

THE STORY OF
TWO FAMILIES
AND THEIR
TIMES



CHAPTER ONE:

THE KJÖLLERSTRÖM (CHILSTROM) AND NILSSON (NELSON) ROOTS IN SWEDEN

Tracing the Chilstrom and Nelson roots in Sweden and the United States has not been an easy task. As in all ancestral studies, it has taken persistence, perseverance and a good deal of simple good fortune to weave together this narrative of the two families to which I and many others trace our ancestry.

How Do You Spell That Name?

The most challenging problem has been the various spellings of the names. This was especially true for the Chilstroms. The name in Sweden was and is consistently “Kjöllerström.” Once the family came to America, however, it was impossible for them to use that name in any settings other than the churches. Since “Kj” is rare even in Sweden, it is even more unusual among English names in America. And, of course, English has no letters of the alphabet like “ö” “ä” and “å”, thus making it impossible to use the name in public documents. Thus far, in various church and public records, I have found *thirteen different spellings* for the name: Kjollerström, Kjolerström, Köllerström, Kyllerstrom, Kjellstrom, Killstrom, Hollerström, Chyolestem, Chjolerstrom, Skollerstrom, Chilstrum, Chillstrom and Chilstrom! That meant that every time I looked for information on the family I had to check three letters of the alphabet - “K” “C” and “S”. (The “H” appeared only once. It was on a ship’s log and was obviously entered erroneously by the captain.)

A Clue in an Old Kjöllerström (Chilstrom) Family Bible

I knew a bit about the Chilstrom family from stories that had been passed down from my parents, aunts and uncles. But the stories were few and only went back to my great grandparents who came to America in 1853. I had no clue to any ancestry beyond those years. All contact with any relatives in Sweden had been lost.

That was when a stroke of good fortune happened. My elderly aunt Malvina (Chilstrom) Nygren was having an auction sale -- probably sometime in the 1960s. It happened that my cousin Ruth (Quist) Warren was at the sale. She spied an old family Bible in a box of books that were to go on sale. Thinking I might want to have it, Ruth rescued the Bible from the other books and gave it to me in the early 1970s.

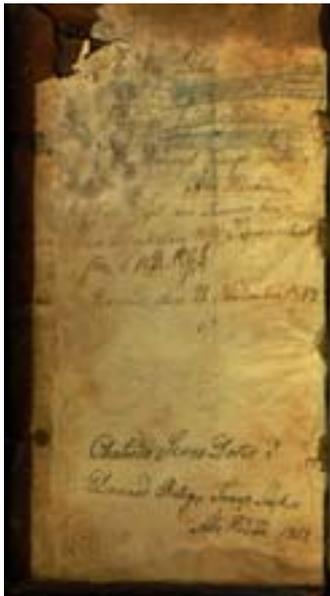
The Kjöllersström family Bible

At that time we were living in St. Peter, Minnesota, was serving as pastor at First Lutheran Church. I appreciated having the Bible, but did nothing with than display it on a shelf with other old books. I that it has been printed in 1729 and also that the my great grandfather, written inside the front cover, spelled differently than we now spell it. There was some handwriting that I, because I do not read Swedish, could not decipher. Inside the back cover was a list of the family names with dates of birth and, in a few cases, the dates of death.



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It was sometime in 1971 that Dr. & Mrs. Emeroy Johnson visited our home. Emeroy had an avid interest in Swedish church history, both in Amrica and in Sweden. He picked up the Bible and examined it carefully. "This name 'Kjöllersström' is very rare among Swedes," he said. He also recalled that there was a well-known professor at Lund University in Sweden by that name. He took the Bible with him with the promise that he would translate the note in the front cover of the Bible and also attempt to find out the address of the professor at Lund.



Suddenly I became very interested in the old Bible and in the possibility that I might be able to find Chilstrom relatives in Sweden. When Emeroy returned the Bible to me he provided this translation of the note inside the front cover. The inscription reads:

This Bible belongs to me, Magnus Kjöllersström, Toarps Parish, Åho District, and have bought this at Jan Isaacson's at Tinnerehult for one dolor (riksdollar) November 21, 1847. At the bottom is written: Chatrina Svendsdottor Doter - Skategard Toarps Parish, Åho District.

It's interesting to note that the family name is spelled with two "L"s in the front of the Bible -

"Kjöllersström" - but with only one "L" at the back --

"Kjölöersström". (As we confusion among whether to spell the "Ls". Little wonder, America used both family Bible! (We again when we see spelling was not 20th century. Words people heard them and the same word or

will see later, there is American descendents on name with one or two when our forefather in spellings in the same should note here, as I will other changes, that standardized before the and names were spelled as it was not unusual to see



name spelled differently in a single document.)

Inside the back cover of Magnus and Katrina Kjällerström's Bible is a list of the family names, dates of birth and some dates of death.

My First Contact with Relatives in Sweden

A short time later Emeroy contacted me again, informing me that he had located the name "Dr. Sven Kjällerström" among the theological faculty at Lund University in southern Sweden.

I wrote immediately to Sven Kjällerström. Within a few weeks I heard from Dr. Bengt Kjällerström, son of Sven. Bengt had good facility in English and wrote on behalf of his 76-year-old father. Bengt, 33 at the time, was also a professor at Lund, his field being theoretical physics. It's hard to describe how thrilled I was to make this connection with relatives in Sweden -- something I never dreamed would be possible. After nearly a century and a quarter of no known contact between the family in America and the family in Sweden, it is difficult to describe how excited I was about the possibilities for reconnection.

A Visit to Sweden

In the summer of 1977 my wife Corinne and I were invited to be part of an exchange program between pastors and church leaders from the U.S. and Germany. Our meeting was to be held in Munich. We decided this would be a good time to extend our stay in Europe and visit relatives in Sweden on both my mother's and father's side.

We visited the Sven and Bengt Kjällerströms at their summer homes in southern Sweden. Sven and Karin's place was at Angelholm on the west coast. During the visit I learned several things about the Kjällerström ancestors from Sven. Here are some of my notes from that conversation:

**There was a Kjällerström who was a pastor in the 1600s. It was said of him that the only thing that kept him from being a good pastor was his wife!

**There was a fair amount of infighting among the clan members.

**The first page of a parish book indicates that a certain Petter Kjällerström had a son who was "born too soon." The wife is not listed.

Gustavus Adolphus was apparently a religious man. It is said of him that when he led his forces into battle at the crucial conflict at Leipzig the trumpets played, “*A Mighty Fortress is Our God,*” a familiar Reformation hymn. He was killed at the battle of Lutzen in Germany in 1632.

At this time I have no idea when and where Corporal Mikael Kjällerström may have served his military duty.

The king’s daughter Christina succeeded him as Queen of Sweden. She turned to Catholicism and abdicated the throne in 1654. She lived in Rome the rest of her life. I’ve seen the statue in her honor at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

Persson thinks the Kjällerström clan may have originated in and taken its name from the village of Kyllås near one of the branches of the Västerås River in Småland. Sven Kjällerström disputed this theory. He speculated that the clan may have originated in Belgium! He thought the family may have been part of the Waloons, a Protestant group in the south of Belgium who were of Celtic origin and descended from the ancient Belgae of Gaul.

Sven based his theory on two factors. First, there is a very dark and swarthy strain that characterizes many of the Kjällerströms to this day and distinguishes them from the more native Swedes with their fair complexion. Second, the name itself is not characteristically Swedish. The combination of “K” with “jö” is difficult even for Swedes to pronounce. Sven thought the name may have originally been “Koller”, or something similar. If his theory is correct, the first Kjällerströms in Sweden may have been iron workers brought in by King Gustavus Adolphus during the time of economic prosperity in the 1600s when their craftsmanship was needed for building enterprises. The fact that Mikael is identified as a farmer casts some doubt on Sven’s theory. But, who is to say?

Like Most Families, a Mixture of Good and Questionable Characters

So much for the speculation about the origins in Belgium. Returning to Michel and Elsa Kjällerström and the account by Persson, it seems that some of Michel and Elsa’s first descendents do not exactly shine as high and noble characters. According to Persson, the records show them to be frequently locked in strife and feuds over inheritance and quarrels with their neighbors. There is even evidence that some of them got a public reprimand from the pulpit! Persson singles out one particular court case involving a Kjällerström and says that it is characterized by “*sharply delineated personalities, rustic manners, lust for power and a lack of respect for authorities.*”

On the positive side, Persson suggests that many of the Kjällerströms “*had received for themselves positions of leadership and land as early as the latter part of the 17th century and the first part of the 18th century.*”

The Family of Michael and Elsa Kjällerström

According to Persson, Michel and Elsa had four sons and two daughters. One son was Petrus Michaelis Ingrell, assistant pastor first at Vetlanda and later at Lidhult in Kronoberg County. Another son, Nils Michelsson, is recorded in 1699 to have bought land known as Ingarp

Norragård for 60 Riksdollar. In that same year Håkan and his brother Nils Michelsson fought over the rights to another piece of land known as Ingarp Sodergård.

Another son of Michel and Elsa was Ingemar Kjällerström. According to Persson, Ingemar “*followed in the family tradition of leadership*” and became sheriff of Mo District. He was elected to the position in 1689 and held office until 1706. In 1694 records show that he was authorized to have charge of the inn at Öreryd. As we will see later, it is through this son, Ingemar, that we descendents of Magnus trace our connection with Mikael.

There seems to be some evidence in the records, according to Persson, that Ingemar’s wife Katherine and a gentleman by the name of Peter Sturck were involved in what is described as “*aktenskapshandel*”. The word is no longer used in modern Swedish and no one I checked with, including a professor of Swedish at Gustavus Adolphus College and relatives in Sweden, knows exactly what it means. The closest they can come is to suggest that it implies some kind of marital problem, but evidently not adultery. At any rate, Sturck was prosecuted after the death of Katherine Kjällerström.

As we will see later, Ingemar and Katherine had twelve children! A son Bengt succeeded his father as sheriff. He was married to Katarina Colliander, the minister’s daughter from Åsenhöga. The records show that in a 1708 court case Bengt prosecuted a certain Gabriel Lidberg, a horseman in Ulvestorp for staying home from church on the Second Sunday of Christmas and getting involved in a fight with Jons Andersson, a farmer’s son from Mossebo.

A second son, Michel, seems to have gone to some foreign country. One speculation is that he went to Portugal to start a clothing factory. He willed his property to his brother Petter.

Another child was Helena. She married Anders Lindstedt, the highly respected sheriff in Kronoberg County.

Petter, the third son, became the head of the family at Öreryd. He took charge of the inn in 1713.

Only one of Petter’s children, Katarina (Catharina), seems to have lived to maturity. Born August 8, 1718, she lived to the age of 86. Her husband, Svenning Jonsson from Fiås in Nittarp parish took the family name, thus becoming “Svenning Jonsson Kjällerström.” He is described as a “*danneman*”. The title is somewhat obscure, but may have been the name given to farmers who served in the Legislature (Rikstag). The title implies one who is capable, dependable and upright.

Katarina and Svenning had nine or ten children, eight of whom married and also had many children. Their children took the last name of their mother, probably because the name was often identified with a place -- in this case the inn at Öreryd. Descendents of Katarina and Svenning spread throughout the area around Åsen, Stakebo, and Mossebo in the parish of Mossebo, around Gölingstorp in the parish of Nittorp and to practically every parish in the southern Mo District.



The quaint country church in Mossebo where many generations of Kjöllersströms have attended worship.

One of the daughters of Katarina and Svenning was Maria Svenningdotter Kjöllersström. She married into what was probably the most prominent family in the area. Her husband was Hans Josephsson from Mossebo, son of Josef Hansson. Josef's portrait hangs in a prominent place on the wall of the quaint little red church in Mossebo. He was the long-time speaker of the peasantry and member of the Swedish Parliament. He was instrumental in collecting funds

from all parts of Sweden to construct the lovely church at Mossebo.

Persson concludes his account of the earlier members of the Kjöllersström clan by acknowledging that most of the Kjöllersströms

married into well-to-do and influential families in the Mo and Kind Districts, with preference for innkeepers, organists, sheriffs and forest inspectors. In this sense the Kjöllersströms were a valuable contribution to the history of the movement of persons from one social class to another over a period of three centuries.

So much for the account from Persson.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, I returned to Sweden in 2007 with my wife Corinne and son Christopher. We attended a Kjöllersström family reunion at Mossebo Church on August 11. There we met more than 100 relatives, all of them fifth cousins of mine and their children and grandchildren.

My Great Grandparents: Magnus and Katrina Kjöllersström

This may be a good place to list the Kjöllersström family genealogy, beginning with Mikael and Elsa and coming down to the generation of my father and his siblings. I am indebted to Bengt Kjöllersström, my fifth-cousin, for all the groundwork he has done to make it possible to connect my great grandparents with the family in Sweden. Without that help it would have been an impossible task. I have put in capital letters the child in each family who became my ancestor to the next generation:

Mikael Bjömson Kjöllersström 1612-1695 Farmer and army corporal
 Wife: Elsa Ingemarsdotter Hult 1625-1697
 Children: Petrus (pastor), INGEMAR (sheriff and innkeeper), Håkan (farmer),
 Nils (farmer)

Ingemar Michelsson Kjöllersström 1657-1706
 Wife: Katharine Eck ? - 1710
 Children: Bernt (sheriff), Michel (went abroad), PETTER (innkeeper), Helena,

Katharina, Ingemar Per, Håkan, Karin, Elsa, Bengt, Nils.

Petter Kjällerström 1690-1773
 Wife: Elizabeth Feiser 1693-1757
 Children: Per, Håkan, CATHARINA, Ingemar (Apparently only Catharina survived to adulthood.)

Catharina Kjällerström 1718-1805
 Husband: Svenning Johansson 1712-1773 (He took the name Kjällerström when he married Catharina.)
 Children: Stina, INGEMAR, Petter, Jonas, Maria, Johan, Magnus, Johannes, Lisken.

Ingemar Kjällerström 1741-1805
 Wife: Cajsa Bergman
 Children: PETTER, Hans, Elisabet

Petter Kjällerström 1766-1830
 First wife: Ingeborg Christina Matthesdotter Ståhl
 Second wife: Brita (apparently Brita is the mother of all of the children)
 Children: Anna, MAGNUS, Anna Sophia, Charlotta, Johan

Magnus Kjällerström is my great grandfather. He and his wife Katrina (also "Chatrina" or "Catharina"), as well as Magnus' brother Johan and his family, emigrated to the United States on the same ship in 1853.

Here is the family from Magnus and Katrina to the generation of my father:

Magnus Kjällerström b. Jan. 7, 1809 at Öreryd, Småland
 d. Aug. 5, 1894 at Minneapolis, MN
 Wife: Katrina Svensdotter b. Jan. 13, 1811 at Unnaryd, Småland
 d. Oct. 4, 1869 at Canon Falls, MN
 Children:

Eva Christina	b: June 29, 1833 at Öreryd, Småland d. Uncertain
Inga Sofia	b: Dec. 5, 1835 at Öreryd, Småland d. Oct. 27, 1899 at Pueblo, CO
Anna Catrina	b: Feb. 4, 1838 at Öreryd, Småland d. June 17, 1858 at Morristown, MN
Louisa Fredrick	b. Aug. 17, 1840 at Öreryd, Småland d. Oct. 8, 1863 at Morristown, MN
JOHAN PETTER	b: Apr. 6, 1844 at Öreryd, Småland d: July 12, 1892 at Litchfield, MN
Svenning August	b: Jan. 14, 1848 at Toarp, Västergötland d: Nov. 30, 1866 at Cannon Falls, MN
Charles Emil	b.: July 22, 1851 at Toarp, Västergötland

d: 1920 at Minneapolis, MN

John Peter Chilstrom

Born: Apr. 6, 1844 at Öreryd, Småland

Died: July 12, 1892 at Litchfield, MN

Wife: Hedda (Hattie) Nelson Born: April 6, 1847 at Gränna, Småland

Died: Feb. 23, 1940 at Litchfield, MN

Children:

Mina (Minnie)

Born: Nov. 5, 1868 at Cannon Falls Twp.

Died: 1891 at Litchfield, MN

Edward

Born: Feb. 23, 1872 at Cannon Falls Twp.

Died: July 12, 1892 at Litchfield, MN

Anton Theodor

Born: July 7, 1874 at Cannon Falls Twp.

(Another record suggests July 24, 1874)

Died: Jan. 11, 1960 at Litchfield, MN

Malvina

Born: Oct. 22, 1877 at Red Wing, MN

Died: 1978 at Litchfield, MN

Sigfred John

Born: Mar. 21, 1880 at Litchfield, MN

Died: Mar. 24, 1964 at Litchfield, MN

Agnes Victoria

Born: Apr. 20, 1884 at Greenleaf Twp. MN

Died: Nov. 12, 1968 at Litchfield, MN

WALFRED EMMANUEL Born: May 12, 1888 at Litchfield, MN

Died: Mar. 9, 1965 at Litchfield, MN

(A list of all the known descendants of Magnus and Katrina Kjällerström for whom I have information is included in a separate document and on a website identified in the Introduction.)



The house where Magnus Kjällerström was born in 1809 in Öreryd, Småland. This is as it appears in 2004, 195 years later

After married, Magnus and Katrina Kjällerström lived at in Småland, where Magnus was born.

Öreryd Church where Magnus was baptized confirmed



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We know nothing about the childhood, youth or early married years of Magnus. One small reminder of his youth is inscribed in the bell tower at Öreryd. When we visited the village in August, 2007 my son Christopher and Bengt's son Anders climbed to the bell tower. There on the wall they found inscribed the words: "*Magnus Kjällerström – 1831.*" The script is identical to the signature in Magnus' Bible. It was an amazing find! Inscribed when he was 22, Magnus' mark still remains after 176 years!

The Kjällerströms Move to Toarp in Västergötland

Magnus and Katrina moved to Toarp in Västergötland in 1844. By that time they had four children -- Inga, Anna, Louisa and John, my grandfather. We have no idea why they moved, but can guess that it was for economic reasons. Since my grandfather John Peter was born in Öreryd it appears that they moved shortly after his birth.



What did Magnus do in the Toarp community? We can only guess, and the best guess is that he farmed in that area.

The church at Toarp, the last congregation Magnus and Katrina and their children belonged to before sailing to America.

I learned from my cousin Bengt, who examined the parish records at Toarp, that the Magnus Kjällerström family left that parish and sailed for America in 1853. Those same records indicate that Magnus' brother Johan Brynolf Kjällerström and his family left the parish for America at the same time. This is confirmed by the Swenson Immigration Center in Rock Island, IL. They found that both families sailed from Göteborg (Gothenberg) on a ship named "Lodebar" on April 1, 1853. To accent the point I made earlier about the difficulty in spelling and pronouncing the name, the ship's log lists Magnus' family name as "Köllerström". And to further underscore this problem, his brother Johan's name on the ship's log, as I indicated above, is spelled "Hollerström."

At this early date ships from Sweden sailed directly to the United States and did not stop in England, as was the case beginning in the 1860s when the British dominated passenger travel and brought emigrants first to England and then on to America. This means that they were on the high seas for up to 16 weeks.

Why did they leave Sweden?

Bengt Kjällerström describes the area around Toarp in Västergötland as "*certainly not suitable for farming.*" After Bengt visited the church at Toarp he wrote:

It is a sad story to read the Toarp records. Every second page is crossed out, meaning that the people moved out of the parish. Those must have

been hard times.

The same could be said for all of Småland, the place from which the Kjällerströms originated. There is a saying in Sweden: “*Put a man from Småland on a rock in the middle of the ocean and he will survive.*”

It is hard to say, however, whether it was economic necessity or the attraction of America that was the chief cause for this early migration. I have read in at least one place that the first emigrants were driven more by the pull of adventure than the stress of poverty. The worst crop failures in Sweden did not occur until the 1860s.

Since Johan Brynolf was somewhat younger than his brother Magnus (There were two sisters born between Magnus and Johan), was it the visionary spirit of the younger brother that persuaded the older brother to accompany him to America?

We will never know their reasons for leaving Sweden for America. My best guess is that they may have made the great move for a combination of the two reasons: adventure and economic necessity.

For a broader picture of what was the cause of the movement to the new lands, the observation of Dr. Byron Nordstrom in the book “*The Swedes in Minnesota*” is helpful:

Between the years 1840 and 1930...the entire Western world was in a state of flux. Societies which had appeared virtually static for hundreds of years were subjected to forces which relentlessly altered their character. The agrarian-artisan economies of Europe were transformed into industrial-urban economies, often in less than a century. Rural Europe became urban Europe. Social classes which remained relatively stable for hundreds of years were shattered, and new classes emerged. Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia, in spite of certain separation from the rest of Europe, could not escape these changes.

Population growth is one of the major factors in European migration and emigration to America. What caused this phenomenal growth? One Swedish historian has said that it was due to peace, potatoes, and vaccinations.

The landless agricultural working class...experienced rapid expansion in the 1800s. This growth put increased pressures on an already over-taxed land base.

The emigrants came from every social level and from every occupation. However, the majority were from the lower classes. They were neither the cream of the crop nor the dregs of Swedish society. They were ordinary people in search of something better or something more than was offered to them at home.

It took a particular type of person to leave his home and his country for something new, very distant and very uncertain. p. 7-12

Whatever their motivation for emigration to America, it's worth pausing for a moment to think

about the ages of the family as the Kjällerströms board ship for the journey to America. Father Magnus is 44; mother Katrina is 42. As we will see later, the eldest daughter Eva is 19, but will not sail with the family. Inga is 17, Anna is 15, Louisa is almost 13, my grandfather John (Johan) will turn 9 five days after they sail, Svenning is 5, and the youngest child Charles will celebrate his 2nd birthday three days before the ship reaches New York harbor.

A Sad Departure

In spite of whatever excitement they may have had about this venture, there are probably many sad notes that overshadowed their departure. One, however, is especially poignant. In examining the records at Västerås on our visit to Sweden in 1977 I learned that Eva did not sail with the family. She was already married and pregnant at age 19. Her husband, Olof Olofsson, was nine years older. The assistant at Västerås explained to me that in the church record books members were ranked by categories. The fourth category indicates that these members not only memorized the required matters, but that they “*understood*” them as well. This category is checked for both Eva and Olof. According to the man assisting me with the translation, this was a sign that they comprehended the faith in a personal way. The records also show that Eva bore two children before dying at a young age. The oldest, Claus Oscar, was born November 15, 1853. Thus, Eva was about a month and a half into her pregnancy when she said goodbye to her parents and siblings.

It appears from the records at Västerås that Eva’s children were adopted or taken in as foster children by others. I could find no continuing record for either of them. They simply disappeared. How did the parents in America learn about the death of their daughter Eva in Sweden? Did they have any contact with their grandchildren? We will never know.

I have often pondered the scene as the other Kjällerströms and relatives of their wives bid farewell to Magnus and Johan and their children as they boarded the ship. By this time Magnus’ and Johan’s father Petter was deceased. I don’t know if their mother was still living or not. Did they bid farewell to family and friends at Toarp? Or did they return to Öreby for a last reunion with family? Did Eva and Olof accompany her family to the ship at Göteborg, some 60 miles west of Toarp? Wherever it happened, there must have been many tears. This was not a short separation. This was for life. It was like death. They surely must have talked about the probability that they would never see one another again. Did Eva and Olof have thoughts about following them to America? How must it have felt for a mother to leave behind a pregnant daughter? Or for a father to know that there would be a grandchild, and more to come, that he would probably never lay eyes on, never bounce on his knee while he sang, “*Rida, rida ranka, Hästen heter Blanka*”? Or for Inga, Anna, Louisa, John, Svenning and Charles to leave forever the older sister who may have been like a second mother to them? Tears, yes, even for stolid Swedes, there must have been many tears on that day.

My Great Grandparents: Johan (John) and Christina (Stina) Nilsson (Nelson)

Now I want to turn to the other set of my great grandparents, Johan and Kristina Nilsson (Nelson). As I mentioned earlier, I have much to learn about the origins of the Nilsson (Nelson) family. According to John Nelson’s death certificate (pictured in a later chapter), his father was “*Nels Lundgren*” and his mother “*Mary Hokanson*” or “*Håkanson*.” The challenge in tracing the

Nilsson (Nelson) ancestry is the opposite from the Kjällerströms. Not only was it a common name, but, as we will see later, it was changed back and forth depending on the situation. “Johan Nilsson” becomes “Johan Nilson” and then “John Nelson.” There are many, many Johan Nilssons and John Nelsons in the historical records.

This is what I know for now.

Johan Nilsson was born August 1, 1812 at a farm called Hägna must north of the village of Gränna in northernmost Småland. Johan’s wife Christina (also Kristina or Stina) was also born in Gränna. Her birth date is April 18, 1810. Gränna is a village on the east shore of Lake Vättern, just a few miles north of Jönköping.

Today Gränna is a popular place to take a ferry to the island of Vissingsö where one can visit many interesting sites, including the old church which still has a crude hole in the wall where the unused wine is poured out on the ground. Gränna is also famous for its “Polkagrisar” or “peppermint rock” -- a twisted red and white cane that is very popular at Christmas time. One friend tells me that these candies were often consumed at dances where they served as breath mints, a necessity for close contact when tooth brushing was unknown and chewing tobacco was popular with men!



Swedish church records in the database *Emibas* show that a son Gustav (Gustaf) was born February 19, 1844 and a daughter Hedda (“Hattie”), my grandmother, on April 6, 1847 -- both of them at Gränna. Mathilda, a second daughter, was born in Hössna parish in Västergötland July 13, 1850.

In 1850 (apparently just prior to the birth of Mathilda) the Nilsson family moved to Västergötland to a place called Hössna. Hössna and Toarp, where the Kjällerströms lived, are only about 20 miles apart. It is only a guess, but it may be that the Nilssons and Kjällerströms knew one another before coming to America. The database *Emibas* shows that the Nilssons left the Hössna parish in 1852 when they sailed for the United States.

The obituary for Gustav Nelson, eldest son of John and Kristina, indicates that the family sailed for America on April 15, 1852, arriving in Boston on July 3, 1852. Ship records, however, give the arrival date as July 13, 1852. I’d believe that the ship records are more accurate. The name of the ship was *Urda*, an old Viking mythological name that is still in use in Sweden. If these dates are accurate, the ocean voyage took twelve weeks.

the ship leaves Sweden. Mathilda is only 2.

Where Were They Going?

Did Nilssons (Nelsons) and the Kjällerströms (Chilstroms) have a destination in mind when they left Sweden? Yes, that is quite likely. Since both families came directly to the area near present-day Milwaukee, we can safely make that assumption. There was a network of agents and subagents in Sweden who worked with ship and railroad companies. They promoted emigration by selling tickets that oftentook the adventurers from their home to a specific place in the United States. The other common arrangement was for those already in America to send money to their families in Sweden to follow them to America. Did the Nilssons write to the Magnus Kjällerströms and Johan Kjällerströms and encourage them to come to Wisconsin? If they did, it's unlikely the Nilssons had enough money to help pay for passage. We can only speculate about how these families financed their long journey from Sweden to America.

It's also likely that other Nilssons -- brothers and sisters of Johan -- immigrated to America. As with Magnus' brother Johan Kjällerström, I have not been able to trace other Nilssons.

No Turning Back For These Families -- A Painful Farewell

Vilhelm Moberg did extensive research, both in Sweden and in the United States, on emigrants who came in the 1850s. Out of it came a series of four historical novels that focus on the lives of the fictional characters Karl Oskar and Kristina. When I read these novels I feel like I'm reading about my great grandparents -- the Kjällerströms and the Nilssons -- and their children, including my grandfather John and my grandmother Hattie. Magnus and Katrina and Johan and Stina and their children could well have been Karl Oskar and Kristina and their children.

Here is how Moberg envisions the departure from Sweden in the early 1850s:

Karl Oskar called his sister aside and begged her to look after their parents, particularly later as they grew older and couldn't manage for themselves... Märta took each of her grandchildren into her arms and said: 'May God protect you and keep you, you helpless little creatures.' (Karl Oskar and his brother) shook hands with their parents, a bit awkwardly, perhaps shamefacedly, almost like little boys who had been disobedient but were embarrassed to ask for forgiveness. Now Karl Oskar remarked, with an attempt at a smile, that when he had earned enough money in America he would come home and buy the manor at Kråkesjö... All knew he was joking, but no one smiled. Nils and Märta felt they were seeing their sons for the last time that April morning.

As they reached the village road Karl Oskar turned a last time and looked toward the house, his father and mother were still on the porch, watching the departing ones -- his father, gnarled and stooped and hanging on his crutches, his mother close by her husband's side, tall, her back straight. Here on the wagon sat the young ones departing -- there stood the old ones, left behind.

Karl Oscar would not see either of his parents make the slightest movement. As they stood there on the stoop,, looking after the wagon, they seemed to him as still and immobile as death, earth-bound things as a pair of high stones in the field or

a couple of tree trunks in the forest, deeply rooted in the ground. It was as if they had assumed that position once and for all, and intended to hold it forever. And as he saw them in the half-mist, this early morning, so they were forever to return to his mind: Father and Mother, standing quietly together on the stoop, looking after a cart driving through the gate and onto the road and after a minute disappearing among the junipers at the bend. In that place and in that position his parents would always remain in his mind. After many years he would still see them standing there, close together, looking out on the road, immobile objects, two human sculptures in stone.

Kristina did not mention to Karl Oskar that she had happened to hear a remark by Nils (Karl Oscar's father) as the wagon was ready to depart: 'I must go outside to behold my sons' funeral procession.'

Another tender description of leave-taking can be found in the journals of Eric Norelius, a Swede who came in 1850, then studied for the ministry and eventually became the spiritual leader of Swedish Lutherans in Minnesota and throughout America. Moberg's descriptions are those of a novel; Norelius wrote from personal experience:

It was on July 18, 1850 that we left our parental home.... I wept bitterly, and indeed my whole family was in tears, both old and young. It was more like death than life in my home that day, because we were now to part from one another, perhaps never to meet again in this life on earth. Oh, what anguish I suffered as I embraced my brothers and sisters for what might well be the last time and bade them farewell. And then my poor, dear mother followed us to the churchyard so that she could truthfully say that in this last moment she had brought us alive to the very portals of the church. Oh, what a painful moment it was when at last I took my little mother in my arms and bade her farewell! And it was just as difficult when later we said goodbye to our dear father. These tender memories I most assuredly will never forget.

"The Journals of Eric Norelius" p. 49



Småland -- The land they left forever....

Postscript: Sven Gottlieb Kjällerström

Before I follow the Nilssons and Kjällerströms to America, I want to add a postscript about one of our more illustrious relatives in Sweden: Sven Gottlieb Kjällerström. Sven was born in Mossebo in Västergötland, near the border of Småland, January 28, 1901. He is my father's fourth-cousin. His parents were farmers. He worked his way through Lund University and graduate school in Skåne. He received his first degree in 1921 and his Master of Theology degree in 1932. He achieved his Doctor of Theology degree from Lund in 1935 and was named lecturer in church history at the University that same year. His doctoral theses on "The Struggle About Calvinism under Erik XIV" received the highest award. From 1941-1967 he was professor of practical theology at Lund. He also served as vice-chancellor of the University from 1957-1963.



Among his many publications -- books and articles -- some of the more well-known are: "*The Problem of Church Law in Sweden 1571-1682*"; "*The Law of God and the Law of Sweden in the Reformation Period*"; "*Crosier and Miter*."

He was well-known for his work in investigating the history of ordination and the role of bishops in the life of the Church of Sweden. When church-state questions were considered he was often called on as an expert in the field.

At the same time, he took a keen interest in the work of the local congregation, serving for a time

on the Lund Cathedral Church Council. After retirement he did extensive work on the history of Lund University.

He was recipient of four honorary degrees: Doctorates in both Philosophy and Jurisprudence from Lund University, a Doctor of Theology from Helsinki, and another from the University of Copenhagen.

I met a pastor from Sweden several years ago who had studied at Lund University when Sven was professor and vice-chancellor. His remarks about Sven Kjöllnerström fit exactly the tribute that is included in Kjöllnerström's obituary:

Sven Kjöllnerström placed great demands on his own research, as to trustworthiness, accuracy, and the possibility of corroboration. He was therefore a demanding guide who closely scrutinized the beginner's work and presented critical questions. At the same time he was considerate, helpful, interested and stimulating. To him it was self-evident that research and basic education belong together. His imperative requirement for definite knowledge sometimes caused him to be feared as an examiner, but at the same time he was one who was appreciated for maintaining quality.

For many years he was inspector of the Göteborg Student Society, and at the time of his death he was chairman of the Thomander Student House. In both of these his personal interest in young people and in students found expression.

For Sven Kjöllnerström scholarly study was a lifework. For those who were in his presence he was both a teacher and a fellow worker, prepared to examine critically but also to listen. We stand in deep gratitude for his input in research and education, and remember him as the inspiring, personable, and sincere friend.

Carl Gustaf Andren

According to his son Bengt, it was once suggested to Sven that he should be a candidate for archbishop of the Church of Sweden. Sven gracefully declined the invitation, certain that this was not his calling.

I regret that Corinne and I had only one occasion to be with him. We felt drawn to both Sven and his lovely wife Karin. On a subsequent visit to Sweden after Sven's death we had a warm and congenial visit with Karin.