refer to the picture on page 16.)

Hans Ivar Svensson, born in 1930.

Wife: **Anna-Greta** Ramne, born 1931 in Växjö, Småland.

Children:

Sven, born 1958 in Luleå, northern Sweden, passed away in 1973.

Hans, born 1961 in Luleå, northern Sweden.

Bengt, born 1965 in Södertälje, south of Stockholm.

Hans Ramne (1)

Wife: **Ulla** Olsson, born 1961 in Vittsjö, Skåne. (2)

Children:

Stina, born 1993 in Stockholm. (3)

Linnea, born 1997 in Ängelholm, Skåne. (4)

Bengt Ramne (5)

Wife: **Anna** Dahlkvist, born 1966 in England. (6)

Children:

Johan, born 1994 in Gothenburg. (7)

Malin, born 1996 in Gothenburg. (8)

Emma, born 1999 in Philadelphia, USA. (9)

My profession became agricultural chemistry, and I have been working with chemical analysis of soils, water and agricultural products.

During my studies I spent one year, 1955-56, as a trainee at a soils laboratory in New Jersey, USA. I then took contact with my relatives in Minneapolis and even spent the Christmas of 1955 there.

In 1958 my wife Anna-Greta and I married. For 10 years we lived further north in Sweden. But in 1968 I got a job in Kristianstad about 20 miles from our farm, and we then bought a house outside Kristianstad, in Åhus, close to the Baltic Sea.

In 1970 we there had a visit by the relative of mine, Ruth-Ann Swenson from Minneapolis and her friend Emmy. Some years later her uncle, my second cousin, Dick Swenson and family came and stayed with us. Roberta Swenson and two friends also visited us there. We enjoyed these visits very much and kept in touch further on. There have been more visits during the years.



Picture from Tjörnarp at the visit 1970

Back: Me, Anna-Greta, Ruth, my father Ivar.

Front: Sven, Bengt, my mother Anna and Hans.

From 1981, my both parents were sick and could not be at home. Anna-Greta and I then decided to move to Tjörnarp, and so we did in 1985. From 1985 until 1993 I went from the farm to my job in Kristianstad.

After we had moved to the farm, I started to devote myself to the forest there, and we later also bought more forest. We also had sheep and geese for a period. After my retirement in 1993 I got more time for the old farm. To do some light work in the forest and to plan for the business there feels interesting for a retired person and also gives some physical training. I am still enjoying it. The main forest work however is now made by advanced machines.

When we moved to Tjörnarp, our sons Hans and Bengt already had left home.

The farm is not distant from the railway. The station was discarded many years ago. But for 2014 new train stops are planned.

Nels' and Maria's story

Maria's family

Nels Swenson's wife Maria Andersdotter grew up on a farm in the next parish, Norra Mellby but not far from our farm.

Maria was however born in Hyby, in southern Skåne, were her parents Anders and

The family of Anders Nilsson (Anders Nelson in USA)

Anders Nilsson, born 1829 in Hyby.

Wife: **Kjersti Andersdotter**, born 1830 in Hyby.

Children:

Maria, born on August 25th 1856 in Hyby.

Anna, born on February 6th 1860 in Hyby.

Nils Johan (Nels J. Nelson), born on September 3rd 1867 in Norra Mellby.

Johanna, born on April 10th 1869 in Norra Mellby.

Anders (Andrew Nelson), born on July 11th 1872 in Norra Mellby.

Kiersti were farm workers. They moved to Norra Mellby in 1861, and Anders started to work at the estate of Fredriksberg. Later he rented a small farm under that estate.

In 1880, Maria was at home and her sister Anna worked on an estate, Hovdala, further north. During that summer the girls seem to have decided to emigrate to America. Maria's registration is dated at August 23rd 1880, and Anna's at August 12th. But it has not been possible to find out when or from what port they really went.

On April 11th 1881 the rest of the family, except Nils Johan, registered for moving to America. They embarked in Copenhagen on April 21st. Now they had adopted the new custom that all should use the fathers second name. The parents were called Anders and Kirsti Nilsson and the children Johanna and Anders Nilsson.

Nils Johan registered for moving to Malmoe. But later he did also live in Minneapolis. There is no information on his departure.

Nels Swenson in America

On April 18th 1881 Nils Svensson from our farm also registered for going to America. He embarked from Malmoe already on the 21st. He must have embarked the same ship as the others, who went over Copenhagen. For all of them the destination was Minneapolis.

The reason for many emigrants was the bad situation for them in Sweden. That was probably not the case for Nels Swenson. The reason for him may have been love. Else, why should he have joined Maria's family when they left?

We have a letter from Nels to his brother Johannes written in January 1883. He then lived in a boardinghouse. Because of the cold weather he had no job but seemed to be in a good mood and greeted from Maria.

In Minneapolis I have been shown a very beautiful and large stone chapel at a cemetery, where Nils had been working as a stone mason. I then come to think of the high stone fundament of our house. That must have been built while Nils still was at home.

About 1910 Nels, Maria and their daughter Carlie visited Sweden. From then we have pictures of Maria and Carlie, but none of Nels. This seems to have been the only time, when they came back to Sweden.

In 1926 Nels mother Anna Månsdotter passed away. Nels then was entitled to a minor inheritance. There were some letters about it between my uncle Erik and the family in Minneapolis. It was then decided, that the money should be given to a nephew of Anna's, who lived close to us and who needed it.

From 1930 there is still a letter from Nels to Johannes. It is written in a very good Swedish. He mentions that his brother-in-law was coming to Sweden and intended to visit his birthplace. But Nels had no plans to join him then. He seemed satisfied with his life and hinted that his economy was good.

Nels passed away in 1933 and Maria lived until 1942.

The cemetery in Minneapolis

The Anders Nelson and Nels Swenson families are buried on the cemetery with the large and beautiful chapel mentioned above. Larger stones show the family names, and information on the different members are found on minor stones in the grass. Pictures of these were taken by my son Hans during a visit in 1993. It turned out to be possible to compare the texts on the stones with the old information in the Swedish church books.

About the Anders Nelson family the following was found:

Anders and his wife Kjersti lived until 1911 and 1886.

Their daughter Anna lived until 1932. She was married to Nels Holmgren, born in 1855 and deceased in 1928.

The son Nils Johan (Nels J Nelson) lived until 1944. His wife was apparently Emma Carolina, born in 1868 and deceased in 1942.

Anders jr (Andrew Nelson) passed away on January 20th, 1926.

From the whole Anders Nelson family, that left Sweden, only the daughter, Johanna, is missing.

The stones over for the Swenson family members confirmed what I already had got to know.

My own contacts

During his later years Nels Swenson lived with his family on Minnehaha Avenue where they had a store. That was the address that I knew when I was in New Jersey in the fall of 1955. My uncle Frans, the aviation engineer, had been on a Swedish American Line scholarship in USA in the 30-ies. He then had that address and had contacts with his relatives but never came about to go to Minneapolis.

Even if the family had moved from Minnehaha Avenue, the address got me into contact with them and I was invited to spend the Christmas with them in 1955. I have many very nice memories from then.

As already mentioned, we had visits by Ruth with her friend Emmy, Roberta with friends and Dick with family while we still lived in Åhus. After having moved to the old farm in Tjörnarp, we have been happy enough to see Ruth here several times. Her mother Delores and daughter Jessica were here twice and her sister Jeannie once.

It is now more than 55 years ago since my contacts started. Last fall we saw Ruth and her friend Mary Bodkins here.

I sincerely hope that our contacts with our American relatives will last and develop.

In this spring it was 130 years since Nils Svensson left Sweden for America.

Tjörnarp in July, 2011.

Hans Ivar Svensson.

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Our family in October 2010 together with our American guests.

1. Hans, 2. Ulla, 3. Stina and 4. Linnea.

5. Bengt, 6. Anna, 7. Johan, 8. Malin and 9. Emma.

(See further page 13.)

No 10 is Ruth Ley and no 11 her friend Mary Bodkins.