The Welin families and my aunt Ida in Sioux City

Nels and Elna Welin

Nels and Christina Welin

Ida Welin

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Sweden 2019
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About my research

Thank you; Tack så mycket
Introduction

This is a story of some Swedish immigrants who arrived to United States 100-150 years ago.

They made many sacrifices, had many difficulties and severe setbacks to overcome in the new country. But they were strong people and created better chances for their grown-up children in the new country. They are the ancestors of many now living Americans.

In 1999 my cousin Erik Nilssagård phone me and told me he had found out that our grandfather had got a daughter before his marriage. The mother Christina with daughter Ida had emigrated to America. This was a surprise for both of us who had started to make ancestry research.

I felt I had to know what had happened to Christina and Ida. I started to make research of their American lives from Sweden.

I have always been a freak of learning about history. The Swedish emigration to USA in the late 1900th century is a very important subject that has fascinated me. And how the first generation of immigrants had to start with empty hands to create a better life for their families in the new country.
In June 2018 I put a rose at the grave of my aunt Ida. Then I thought that my research had come to an end after 18 years! It had given me so much satisfaction and joy including all the personal contacts with Swedes and Americans. During some periods I have been very active and during long periods not at all. But always I have had my research objective in my mind.

This documentary is about Christina, Ida and the families of Nels Welin who married Christina. As they lived most of their lives in Sioux City, Iowa I am starting to describe the history of the city.

To my American readers I regret my Swenglish. We Swedes are overestimating our English although we are considered to have the best knowledge of the language of all non-English speaking people in the world.

If someone has more information about the Welin families and my aunt Ida or you think some information is not accurate, I am very thankful if you will contact me.
The history of Sioux City

General

Sioux City is situated in the middle of the farming heartland by Missouri river near the point where the borders of Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota meet.

Between 1870 and 1890 the city grew by leaps and bounds due to the great speed in the cultivation of the soil in Iowa, South Dakota and Nebraska.

In 1855 only two houses existed where Sioux City now stands. By the end of the same year there were nine houses. Of these were two hotels, two stores and one post office. In 1856 there were 90 houses and 400 inhabitants.

1889 the city had 40 000 inhabitants, 150 new businesses, 763 boarding houses and 8 churches were built. The city transportation was served by street cars, driven by horses, by cables and by steam.

![Sioux City in 1888. To the left Missouri river and to the right Floyd river. In the left circle ”The Swedish area” and in the right circle the East Bottoms](image)

The main industries were the big meat packing companies and trade in grain, mainly corn. The packing companies were 4 in numbers. In 1888, 3 of them were working and slaughtered 11 000 hogs and 2 000 cattle per day. Many immigrants, mostly young men, flowed into the city which created problems of order in the city. Some people called the city for “Little Chicago”.
4th street in Sioux City 1890

Elevated train in Sioux City

The great flood 1892 in Sioux City
Sioux City had very good railway communications. Across the Missouri river was built a bridge. No less than 36 passenger trains arrived and made departure every day.

The city suffered two setbacks during the decade 1890. One disaster was the great flood of 1892 which partly closed the stockyards. The other was an economic crisis. The huge expansion in the 1880ies had partly been created by a financial bubble with capital from the east coast. The real estate prices fell dramatical and many enterprises went bankrupt. First after 10 years the situation had been normalized, but the rate of expansion of the 1880ies never returned.

The employees who came to work in meat packing plants established communities in the area nearby which came to be called the “Bottoms” because of their location on the river bottoms. East Bottoms east of the downtown (see map on page 5) and South Bottoms more south closer to the Missouri river. Need for workers also increased with the introduction of rail yards and rail repair shops, increasing the population of a diverse community in these neighbourhoods. South Bottoms grew bigger than East Bottoms.

Today the population of the city is approximately 80 000.

The Swedish community

In 1890 the Swedes numbered 4000 and were the largest ethnic group. There was a big concentration of Swedes east of the center between Court Street and Clark Street (See map on page 5). At Iowa Street lived with few exceptions only Swedish emigrants.

Already from the founding of the city Swedes had established different businesses. Many had grocery stores. But there were also building contractors. The Swedes were established in most businesses, some even as joint owners in small local banks. But most of the Swedes were blue collar workers. Many worked as carpenters or as railway workers. In the wealthier area it was common that newly arrived young Swedish women worked as maids. Swedes worked also in the enormous packing houses. But normally they did not stay long due to the bad working conditions.

There were 3 Swedish churches in the city that had services in the Swedish language. The members made great sacrifices economically and by their own labour to build the churches and to keep the services running.

The Swedish Augustana church was the biggest and had been established in 1875 by active immigrants who had been members of the Swedish state church. Church buildings were built as the number of members increased; the latest was inaugurated in 1891 at Court Street. It is still in use.

"Svenska Missionsförsamlingen” (The Swedish mission parish) was the oldest Swedish church and was established already in 1873. It later changed its name to ”First Covenant Church”. Nels and Ellen Welin were two of the founders. More about that on page 12. The Swedish Baptist parish was founded in 1874. The parish built its own church building although the number of members was only about 130.
The children of the 1st generation of immigrants spoke Swedish at home and in the local neighbourhood. Now and then existed local newspapers in Swedish. At school and at work English was spoken. The churches had Sunday schools for children in Swedish. The adult children of the 1st generation were anxious to speak good English to be regarded as established Americans.

In the beginning of the 20th century the population pattern began to change in the Swedish dwelling area. The wealthier Swedes moved to new housing areas in the outskirts of the city and people from other communities moved in.

During the 20th century practically all ethnic groups were swallowed in the American melting pot and began to identify themselves as Americans with little interest in their ancestry. Many Swedes in the 2nd generation married someone from another ethnic group. Most children in the 2nd generation lost the Swedish language. The language law in the state of Iowa of 1917 demanded that all services in the churches must be held in English. The law should be regarded in the light that the present governor did not approve of the use of the German language as USA was at war with Germany. The law also stuck other languages. But it was only a matter of time before Swedish would be replaced by English in the churches. The law made the change faster.

During the last decades the immigration from Mexico has increased. When I visited the city in 2007 a rather large Spanish speaking Mexican ethnic group lived in the old Swedish area. Many were working in the remaining packing house. They had their own churches and stores. The Augustana parish still exist and are now called Augustana Lutheran church. The old church buildings of First Covenant church and the Swedish Baptist Church had been taken over by Mexican parishes.

Today very little remains in Sioux City of the Swedish enclave that existed 100-150 years ago which played an important role in the life of the first generation of the Swedish immigrants.
The family of Nels and Ellen Welin

Swedish background

Nels Welin was born as Nils Persson in 1844 in the village Ormatofta in the southern province Skåne in Sweden. The village was situated 5 miles southwest of the city of Kristianstad. (See map page 4)

Ormatofta village consisted of a handful of farms. Historically the farms were owned by the noble family Hamilton for generations.

One of the farms was bought by Nils in 1866. The size of an overage farm in the village was only 7 acres cultivated area plus some forest area. The mother of Nils died in 1852 when Nils was 4 years of age. She had got one daughter Anna and three sons: Nils, Per and Jöns. One year after the death of his mother his father was remarried with Anna Mattisdotter. They got 2 sons and two daughters.

Nels married in 1868 Elna (Ellen) Nilsdotter and their first child Elna (Ellen) was born in 1870.

The farm was small but Nils was successful in his farming. In three years he had doubled his crop. After 7 years of farming in 1873 he decided to sell the farm and emigrate to America which his brother Pehr (Pete) already had done in 1866.

Emigration to Sioux City, Iowa, USA 1873

In April 1873 Nils and Elna Persson with daughter Elna left the village Ormatofta. Nils’ brother Jöns (John) also joined them for America. They never saw their parents, brothers and sisters again who stayed in Sweden.

Probably the family went by train to Malmö, ship to Copenhagen in Denmark, ship to Hull in England, train to Liverpool, ship to New York and train to Omaha, Nebraska. This was a standard route from southern Sweden and was sold as a travelling package by emigration agents in Sweden. See the advertisement below from the year 1868. In English: “Prices from Sweden for journey by Hull and Liverpool to Omaha, Nebraska 215 R:dr” (R:dr = Riksdaler).

Cash payment for a farmhand per year was 100 Riksdaler. This indicate that most of Nels’ profit from the sale of his farm went to buy the tickets for his family.

The journey was a great adventure for the family. They had probably never been outside their neighbourhood, never went by train, never seen the sea and only spoke, read and wrote Swedish. The whole journey to Omaha took several weeks including 12 days on the Atlantic and one or two days in New York City. In New York they had to pass the old station Castle Garden on the southwest point of Manhattan in order to be examined and accepted as emigrants to USA.

From Omaha they continued by train to Columbus NE, a small town 70 miles west from Omaha. They planned to meet Nils’ brother Pete (Pehr) there. But they did not meet. So they hired a “livery man” and drove a whole day to a farm where Pete lived and worked. A very long tiresome and difficult journey was at last ended.
After the arrival of Nils and John to brother Pete, John stayed with Pete. Both Pete and John became later farmers. But the destiny for brother Nils moved in another direction. Within a few months after the arrival to Nebraska, his family moved to Sioux City, Iowa. They stayed in the city for the rest of their lives.

Nils’ brother Pehr had changed his name to Pete Welin in America. In consequence Nils changed his name to Nels Welin in the new country.

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Prices in 1868 from Sweden to destinations in USA in Swedish currency

**The first difficult years of the family—cultivation setbacks**

After the arrival from Sweden of Nils and John to his brother Pete in Nebraska, John stayed with Pete. Both Pete and John became later farmers. But the destiny for brother Nils moved in another direction. Within a few months after the arrival to Nebraska Nels Welin’s family moved to Sioux City. They stayed in the city for the rest of their lives.
A document about the early difficult years in America of Nels Welin
The Nels Welin family had arrived to Nebraska in May 1873 and celebrated the 4th of July in the small town Freemont close to Omaha. It must have been a great experience for the newcomers and a positive start in the new country. He worked at a lumber yard for $1.50 a day and rented a house for $7 a month.

Nels met a Swede named Peterson who was a railroad contractor and lived in Sioux City. Probably Peterson promised better jobs there so the family moved to the city. He got a job to grade roads with horses. That means to work on building streets and roads. The road grader was pulled by horses and moved the dirt (soil) to create the road bed. The population grow in the city and in the region were exploding and the demand of making roads were high. And as former farmer from Sweden he was used to work with soil.

When Nels planned to move with his family to another place for work his wife Ellen got sick and had to stay in Sioux City. A possible reason why Nels never became a farmer on the great plains as his brothers Peter and John. Although he was an experienced farmer.

Based in Sioux City he often worked outside the city with grading and as farmers help. Once he walked 30 miles on a hot day to stack wheat. Another job was to make hay for $3 a day or saw timber for 75 cents a day.

When he went to Sioux Falls (90 miles north of Sioux City) to grind he went by a wagon and two horses. On the way one horse died so he sold the wagon and the other horse to his companion.
Nels rented farm land close to the city near a mill dam at Floyd river. He payed $150 yearly for 25 acres. He sold corn for 20 cents per bushel and planted potatoes and got a good crop. But bugs ate the entire crop. The next year a flood destroyed the mill dam and a bridge which caused a longer walk from the home to the field. So he built a shack there. And then he was hit by the next blow. His harvest of corn and oats were all spoiled by a flood and he lost everything. These setbacks forced him to start up his grinding work again to make a living for his family.

Founders of the first Swedish-American church in Sioux City

On September 20th 1873 Nels and Elna Welin were present at the meeting of 28 persons when the “Svenska Missionsförsamlingen” (English: The Swedish Mission Parish) was established. They were among the most anxious at the meeting.

The first own church building was ready 1882. In 1888 the members had increased to 450 members and a bigger church was needed. A new building started to be constructed on a new site.

Nels Welin was elected as member of the board of the building project which consisted of 8 members. The church was ready the following year. The cost was $7,500. In 1915 the 3rd church building was erected at Court street and 10th street. The name of the church was changed to “First Covenant Church”.

Ellen Welin with Kersti Mari, Alice and Swan
East Bottoms in 1888. The red rectangle represents the area where the Welin family lived. See detailed below.

The area of 7th St between Clark and Stuben St
Living in Sioux City during the decade 1880

In 1880 the family had 3 children: Ellen 10 years, Swan 5 years, Kersti Marie 3 years. And it was increased by Alice that year, Anna in 1884 and by David in 1887.

In the same year they got company from Sweden. The family of Anders and Elsa Swanson arrived from Ormatofta. Elsa was sister of Elna Welin. The Swanson’s moved soon in at 1508 7st Street only a few houses away from the Welin family. Anders was labourer and was registered as railroad repairer in 1887.

The Welin family lived at Howell Street just on the east side of the railway that separated the Swedish area with the area East Bottoms. This location was not far away from the area where Nels had been farming on the east side of Floyd River.

In 1885 they had moved to a small rented house at 1418 7th street near the corner of Lafayett St nearby. Some years later they owned the house. (See map page 14)

Nels had left the hard physical work with soil as grinder and farmer. In 1884 he was registered as railroad car repairer and in 1887 as car inspector. He also started early a small business selling hay and food using his contacts in the farm business.

The health disaster

- In February 1889 daughter Ellen, 19 years, died by pneumonia caused by typhoid. Typhoid may be caused by bacteria from bugs or fleas.
- In September 1891 wife Ellen, 40 years, died. In the beginning of the year she got serious influenza during several months that caused tuberculos which ended her life
- In October 1892 daughter Kersti Mari, 15 years, died caused by paralysis
- In June 1893 daughter Alice, 13 years died in tuberculos

Three of the victims died by pulmonary diseases. Possible cause may be bad environment in the small house where the family lived tight together. As the house was near the railway
tracks with very frequent steam-powered trains, the air was smoky. Maybe this also contributed to these diseases. These diseases can nowadays be cured by medicines.

The paralysis of Kersti Mari may have different causes. One reason could be psychic. She had at the age of 15 been hit by a catastrophe. She had lost her mother and her big sister. And one of her small sisters had a deadly cough.

But these disasters were not enough. In February 1889 the brother-in-law and neighbor Anders Swanson died. Anders left wife Elsa with the children Swan 16 years, Anneni 7 years and Nils Alfred 3 years.

Nels wrote about the sad news to his family in Sweden. See the late answers by letter below from his sister Anna that he had seen for the last time 18 years ago. I have tried to translate it from Swedish to English although it contains old fashioned religious words which are difficult to interpret for me.

Onnatofta 9 February 92

My friend is mine. And I am his. I am holding him. And will not abandon him.

Dearest brother

With the above words I am greeting you as you have made the great and severe loss of your wife who was your best friend of all human beings on earth. I mean that you need to lean yourself tight against that friend who is saying: I am with you until the end of the world. And has the power to tell the waves and the storm to be calm when the waves of the emotion will create a flood.

It seemed that you did not have empathy from Mother or sisters or brother from home as we have waited so long to write but I can tell you that we feel very deep empathy for you and I am expressing myself with the same words as brother Jöns wrote home once:
The thought crushes often the wave that is between us. Oh how good it will become at home when all pains and fights are over, when all relatives will be together in peace with playing harps and cheering songs. Oh if we were there.

I can tell you that God has given us a daughter 28 December she was born. We have given her the name Anna Ester. We are all healthy. You and your children are heartily greeted from my husband and I. Your small children are greeted with kisses from their aunt.

Written kindly by your sister Hanna

The situation got critical for the big family when wife Ellen got sick. They needed a maid urgently who could take over the work of Ellen. They engaged Christina Johansdotter from Sweden.
Christina and Ida Johansdotter

Swedish background

Slätthög is situated in the region of Småland in the southern part of Sweden about 16 miles northwest of the town Växjö (see map page 4). The region is mostly covered by forests and lakes. Småland was one of the poorest region of Sweden 100-200 years ago.

From the parish of Slätthög emigrated around 900 persons to North America from a population of around 2500.

The cottage Berget 1865-1882

Christina was born in 1865 in a cottage in a forest located about 7 miles north from the church of Slätthög.. See map on page 19.

This place is a good example of old deserted living-places that you can find everywhere in the forests in Småland. They were created during the 19th century due to the increased population. The places could normally only feed one or two cows, a pig and fowls and gave mostly enough food for a family. The people who lived in the forests were the poorest group in the poor country of Sweden. The daily life was a fight for survival. Many children of these families moved to USA but most of them moved to the growing cities of Sweden in the beginning of 1900.

Christinas’ father and mother got 4 children and she was the second. When she was 11 years old her mother died. Her father was remarried 8 months after the death. The new family got 6 children. 2 of them died at an early age. The conditions in the cottage must have been very hard and difficult.
Present map of part of the Slätthög parish. Distance from Berget to Nilsagård = 7 miles

Berget = Birthplace of Christina
Lilla Norrhult = The home of Erik and Kristina Petterson, parents of 2 sisters in Sioux City
Södra Hult = the home of Christina and Ida before the emigration

Church of Slätthög
Nilsagård = The birthplace of Ida
The remainings of the cottage in the forest where Christina grow up. My daughter Lena is standing on the stones of the chimney.

**Nilsagård in Hössjö 1882-1890**

In the year 1882 when Christina was 16 years old, she moved to the farm Nilsagård in the village of Hössjö, situated about 1 mile south of the church of Slätthög, and was employed as a maid. A maid on a farm was always working, milking cows, feeding the animals, carrying water and so on… She lived very close to the family and had the meals together with them. In the winter many rooms in the houses were not heated and then the maids used to sleep with the children in the kitchen. On the farm lived the unmarried son Anders Johan Carlsson, born 1852 with his parents Carl Magnus Jönsson and Lena Cajsa Andersdotter. The small farm had belonged to the family for many generations. The size was only 120 acres, mostly covered by forest. In spite of the small farm the family was relatively wealthy.

In April 1889 gave the unmarried Christina birth to a daughter. Anders Johan acknowledged the fatherhood. It was not socially accepted in the strong religious environment of the parish to have children outside marriage although it was not uncommon.

We do not know anything about the kind of relation Christina and Anders had. At that time there was a strong class-difference between the families of the land-owners and the people without land. A farmer-boy should marry a farmer-girl and not a girl of the land-less people.

In June 1893 Anders Johan married Matilda Andersdotter. Her father had a big farm in another parish and he had been representing the region at the parliament in Stockholm.
Anders and Matilda got 5 children and 15 grandchildren. An interesting circumstance is that Anders gave his first daughter in his marriage the same name as his daughter in USA. Anders and Matilda are my grandparents on my father’s side. Anders Johan died in 1919 and Matilda in 1932.

The old house of Nilsagård today which is the summer house of my family
The cottage Södrahult 1890-1891

The unmarried mothers in Sweden had a very difficult position. It was a rule that the unmarried mother with the child should not stay in the home of the father. But Christina had one advantage compared with many others in her situation. Anders acknowledged the fatherhood and gave Christina a rather big sum of money as support.

In November 1890 Christina and daughter moved from Nilsagård to the cottage Södrahult situated 3 miles north of the church of Slätthög.

In the cottage lived also an old widower. There normally lived old and poor people who got some support from the parish. The living condition for Ida must have been very difficult.

Emigration to Sioux City 1891

Many young people from the parish emigrated to USA at that time for a better life.

The reason for the huge emigration was the population explosion during the 19th century, which meant that the farming in this part of Sweden could not feed the population. During the period 1820-1880 the population in Slätthög increased from 1500 to 2500 (+67%!).

The emigration increased to a great extent after 1867-1868 due to two bad harvests in a row which caused starvation among people. In the beginning of the decade 1890-1899 the emigration had culminated.

Emigration to America could also be an option for Christina. She was able to finance the journey. But as an unmarried mother with a small daughter, she needed someone who could help her to find a job over there. Otherwise it was too risky.

In the beginning of 1891 the Welin family in Sioux City needed a maid badly due to their health situation.

Nels and Ellen Welin were very well known in The Swedish Mission Parish as founders and active in the parish. Members were also two sisters from Slätthög in Småland. They lived with their families on Iowa Street not far from the Welin family.

The sisters know the situation of the Welin family and had contact by letter with their parents Erik Pettersson (57 years) and Kristina (75 years) at the cottage “Lilla Norrhult” (see map page 18). They were informed that a neighbor wanted to emigrate to USA. It was Christina Johanssdotter. She had a very good reputation as a hard working maid. The sisters had grown up not far from the cottage of Christina and probably remembered her from their childhood.

They promised to help Christina finding a job in Sioux City. If she already was promised the job at Welin’s when she pushed the button to emigrate is unclear. Anyway, she arrived with daughter to Sioux City in august 1891, 1 month before Ellen Welin died. We can assume that she immediately moved in with daughter at the house of Welin to take care of the situation.

The journey from Sweden to Sioux City had been a great adventure for Christina.
In July 1891 a group of 6 persons started the journey from Slätthög: Christina with daughter, Erik and Kristina Petterson. Also 2 young women who should join their families in Minnesota.

First by horse and railway to Göteborg (Gothenburg). There they embarked a ship to England. But the old couple were stopped by the harbour police. They were supposed to not be allowed to disembark in USA as they were too old to make a living there.

The other 4 went by ship to Hull in England and from there by train to Liverpool.

**SS Majestic**

In Liverpool they embarked the big emigration ship SS Majestic.

The group travelled in the cheapest class, the steerage class. 800 steerage passengers lived very tight in 3 sections on lower deck: the families, single men and single women. The main deck, fore and aft, formed a promenade and recreation for the steerage passengers, while the saloon passengers had a special separate deck amidships, all mixing of classes thus being avoided.

They arrived to New York in the beginning of August. The receiving bottleneck was the Old Barge office at Manhattan. There was passing about 2000 persons per day to be checked and hopefully be approved to enter the country.

After this trial waited a railway journey from New York to Sioux City. The first stop was Chicago were the group was separated. Christina with daughter to Sioux City and the two girls to Minnesota.

After a journey of several weeks by railways and by ships, Christina and Ida arrived to Sioux City in the middle of August 1891. The journey must have been a very tough and confusing experience. Christina had lived in the isolated countryside of Sweden all her life and probably never visited a town before and did not understand English. Now waited new challenges. To help the family of Welin, to adapt herself to a new country, to a new language and to a life in a city.
The family of Nels and Christina Welin

Living in Sioux City 1892-1929

The young maid Christina was a strong support to Nels after the death of his wife Ellen and daughter Kersti Mari.

In 1892, one year after Ellen’s death, Nels and Christina were married. At the time of the wedding lived in the house at 1418 7th street: Nels 48, Christina 27, Swan 17, Alice 12, Anna 8, David 5 and Ida 3 years old.

In 1893 daughter Alice died at the age of 13. But a light in the grief of the family was the birth of the first child in the new marriage. Daughter Ellen was born in July 1893, 5 days later of Alice’s death.

During the following years 4 more children were born in the new family: Albert in 1895, Alice in 1987, Elsie in 1899 and Effie in 1902.

In 1903 the family moved from 1418 7th Street to 1412 7th St at the corner of Clark Street.(see map page 14)

In 1907 Swan married Jessie Maud Haakinson. Swan was 32 and Jessie 24 years old. Swan moved out from the house of the Welin family and left his job in the store.

In 1908 Nels’ stepdaughter Ida married Charles Martin and moved out.

In 1912 the numbers of the addresses were changed at 7th st. The address of the Welin’s was changed from 1412 7th Street to 1500 7th Street.

The death returned to the family during the decade 1910.

- In 1912 the nurse Anna, 27 years, died in tuberculosis infected by patients.
- In 1916 the fireman David, 29 years, died in a motor cycle accident.
In 1920 Albert, Elsie and Effie still lived at the home of the parents. Albert had served in the 1st World War and was now taxi driver. Elsie was advertisement clerk and Effie clerk at the store.

It is unknown when daughter Ellen moved out from the family. However, in the decade 1920 when she was studying advertisement in Kansas C, her daughter Dorothy, born 1920 was living at her grandparents Christina and Nels. Dorothy had very good memories of her grandmother and gave each of her 2 daughters a name from her grandmother.

In 1929 Nels Welin died at the age of 85 years. During the last years he was blind.

**The Welin grocery store**

During the decade 1880 Nels Welin had started a small business selling hay and food from his home address using his contacts in the farm business. In 1890 he was an established grocer in the growing East Bottoms. At that time existed more than 200 grocery stores in Sioux City. Most of them served only the nearest neighborhood and the customers had to bring home the products by hand. In 1903 the family took over the grocery at the corner of Clark and 7th Streets (1412 7th St later number changed to 1500 7th St).

The son Swan worked in the store until he was married in 1907. He moved with his family to Denver CO in 1913. At a truckfarm outside the city he produced vegetables to be sold om markets. There are real estate records showing that Nels Welin owned some land east of Floyd River in the decade 1890. I assume that Nels also sold own produced vegetables in the store and that Swan had learned how to produce vegetables there.

In 1918 Christina took officially over the grocery with the help of daughter Effie. Christina continued to run the business for some years after the death of Nels.
Christina Welin 1929-1950

In the year 1930 the widow Christina Welin still lived together with son Albert and daughter Effie. Christina was registered as merchant. The owned house had a registered value of $1000.

In the beginning of the decade Effie moved to Fort Dodge, to work with her sister Ida at a County home.

11th June 1934 the son Albert died at the age of 38 years.

Widow Christina was remarried with Olaf Anderson. His name indicates he had Scandinavian background.

After the grocery was closed, Christina had lodgers in her house.

In January 1950 Christina slipped on the ice and broke her hip. Ida assisted her until she passed away in March.

Christina lived all her life in Sioux City on the same street after her arrival to USA. She learned to talk good English and had been very active until her accident.
Ida Welin-Martin-Spurgeon 1891-1964

The state of Iowa

Living in Iowa 1891-1930

Ida grew up together with many children in a small house where also the family had a small local grocery store which was their basic income.

Ida had arrived from Sweden with her mother Christina at the age of two years in 1891. Christina started working as maid in the family of Nels Welin. They were hit by health disasters. One month after the arrival wife Ellen died and the year after daughter Kersti Mari.

Short after the death of Kersti Mari, Nels and Christina were married. Ida got stepdaughter in the family which at that time also had the children living in the house: Swan 17 years, Alice 12 years, Anna 8 years, David 5 years.

The year after, in 1893 Alice died and the first child in the new family, Ellen was born.

The Welin family was increased with further 4 children between 1895 to 1903.

As a small child, Ida attended the Sunday school of the Swedish Mission Church. There she listened to the stories of Jesus life in Swedish. In 1903 she got confirmed in the same church.

When she and her sister Anna were attending the wedding of her brother Swan in 1907 she worked and lived with Anna in Cherokee, IA where Anna was a nurse.
I assume that they worked at Cherokee Mental Health Institute which was a state-run psychiatric facility. In 1910, 81 persons were employed in the nursing service department, caring for 881 patients. These employees worked 12 to 14 hours per day, with one half-day off per week, for a base salary of $24.00 to $30.00 per month, plus room and board. Most of the living quarters were located in the wards where the patients also resided.

In 1908 Ida Welin married Charles D Martin in Cherokee. At the marriage Ida was 19 and Charles 30 years. He was born in Illinois and had moved to Iowa in 1903.

In 1909 Ida and Charles got their only child Helen in the small town of Clarinda, IA. The reason why they moved to Clarinda after their marriage may depend on an employment offer of Ida at “Iowa State Hospital for Insane” after her experience in Cherokee.

In 1910 the Martin’s lived at 16th North Street in Clarinda and Charles is registered as butcher in a store.

In 1915 they had changed their lives. Now they lived on the countryside outside Clarinda at Bradyville in Township Buchanan. Charles was registered as farmer.
In 1920 the Martin family had moved back to Sioux City. They lived at 1620 7th Street only a few houses away from the Welin family. (See map page 14) Charles was now registered as salesman in the federal Census. And Ida as nurse in the private sector.

In the 1920th Charles got a new job as superintendent of the Iowa Broom Works at 7th Street close to their home and the Welin family. And Ida was employed as a helper at the same company.

During the decade they moved to 2120 7th Street east of Floyd River.

In 1928 daughter Helen, 18 years was married to Harold Cormany, 21 years. Both worked in a packing house.

According to the Sioux City directory Ida and Charles lived at different addresses in 1929. She at 13th Street and he at the old address at 7th Street. This is strange. Maybe they had problems in their marriage.

### Living at Webster County Home in the early decade 1930

In February 1930 Charles and Ida moved to Webster County Home near Fort Dodge, IA.

According to the newspaper clip above from February 1930, Charles had been superintendent of Iowa Broom Works for the last 6 years. He and Ida now left the company for employments at the County Home for poor and insane people, he as superintendent and she as matron and nurse.
The reason for leaving the company in Sioux City for the County home outside Fort Dodge is unknown. In 1930 the depression hit many factories to close or reduce the personal staff. Maybe this was the reason? According to a newspaper clip in October 1930, the secretary of state issued a cooperation charter to the Iowa Broom Works. The company was capitalised at $25,000 by the owner family Chesen. Another reason maybe that the owner family Chesen was not satisfied with Charles as superintendent?

It appears strange that Charles was employed as superintendent of an institution for insane people. Maybe he had been working at the Cherokee hospital when he met Ida? Or he had no experience at all of insane people? However, he seems to have a strong personality and talk people into hiring him for positions that he may not have any experience of. On the other hand he could count of the support of Ida who had the experience he may have lacked.

The Webster County Home was established in 1874 and provided service to the poor and insane residents in the county.

![The main building at Webster County Home](image)

In the decade 1930 there were about 100 patients divided in 4 groups - poor men, poor women, mentally ill men and mentally ill women. Most of them were elderly people. The main building was a large three-story mass flanked on both sides with 2 parallel wings of equal size. The ground floor housed the kitchen, laundry and food storage for the home. The central portion of the second story served as the living quarters for the home’s steward and his family.

The wings of the building were designed for the four major types of patients. The men and women lived isolated from each other. They contributed to the daily tasks of raising crops, cleaning, cooking, baking and caring for the livestock.

The staff consisted of 5-6 persons including Charles and Ida. Ida worked as a nurse. Doctors were called if needed and patients were transported to local hospitals if needed.

Doctor’s comments provide insights into the treatment of the poor and mentally ill. In April 1930 is found a doctor’s comments of the nurse Ida Martin. It is about a seventy-one year old woman. She described as “badly bruised on her back and arm had bad fall, very hysterical. Has been inmate at Cherokee State hospital for insane.
When the doctor was called one month later, he too described her condition: “found patient with a broken wrist, Colle’s fracture – result of fall. Mentally very deranged. Reduced & splinted Colle’s fracture which owing to relax condition was easily accomplished. She was given general care and very careful attention by Mrs Martin (nurse) before my arrival and during my visit. She was very anemic. I visited Home at 2:25 and found that the most exacting care and attention was given the patient ant that she peacefully passed away”.
E.D. Russel, M.D.

In October 1933 died Charles Martin by heart failure. After the death of Charles, Ida took over temporary the management of the Farm until a new superintendent was recruited.
In an article of a local newspaper in November 1934 the County Home was described in a positive way. The journalist was impressed. Ida Martin is mentioned as chief of staff. Also her sister Effie Welin is mentioned as a trained dietician who prepares the daily menus.

In 1935 Louis R Rollow became the County Home steward. He remained as steward at the home until his death in 1957.

**Living in the late decade 1930**

There is no exact information about the time period 1935-1939 of the life of Ida. Possibly she continued to live and work at the Webster County Home up to the end of the decade. One indication is the photos below taken at the farm of family Hayek near the County Home.
Mrs Hayek, Ida and George  Helen, Ida, Mrs Hayek, Effie with George, Christina

There lived sister Effie Hayek with her husband Edward and her parents-in-law. Through marriage Effie was now a farmer wife. But as she had no children I suppose she still worked at the County Home.

George was the first grandchild of Ida, born in October 1937. This indicates that the photos above were taken in 1938. I guess that Helen, Ida and Christina went from Sioux City with George to visit Ida and Effie. And that the main reason was to let Ida meet her grandson.

Living in the early decade 1940

Also the time period 1940-1944 is very unclear regarding the life of Ida.

Ida Martin and Frank Spurgeon were married New Years Eve 1939 in Troy Kansas. She was 51 and he 49 years.

Frank Spurgeon was born in Bedford, IA not far from Clarinda where Helen was born.

He spent his youth in Bedford. He was married in 1914 but his wife died within a few years after. During the 1920:ies he was convicted for some minor crimes.

1930 he lived without family working as poultry dresser in Detroit.

It is unknown when and where Ida and Frank met. Bedford is rather close to Clarinda where Ida had lived. Maybe there is a connection there.

According to a WW2 registration card issued in Bedford in 1942, Frank lived in Bedford and there is a reference to his mother, not to his wife as a contact person. He is registered as unemployed that seems strange during WW2 when many men were in the armed forces.
According to an information from her grandson George Cormany, Ida bought a house at Morningside, Sioux City where George grow up. But Ida could not pay the loan so her son-in-law took over the house. This information is not supported by the address records that exist from that time.

Living in Sioux City 1945-1964

According to Sioux City directories Ida and Frank Spurgeon lived at the old Swedish area not far from the house of Christina. The home addresses were:
1945-1948 at 502 ½ Court Street, 1952-1953 at 1017 5th Street, 1957-1958 at 611 ½ Iowa Street. Frank’s profession was construction worker.

Photo taken 1948 in Sioux City. From the left: Ida, sister Ellen, daughter Helen, grandsons Harold Jr and George, Olaf, husband of her mother Christina
When I met George Cormany in 2007 he told me that his grandma Ida and mother Helen worked at a wind charger factory. That must be at the Wincharger Corporation which had its factory near Floyd River. But the big flood in 1953 ruined the factory and ended the wind charger production in Sioux City.

In 1950 her mother Christina died.

In 1955 Ida applied for Social Security benefits but there are no signs that the application was accepted.

In 1963 she had to follow her only child, Helen Cormany to the grave. At that time she had been ill for a year.

In 1964, only a few months after the death of Helen she passed away at the age of 75 years.

Ida was buried at the a common grave with her first husband Charles Martin in Fort Dodge.

Frank Spurgeon died in 1978 in Bedford IA and is buried there.

614 Iowa Street, the last address of Ida
About my research

2000

When I started the research in the year 2000 of Christina and Ida I only know what is registered in the church book of Slätthög: “they left the parish for Nord Amerika in July 1891”. The research aimed to get knowledge of what happened to mother and daughter and if possibly get contacts with relatives in USA. A side effect of the research was to get greater knowledge of the great emigration from Sweden to North America and the living conditions of the Swedish immigrants in USA.

I learned that some cousins had knowledge about the birth of Ida. I was informed that my uncle Gustav Hössjer visited USA in 1950 for professional reasons. He tried in vain to localize his sister Ida. Another cousin informed me that he had been told that Christina got a great sum of money from our grandfather. But no cousins had any information of what had happened with Christina and Ida in USA.

In parallel I searched for the birthplace of Christina and started to map her ancestries and relatives in order to get in contact with relatives in Sweden who know anything about her. I found one living descendent of a brother of Christina, Kjell Johansson, but he also did not know anything about her.

Soon I found out that Christina went to Sioux City in a database containing records from passengers of emigrant ships from Sweden.

By Ancestry.com I found out that Christina and Ida were members of the Welin family on 7th Street.

At the Immigrant Institute in Växjö I found in the church records of the First Covenant church in Sioux City that the Welin family and two sisters from Slätthög were members.

Then the research came to a stop. I did not know how to continue.

2003

In 2003 a put a question at the messenger board of Ancestry.com. And was very lucky to make a decisive breakthrough. I got a response from Dorothy Atkinson in Florida and her two daughters Chris Asbill and Jennie Canne. Dorothy was daughter of Ellen, the first child of Nels and Christina Welin. We shared a lot of information. I got many photos and letters. Also a very interesting paper about the first difficult years in USA of Nels Welin. But not any facts about Ida.

I got email contact with George Corman, grandson of Ida. He gave me a few information about Ida’s life during his boyhood. Also that Ida worked at a wind charger company. But he had no knowledge about her latter life and where and when she died. I also got an email contact with Randy Corman in Arizona (son of Harold Jr.)
In 2005 I and my wife Kristin visited California. Back to Sweden Kristin took a direct flight but I flew to Atlanta and from there by car to Florida. There I met Dorothy and the family of her daughter Chris. I was received by very great hospitality and it was a great experience to meet the family in their splendid home. It was great to change information with Dorothy person to person. I got some further information and some photos. They showed also the family bible of the Welin family. A huge and heavy book in Swedish printed in Chicago.

In 2007 I was retired and visited USA looking for traces of the Swedish emigration. I flow to Minneapolis and rented a car there. I spent some days in Minnesota and then I went to Sioux City to make research of Christina and Ida.

I had contacted the research center of the Sioux City Public Museum before my visit, I was very well received by Grace Linden and Tom Munson. He copied detailed maps of the Welin living area and guided me in the city. We visited the old Swedish area, Floyd Cemetery and the address where the Welin family had lived. The area was completely changed from a dwelling area to a warehouse area. Before I left Sioux City I took part of the church service at the Augustana church. The parish was founded in 1875 by Swedish emigrants and the present church was built in 1889. It is a beautiful church.
During my visit I learned a lot of the history of the city but very little new about the Welin family and Ida.

I also had a nice meeting with George Corman and his wife Karmen in the small place Onowa south of the city. But he had no new facts about Ida.
The family of Dorothy Atkinson and myself at the memory stone of the 900 emigrants from Slätthög (90% to USA, 10% to other countries)

In 2008 my family and my sister Karin were visited by the family of Dorothy and her daughters at our summerhouse in Slätthög. I showed them the places where Christina and Ida lived and were born. We had a dinner in our house. The descendants of a brother of Christina, Kjell Johansson with wife and daughter were also present. An American visit to be remembered!

2011

In 2011, when I had started to make research of the children of the Welin families, I got in contact with Ruth Eckerman in California whose husband Steve is a descendent of Swan Welin. That year they visited Scandinavia and we met at our house near Stockholm.

Then there was another stop of the research for some years.
2015-2016

In 2015 I got contact with Bengt Welander about the village Ormatofta. The father of his grandfather lived in Sioux City during the decade 1880 and returned to Sweden. I published “Farmer in Sweden, Grocer in Sioux City; The story of Nels Welin and his family”. I had then noticed the health disaster of the family but I had no idea of the cause. Through a paper clip I had learned that Ida and husband worked at Iowa Broom Works in the decade 1920 and moved to Webster County Home near Fort Dodge in 1930. But still I did not know about the latter life of Ida. Although I got in contact with Lynn Eckstrom, oldest daughter of George Cormany. She has a vague memory of Ida when her grandmother Helen died in 1963.

2017-2018

In 2017 the research took a new decisive (final?) step. I got contact with Carl Musselman living in Omaha by email. He is a descendent of the Swanson family who lived close to the Welin family at 7th street. The wives of the families were sisters from Ormatofta, Sweden.

Carl helped me a lot. Sent me photos of the Welin family. Localized the grave of Ida in Fort Dodge. Found out that Ida was remarried and the addresses of her latter life in Sioux City. Also the death certificates of Ida and of her two husbands. And some other information by paper clips. Carl also solved the mystery of the health disaster. He contacted Sandra Vaughan in Sioux City who found the death documentation of the Welin family where the death causes are registered.

In July 2018, I and my old friend Göran Axelsson made a two weeks trip Chicago- Detroit- St Louis- Lindsborg KS- Omaha NE- Clarinda IA- Sioux City IA- Fort Dodge IA- Chicago.

Grace Linden, Göran Axelsson, myself and Carl Musselman in Sioux City
The main event was the Glen Miller Music Festival in Clarinda (5000 residents). By a very very great coincidence, the birthplace of daughter Helen of Ida is Clarinda which is also the birth place of Glen Miller, the famous band leader during WW II.

But we had also time for modern American history. And for myself also research of Ida. In Independence MI, I had a reunion with Jennie and Chris. We visited the Truman museum and had lunch together.

In Sioux City I met Carl Musselman and again Grace Linden (after 11 years!). We visited the new Public Museum of Sioux City and had a common dinner in the evening. Together with Sandra Vaughan we visited the Floyd Cemetery were the Welin, Swanson and Musselman families are buried close to each other.

I had prepared my visit in Fort Dodge by getting contact with Susan Lieske, volunteer at the Webster County Genealogical Society. When we met she gave me a copy of a newspaper article and a copy of a historic book about the farm (BURIED ON THE FARM by Victoria A Lock, 1996). And above all, she gave me a map where to find the grave of Ida at a giant cemetery outside Fort Dodge.

Susan Lieske (sitting) and a colleague at the office of the genealogical society in Fort Dodge

Thank you; Tack så mycket

I want to thank very deeply all Americans and Swedes who have helped me in this research. It includes also people that are not mentioned in this chapter. Also Dorothy Atkinson and George Cormany who are not with us anymore. It has given me so much joy and satisfaction to meet all of you.