

# Long Ago and Far Away: Part II

Winberg Family

Another part of the Swedish roots also came from Västergötland

By HAROLD L. BERN

The earliest known ancestors of what later became the Winberg family lived at Hvitatorpet. Hvitatorpet means "the white farm house" and is the name of a ruin in Öxabäck parish today. The parish is about 40 miles south and slightly west of the city of Borås, Sweden, in what used to be Älvsborgs *län* in Västergötland.

Anna Jönsdotter was born there 1 September 1728. Her mother is not identified and we can only discover that her father was a farmer named Jöns. She married Nils Jönsson 29 December 1755 in Öxabäck. Nils was from the neighboring parish of Örby and was born in 1699. They had only two children, Jöns and his sister Britta. Nils died in 1770 and his widow married the *Häradsprofoss*, Gunnar Kindström. Jöns was raised by his stepfather and grew up in time to follow in Gunnar's occupation.

Jöns Nilsson was born 13 May 1757 at Hvitatorpet in Öxabäck parish. Jöns became the *Häradsprofoss* for the area upon the death of his stepfather, Gunnar Kindström. Literally, the word means he was the District Flogmaster and is difficult to translate<sup>1</sup>.

The main road between Stockholm and Göteborg ran right in front of Hvitatorpet during the 1750–1800 timeframe. Whereas today Hvitatorpet appears to be out in the middle of nowhere, in that earlier era it was located along a main artery in the important business of administering the district for the King of Sweden.

Jöns Nilsson married Malin Jönsdotter who was born 29 September 1745 at a neighboring farm called Bredhult. Of this union five children were born. The first Nils was born in 1781 and died a year and a half later in 1783. The couple then had Johannes in 1784 and Christina in 1786. Their fourth child was again named Nils who was born in 1790 and a sister, Edla, was born in 1792. This second child called Nils was raised at the farm called Ramnås and became the progenitor of the Winberg family. Nils's birth name was of course patronymic, and when he first appears in the Öxabäck parish records, his name is Jönsson.

Nils first appears in the Öxabäck records using the Winberg surname between 1814 and 1818. There are missing years in the records so no definitive date can be identified when he first started using this fixed surname.

Nils was born 21 April 1790 at a *torp* called Ramnås in Öxabäck parish. It took nearly two years of searching microfilms and finally a trip to Sweden to locate his place of birth and parents.

The difficulty began when I attempted to trace backward to the next generation. I was able to go back to 1823 to a parish called Torestorp. The *Utflyttning* records for that year indicated his correct date of birth and stated that he went to Holsljunga where I had originally found him. The record said he was from Ram-

nås. The problem was that there are six different locations in Sweden called Ramnås. Some are farms; some are villages; and some are parishes. I had looked patiently but unsuccessfully through thirteen rolls of microfilm in efforts to locate the birth of Nils Winberg. At one point I had convinced myself that Ramnås was a farm in Holsljunga which no longer existed. Since the birth records for Holsljunga are missing for the year 1790, I was resigned to the conclusion that Nils's parents would never be found.

On a trip to Sweden in 1994 we arrived in the village of Kinna in mid-afternoon on a Saturday. It was my intention to attend the Sunday service in Holsljunga at the church where my ancestors were baptized. We found a place to stay and decided that we should drive over and check out the church schedule for Sunday.

## A case of serendipity

On our return trip toward Kinna, we passed through another small village called Öxabäck where we had noticed an antique store which was open earlier. Since we had plenty of time and no further plans, we stopped to browse. My wife looked at furniture and dishes and other old household artifacts. I went hunting for books. We had only been there a few minutes when I picked up a relatively new book called *Öxabäck Socken - historia gårdar folk*. I knew that this translated roughly to *Öxabäck parish*

– the history of the farm people. In thumbing through the index I found a farm called Ramnås and on page 181 found the notation, "Nils 1790 (kallade sig Vinberg)." My heart nearly jumped out of my chest as I asked the storeowner to confirm my translation of the Swedish parenthetical phase - (called himself Vinberg). We bought two copies of the book.

### Backa torp – Ramnås 1:14

Detta torp omnämns i mantalslängder redan 1724. Där finns här Nils Nilsson, fattig. Året efter finns också samma notering samt att han är gammal och varit soldat. Efter honom kommer Arfwid Trending. Han ligger är en senare notis om honom. Från 1729 och fram till mitten av 1750 omnämns backstugan som obesutten och även som öde.

Vid 1800-talets början finns här profoss Jöns Nilsson född 1756 på Vitatorpet samt hustrun Malin Jönsdotr född 1745, vigda 1781. Deras barn: Johannes 1784 (senare Bredhult), Christina 1786 (gift med knekten Sjö), Nils 1790 (kallade sig Vinberg), Edla 1792 (flyttade till Roasjö). Jöns noteras som bräcklig 1818–20.

Nils Jönsson Winberg married Sara Andersdotter 22 September 1827 in Holsljunga parish. Sara brought to the family an illegitimate daughter, Anna Greta, who was born in 1818. Two more children were born to this marriage before Sara died in 1834. Johan Justus was born 26 November 1824 in Hökabergh in Holsljunga and his brother, Anders Magnus, was born 26 May 1828. It should be noted that illegitimacy was not uncommon among the families of Sweden at this time. Sometimes the parents married later as in the case of Johan Justus, but in other cases no wedding bells followed.

Swedish church records contain the name of the father when it was known or suspected, and the child then usually carried the father's patronymic surname. In other cases when no father was named, the surname might be the same as the mother's or in rare instances, the child might have a female patronymic [metronymic] such as Annasdotter.

### Hökabergh

I am not certain if we actually located Hökaberghs *led* on our 1994 trip. We did positively identify the main farm called Hökabergh. The word *led* in Swedish is a synonym for *väg* which means road or way. On the road toward the main farm there was a small *torp*, with a man out near the road. I asked him if this was Hökaberghs *led*. He pointed toward the bigger farm house down the road and said that was Hökabergh. It may well have been the small *torp* where we stopped.

The Holsljunga Parish book says that the farm Hökabergh has been listed as a taxable property since 1567 and took its name from a farmer who lived there in that era. He was simply called Höke. At various times the farm has been called Hökebeck, Hakabergh, and Höckabärg.

At the time of his marriage, Nils's occupation was identified as that of a *Skrifvare* which is defined as a writer. In that era the word had a different meaning than the present day. The occupation was in the context of someone who wrote docu-



Holsljunga church.

ments or letters for those who were unable to do so for themselves. At any rate it is an indication that he had been educated above the level of most of his contemporaries. His education and later occupation was in all likelihood linked to the reason he assumed the surname Winberg.

The custom of taking a fixed surname was usually associated with acquiring a respectable position in the community or accumulation of wealth. The nobility in Sweden were the first to start using fixed surnames, followed by merchants, craftsmen, and large land holders.

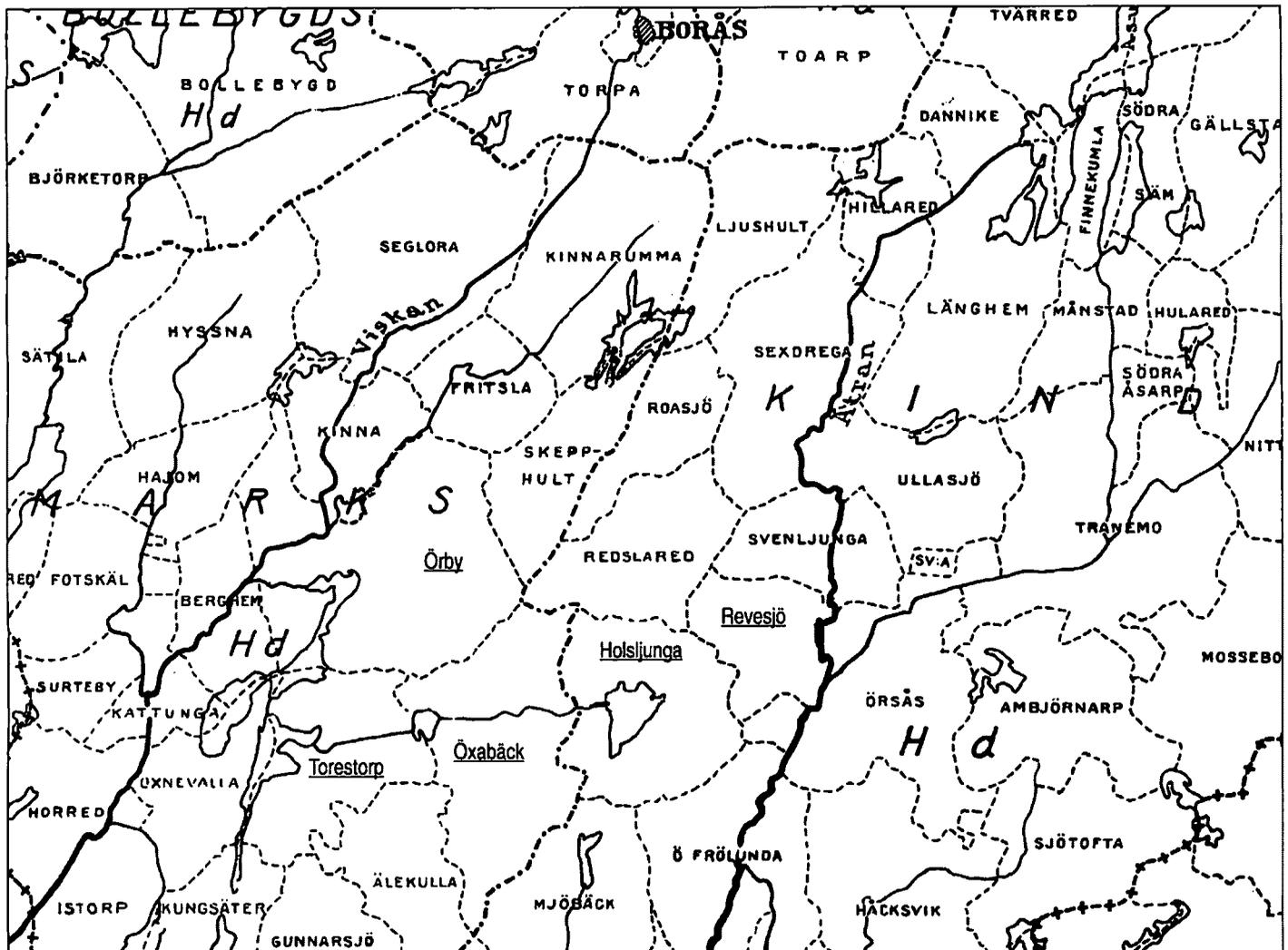
It should also be noted that there is really no 'W' in the Swedish alphabet. A 'W' is only found as the first letter of surnames or place names. The pronunciation equates to what the Swedes call a double 'V'.

Nils's wife, Sara, age 44, died on 1 April 1834 in childbed and the child died with her. A second marriage in 1836 to Edda Catherina Bengtsdotter, who was twenty years younger than Nils, produced five more children. Some of the descendants of this second marriage reside today in Kinna, Sweden.

Johan Justus was probably a farmer as he is not otherwise identified. In 1858 he married Augusta Eleonora Andersdotter, born 3 October 1830 in Holsljunga. The family lived on a lake in the *Backstuga* of a place called Sjöganäs. We visited this area in 1994 and saw the main house still called Sjöganäs today. It is used as a modern day vacation home. There are several out-buildings which could have been the *Backstuga* in the time the Winberg family lived there. There were five children born to this marriage – Alfrid 1859, Johan Nicolaus 1862 (died as an infant in 1863),

Personernas namn, stånd, arbete, yrke och näringsföreläggning (bäckstuga- inhyssa- och fattighjöl, nationalitet (om främmande), lyten (svaginta, blinda, dösfatumena)	Födelse-		Äktenskap.	Flyttat	Död.
	År.	Mån. och dag.			
Backstuga Sjöganäs					
Nils Johan Winberg	1790	26	1790	1827	
Christina Bengtsdotter	1816	10	1816	1836	
Alfrid	1859	27			
Johan Nicolaus	1862	10			1863
Edla	1792	10			
Sara Eleonora	1830	3			

Nils Johan Winberg and family at cottage Sjöganäs on Danskabo lands in Holsljunga parish [Holsljunga AI:4, p.186]



Edvard 1865, and the twin sons Peter and Severin in 1870.

Several interesting notes appear in the Holsljunga *Husförhörlängd*. One indicates that Johan Justus was “punished for theft in 1848 and had (an) illegitimate daughter in 1851.” I have only partially researched these notations, but have learned that the 1848 incident involved breaking into a house. Johan’s *oäkta* (illegitimate) daughter was named Anna Christina, and she was born 29 September 1851. Her mother was Ingrid Sara Petersdotter who was from Burseryd Parish in neighboring Jönköpings län. The record of Anna’s birth indicates that Johan Justus acknowledged that he was the child’s father but did not marry the mother.

In 1883 the record says that Peter and Severin have received help “from the Royal Order of Seraphim’s Guild and even the bootbox.” Swedish nationals have told me that these

notations refer to charitable contributions to the two boys. From the above it would certainly appear that their home life during this period of time may have been hectic.

Although family tradition says the twins were from Kinna, all of their family data is found in the parish records of Holsljunga. Kinna is the largest city in the area and perhaps they worked there or considered themselves a part of that city.

### Going to America

The records in Sweden indicate that 37,276 of her citizens left the country in 1891. The vast majority of these immigrants came to the United States. Peter and Severin Winberg were among these Swedes who left their homeland forever that year. When we visited the *Emigrantinstitutet* in Växjö we saw copies of the three part tickets which were

issued to our ancestors.

The twin brothers were passengers on a ship called *Romeo* which departed Göteborg, Sweden, on April 24, 1891. The first part of their journey took them to Hull, England, where they left the ship and boarded a train for Liverpool. The third and final part of the ticket was for the voyage across the Atlantic where they arrived at the port of New York. I have not researched the name of the ship which carried them on to New York which was their stated destination upon leaving Sweden. I have a copy of the *Romeo* passenger list, and it is interesting to note that although they were twins traveling together, Peter’s surname is spelled ‘Winberg’ and Severin’s is listed as ‘Vinberg.’

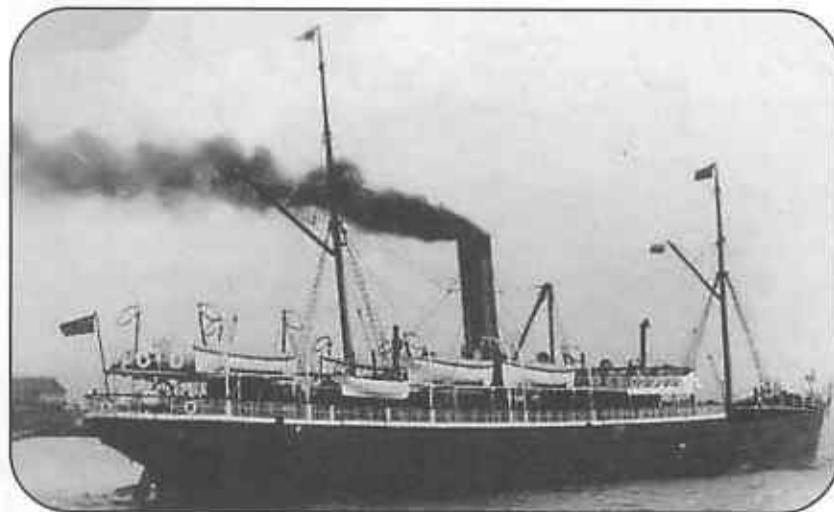
Interestingly, Peter and Severin do not show up on the Galesburg City directory records until 1895. So did they spend some time in other parts

of the United States after they arrived in New York? No one seems to have any information, and oddly enough there are no family stories. Peter's obituary says they came directly to Galesburg, but it also says they immigrated in 1892 which is incorrect. In the 1895 city directory their name is spelled Wineberg and both list their occupation as brick mason. By 1897 the directory lists their name as Weinberg which is the way most family members spell the name today.

So why did Severin and Peter choose Galesburg, Illinois, as their destination of all the places in the United States? It was a mystery to me until a couple of years ago when I received a letter from a descendant of Peter Winberg, the twin brother of my ancestor.

Nancy Winberg Sutton had some old papers from Peter, her grandfather, which indicated that the twins had relatives living in Galesburg at the time they immigrated. This was the first indication of earlier relatives who had chosen Galesburg as a home in the United States. The papers indicated that this relative's name was Eric Anderson; he was a brick mason, and Peter and Severin worked for him when they first arrived in the United States. He was born in Holsljunga Parish 30 September 1832, and turned out to be the next younger brother of Augusta Eleonora Andersdotter, the twin's mother. I have copies of several books compiled by the Knox County Genealogical Society and I wanted to know who this Eric Anderson was. I checked several of these books to see if there was an Eric Anderson listed.

I immediately found Erick Anderson listed in the 1880 Census Index for Galesburg. His occupation is



The S/S Romeo.

listed as brick mason. This same individual appears again with his family in the 1900 Census Index. Last I checked for an obituary and found the conclusive evidence that this Erick Anderson was indeed the maternal uncle of Severin and Peter and immigrated to the U.S. in 1866. The date of birth listed in the obituary matches that of the brother of Augusta Eleonora Andersdotter in Sweden.

Additionally, the obituary of Erick Magnus Anderson, who died in 1904, mentions another brother named Gustavus Anderson. More research in the Galesburg books disclosed that John A. Anderson born 28 September 1849 in Revesjö Parish was one and the same as Johan August Andersson, another brother of Augusta Eleonora Andersdotter. In Galesburg he sometimes used his middle name and was known as Gus. He died in Galesburg in 1910. Both of these Anderson uncles had families in Galesburg. A side note may be of interest. I have a 1934 Galesburg city directory. Erick Anderson's oldest son, Andrew Victor, is listed as a

building contractor in the 1934 city directory.

Severin married Anna Sofia (Jonsdotter) Johnson on 6 July 1897 in Monmouth, Illinois. Anna was born 27 February 1876 in Ryssby Parish in Kalmar län. The following year the first of their six children was born: Selma Eleanore - 1898, then came Rangnee Marie - 1900, Hjalmar Naphtalia - 1902, Karl Theodore - 1905, Reuben Leonard - 1907, and finally William Gustav - 1911. Tragically, Anna died in 1918 of typhoid fever and Severin was killed in an industrial accident in 1920 leaving the six young children without parents.

Hjalmar, the third child of Severin and Anna, was a first generation American Swede and my maternal grandfather.

### Note:

1) *Profoss* was originally a military official, who had to execute corporal punishment, like flogging. This was later also a function in the civil society, and each town or legal district (*härad*) could have their own *profoss*, who carried out the sentences of corporal punishment passed by the court. (*Nordisk Familjebok*)

### Contact information

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Anderson-Enck M. one of the old residents of this city died at his home 258 Monroe Saturday evening of complication of diseases. Having lived so many years and being employed as brick mason he was well known. Born Sept-31-1832 in Holngienga, Socken Wester golland, Sweden. Came to this country 1866 direct to Galesburg. Married 1871 Christina Anderson. They had seven children, Victor Annie, Earnest, Levi, Herman, Jessie, Reuben. A brother, Gustavus Anderson in this city, four sisters living in Sweden. The funeral will be held Tuesday morning.  
Dec-12-1904 186