

Swedish American Genealogist

Volume 19
Number 2 *Double Issue*

Article 18

9-1-1999

A Returning Shoemaker

Lennart Limberg

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Limberg, Lennart (1999) "A Returning Shoemaker," *Swedish American Genealogist*. Vol. 19 : No. 2 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol19/iss2/18>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

A Returning Shoemaker

Lennart Limberg*

In the spring of 1998 some articles about Swedish-Americans in the Midwest were published in *Göteborgs-Posten*, the leading newspaper on the western coast of Sweden. The articles prompted Hugo Schöllin to write the following letter to journalist Karl-Erik Magnusson:

I read your article about the emigration to America, and I now ask if the enclosed photos and documentation might be of interest to you.

The shoemaker, Frans Oscar Karlsson-Schöllin, was born in 1858 near Kumla and emigrated around 1875 to Chicago. He was first employed in a factory and you can see him pictured together with several Swedish mates. Later he opened (or bought) a shoe shop and then spelled his name Schelein according to the pronunciation.

Schöllin returned to Sweden around 1910 as a well-to-do man. He bought a house at Motala and started as a specially trained shoemaker producing riding boots and boots for ladies. The latter were tight and long, with 14-centimeter high heels and 120 eyelets. He had customers from the capitals of Europe and from Hollywood.

Schöllin died at the age of 75 in Jönköping in 1933, and with him one of the last specially trained shoemaking craftsmen.

Hugo Schöllin,
stepson of F. O. Schöllin

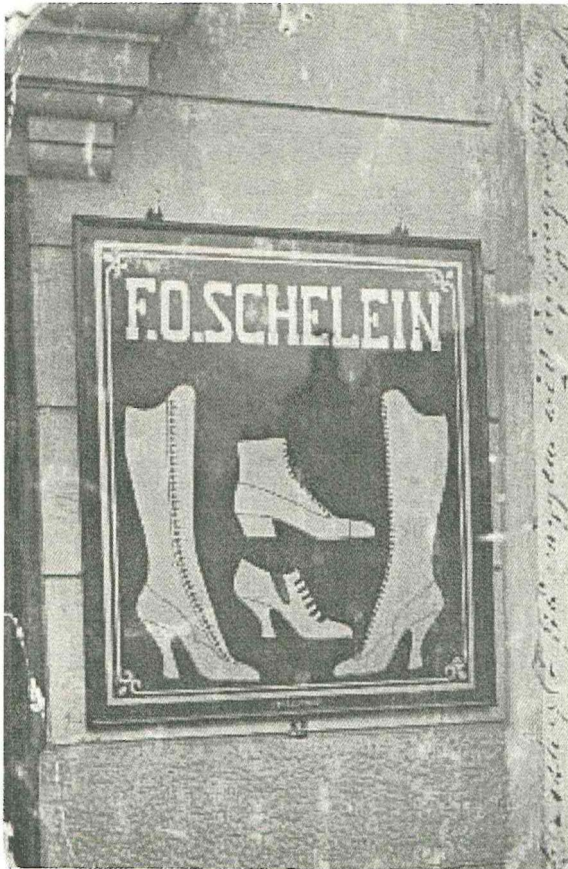
Enclosed in the letter were three photos showing Schöllin outside the Chicago factory, his shop in Jönköping, and an example of his spectacular boots for ladies. Karl-Erik Magnusson handed over the material to our research project *Göteborgs-Emigranten*. I decided to find out if this shoe-maker, Frans Oscar Karlsson-Schöllin, could be further traced in the sources.

As a start, I called the writer of the letter, Hugo Schöllin, asked for an interview, and was given some further details. Frans Oscar Schöllin died on 4 January 1933, when he was seventy-five years old. Therefore, his year of birth was estimated by his son to be ca. 1858. Hugo also told me that, after his return

* Lennart Limberg is the general secretary of Riksföreningen Sverigekontakt (the National Association for Contact with Sweden), Dicksonsgatan 6, Box 53066, S-400 14 Göteborg, Sweden. <e-mail: sverigenkontakt@tripnet.se> He also leads the research project *Göteborgs-Emigranten*.

to Sweden, Frans Oscar first lived at Kungsgatan 15 in Motala, before he bought Villa Fridhem at Skolgatan 2 in the same town. On 14 May 1921 he married his housekeeper, Ester Cecilia Palmqvist, who was born 21 April 1894 in Frinnaryd Parish (Jön.), Småland.

In 1925 the family, now comprised of Frans Oscar, Ester Cecilia, and Hugo (born in 1915; living with them since 1918; and adopted right after their marriage), moved to Jönköping. A shop was opened at Storgatan 88 and Frans Oscar's craftsmanship gave him many international customers. Besides the fancy ladies' production, Frans Oscar delivered riding boots to the officers of the local artillery regiment.



The silhouette seen in F. O. Schelein's sign may be the tower of the town hall (in Chicago?).

So far we only have the memories of Hugo Schöllin. If we want to find out more specific details about the returning shoemaker, Frans Oscar, we must use various registers in Sweden.

Archive Registers

If we start with the fact that Frans Oscar died 4 January 1933, we can check this with Kristina Parish in Jönköping and find that the date of his death is correct. There we also learn that Frans Oscar moved from Motala to Jönköping 10 November 1924, together with his wife, Ester Cecilia, and foster son, Karl Hugo. Frans Oscar's date and place of birth are also given—2 March 1857 in Svennevad Parish (Öre.). We are also told that his adopted son's mother was Johanna Helena Pettersson, who was born 20 March 1895.

Perhaps Frans Oscar had a good reason to adopt an illegitimate child. When we turned to the provincial archives at Motala to ask for the records of Svennevad Parish, the entry of Frans Oscar's birth on 2 March 1857 tells us that he was the illegitimate son of "pigan Carolina Jansdotter" at Baflinge.

A good source of information is the household examination roll (*husförhörslängd*). We ordered it from Svensk Arkivinformation [SVAR], the Swedish Archive Information service. In the household examination roll for Svennevad Parish covering the period 1856-1860 we learn that Carolina Jansdotter was born on 6 February 1836. She moved to the farm Baflinge in 1855 and had an illegitimate son who was born 3 March 1857 and christened Frans Oscar on 24 April.

We can trace the life of this little family through the subsequent records. In 1858 Carolina and her son moved to Fogelhult to live with her brother, the crofter Jan Erik Jansson and his family.

In the household examination roll covering the period 1861-1865, Frans Oscar is now called Carlsson, the mother's family name is still Jansdotter, and her second illegitimate child, born 25 May 1865, is called Johan August Schöllin.

In 1867 Carolina moves to the small farm Johannisberg to live with the bricklayer Johan August Schöllin, born 24 August 1821 in Örebro. They are blessed with two more boys: Eberhard Mauritz Schöllin, born 7 November 1867, and Edward Schöllin, born 24 September 1869. Finally, Carolina is married to her bricklayer on 9 February 1870 and two more children follow: a daughter, Beda Serafia, born 8 January 1874, and a son, Karl Otto, born 31 March 1875.

In the next volume of records, Frans Oscar Carlsson is raised to stepson (*stjufson*) and in 1875 he moves to the nearby farm Bäcketorp, where he is registered as a farmhand (*dräng*) and finally gets rid of the mark “*oä[kt]a*” (illegitimate child). He is now eighteen years old.

In the household examination roll for the period 1876-1880, Frans Oscar is still at Bäcketorp registered as a farmhand. We further learn that he was vaccinated against smallpox, that he was able to read and had an understanding of the Christian faith, that he came to the Holy Communion 26 August 1877, and that he fulfilled elementary military training in 1878 and 1879.

The next volume informs us that Frans Oscar now entered a new phase of his life. He is registered as a “Baptist” and had moved to the nearby town of Motala on 21 November 1881. He is twenty-four years old.

In the CD EMIGRANTEN, the Swedish emigrants are listed, and in Emihamn we find the large groups leaving Sweden from Gothenburg. There we find Oscar Schöllin from Motala emigrating on 8 February 1889, with the destination listed as Jamestown, New York. His age was given as thirty-one.

Administrative Records

From the County Court of Jönköping we can ask for the inventory (*bouppteckning*) following his death. After a telephone call, this was sent to us. It shows that the assets were totally balanced by the debts. The direct heir was Ester Cecilia and it was also stated that Frans Oscar had half sisters and brothers “unknown to numbers, names and places of dwelling.”

A testament is quoted in the inventory giving the surviving wife full right to all assets. This testament was signed at Motala on 14 August 1922 by Frans Oscar Schelein and Ester Cecilia Schelein. The American spelling of the name was obviously kept some years in Sweden. In brackets under Frans Oscar's name is added that he officially was registered as Karlsson Schöllin.

From a photo in the family archives of the son, Hugo Schöllin, showing the shoemaker shop in Jönköping, we can see that Frans Oscar, after 1924, advertised himself as Schöllin. When Ester Cecilia signs the inventory, she is also Ester Schöllin.

In the inventory no house is mentioned. According to the son, Hugo, Frans Oscar bought a house when he came back from America and settled in Motala. He gave the impression that he also bought a house when he moved to Jönköping. Telephone calls to the local land registers (*fastighetsregistret*) in

Jönköping and Motala confirmed that Frans Oscar Schöllin never owned the houses at Östra Storgatan 88 in Jönköping and Skolgatan 2 in Motala.



Schöllin's shop in Jönköping. The window signs read: Schöllins / Skomakeri / Beställningar. Reparationer. / Tel. 1792 (Schöllin's Shoemakers Workshop / Orders. Repairs. / Telephone 1792). The man in the photograph is one of Frans Oscar's assistants.

Return

It was then time to find out when Frans Oscar actually returned from America and settled in Motala. The parish register did not indicate Schöllin as a newcomer around 1910, when he was supposed to have returned. However, he was registered in Motala on 2 November 1921, when he moved in from Frinnaryd Parish, together with his wife, Ester Cecilia, and his foster son, Karl Hugo Pettersson. I further learned that Ester Cecilia was Frans Oscar's second wife. He was registered as a widower (or divorced) since 11 June 1897.

In the parish register of Motala were two addresses: Bispotalagatan 15 and then Kungsgatan 5. Was Frans Oscar owner of any of these houses? Another call to the Land register gave a negative answer.

A major question remained to be solved. When had Frans Oscar returned to Sweden? The parish register of Frinnaryd was consulted, but he only lived there for one year. In 1920 he had moved there from Motala.

The friendly and helpful personnel at Motala parish office finally found the entry proving Frans Oscar Schöllin's return from the U.S. In December 1899 he came back to Motala and again he is registered as a "Baptist." Furthermore, it is stated that he "has been living in North America" and "is lacking proof of freedom to marry" (*saknar betyg om hinderslöshet*), which might indicate that he had been married in America.

He lived at several addresses in Motala before he moved to "Villa Fridhem" (on Bispotalagatan 15) in 1914, a house that he later acquired in 1917. In 1918 the foster son Karl Hugo moved in with Frans Oscar and perhaps this made it necessary for him to marry.

Conclusion

This short essay, tracing the life of a returning emigrant, is written to demonstrate two things. Firstly, any family tradition may be false. In the case of Frans Oscar's story, told by his son, only the date of his death was correct. We had to verify his date of birth, the year of emigration, the year of return, and the addresses where he lived in Motala.

Secondly, my investigation is a good example of how accessible the source material is in Sweden. By obtaining material from SVAR, from the County Court, and from several telephone calls, I easily traced Frans Oscar through his whole life. It would be interesting to ask what can be found of him in Chicago.



Two examples of Schöllin's fancy boots for ladies.