

Our Family Links

The Groberg/Holbrook Family History Association Newsletter

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Return To and From Scandinavia



Richard Groberg by Vasterfarnebo, home town of John Enoch Groberg's father and grandfather.

by Dick and Ronda Groberg

We arrived back in the United States on July 16th. We were greeted by our children and grandchildren, and were introduced to little Maxwell Groberg (born 9 months ago to Michael and Natalee). What a joyous reunion.

Our departure from Finland was a bitter-sweet experience. We had come to love the people and the beautiful country. We had developed some very close relationships as we prayed with and taught many extraordinary people over the course of our 18 month stay. We worked with many who were less active. First of all, it was challenging to FIND them. Our "hunting skills" improved as we learned to find and read the long names of those Finnish streets, (Toivonlanratiotie, Laajasunpolku). We always started out with our map, a magnifying glass, a compass, and a determination to continue until we found the person we were seeking! When we found we were going in the wrong direction we learned to immediately change our course (repent). Sometimes it happened right in the middle of busy traffic!



Old Lutheran Church in Sweden where Groberg ancestors may have attended.

We experienced the joy of teaching a man all of the discussions and witnessing how faith, humble pray, and repentance can bring lasting joy through baptism. We reached a point in our progression where he said he understood and believed but lacked a strong spiritual witness, but he was concerned about eliminating social drinking. We promised him that if he would commit to quit drinking, the Spirit would be with him to help him to overcome his desire to drink. We kneeled together in prayer and each took a turn pleading with the Lord in his behalf. At our next appointment he said that he had received the spiritual witness he had longed for and that he was ready to be baptized. When we left Finland he had been ordained a priest and was serving as a home teacher.

Some of the sweetest words we have ever heard were: "Thank you for caring about me," "I'm so grateful to have the Gospel back in my

John Enoch Groberg: Swedish Missionary 1897-1899

We have all heard the story of John Enoch Groberg calling his young sons Delbert (3) and LeRoi (5) to his deathbed and admonishing them to "be good boys." Some may also have heard the romantic tradition that he died of a broken heart brought on by his wife's death from childbirth complications the previous year. But how many know anything of his life -- his interests, his personality, his experiences? Did you know he went by his middle name, Enoch? Did you know he loved to dance? Did you know he served as a faithful and effective missionary in Sweden?

You could know all this and much more about this remarkable ancestor if you were to read the first volume of his missionary journal. The journal and several pictures of Enoch and other Swedish saints have been scanned and are available on CD. Let Matt Powell know if you are interested in a copy (and especially please let him know if you know where the second journal volume is).

One example of the special insights contained in the journal is Enoch's account of how he and other missionaries in Goteborg, Sweden contracted and battled a serious illness (the illness that ultimately led to the real cause of his pre-mature death -- tuberculosis). After noting an ever increasing number of instances in which he

life," "I could feel the Spirit when you were teaching," "I think we're ready to continue on our own," "Thank you for bringing us the message of the Restored Gospel," "I could feel the Spirit through the music the choir was singing," "I don't think there has ever been this many people attend a Fireside in this ward," "We will miss you."

We had an opportunity to spend several days in Sweden after our mission. We visited some of the places where the Groberg ancestors lived. We imagined some of these wonderful men and women walking the same streets decades earlier, and perhaps even worshipping in some of these old, stately cathedrals. There was a special feeling of connection to the past as we walked on Swedish soil. The country was green and lush with an abundance of lakes and friendly streams. We appreciated our time in Sweden.

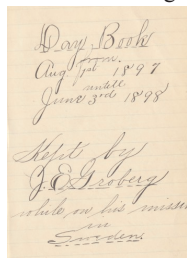
was called upon to administer to the sick, Enoch recounts that he and Elder Joseph Jensen contracted "inflammation of the lungs and also an inflamed stomach." They "coughed hard and could not eat very much." Treatments included "lemon water" and "putting a woolen rag with turpentine on, on my chest." On March 8, 1898 "at about 4:30 a.m. Elder Joseph H. Jensen died. This was sad news to all the Saints." On the 11th "Elder Jensen's burial took place in the afternoon. A fine hearse and 9 carriages were hired. He was buried by the side of Pres. Quist who had died here a few years before. I was still sick and could not be present at the funeral." Still "spitting blood" a month later, Enoch wrote: "President Lund asked me if I had any desire to go home, but I stated that I did not if I possibly could avoid it, and he promised me that if my desire was to stay and if I would pray to the Lord, that I would be able to finish my mission." The remainder of his journal bears witness of the answer to that prayer.

The Saints of Goteborg remember and honor Enoch and Elder Jensen for their devotion and sacrifice to this day. A Swedish Ensign arti-

cle notes that in a recent Goteborg Stake Conference, President Leif Mattsson made specific mention of Enoch Groberg and Joseph Jensen and then "emphasized that this was a price paid so that today there are more than two thousand members in the Stake.... President Mattsson concluded with a wish that we will always be willing to sacrifice for the Lord's work." (April 2005 *Krykorytt*, p.11). On a different occasion, President Mattsson explained that since almost all of the early Swedish saints eventually emigrated to the United States, the current Swedish saints consider the story of the sick elders and the maintenance of Elder Jensen's grave a symbolic link to the many who laid the foundation upon which they now build.

So now how much do you know about John Enoch Groberg? Would you like to know more?

You can and should.



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Enoch Groberg (between 2 women) with Saints in Sweden.

The Legacy of Missionary Service Continues

Remember that 3-day family reunion with the missionary theme -- the one where Grandma pinned those flattering 8x10 head shots of all the family missionaries (including in-laws) in a time-line across the stage?



Smiling missionary pictures provide backdrop for 1984 family reunion activities including this talent show number featuring Jennifer, David, and Lorraine Groberg.

Who could forget? Certainly not a newlywed who was meeting most of the DVG extended family for the first time and who had previously defined a reunion as an afternoon of softball, horseshoes, and cold Kentucky Fried Chicken with strangers who looked a lot like his dad.

But for those of us now reviewing that missionary time-line in our minds and thinking that our picture is not nearly as bad as it seemed at the time, we are due for one of those uncomfortable reality checks. Alas, there are some who have forgotten that reunion. It was 21 years ago. Indeed, if we could glimpse into that celestial mansion room where Grandma is most assuredly keeping that photo time-line up to date, we would have to admit that those missionaries pictured in the most recent pin-ups not only do not remember, but for the most part were not even born at the time of that reunion. Great-grandsons Tyler Owens and Joe Tingey, toddlers at the reunion, have already returned from Spanish-speaking missions in New York and California, respectively. Great-granddaughter Whitney Owens, barely four months old at the reunion, is now in the MTC preparing to serve in Argentina. Grandson, Andrew Groberg, whose pending birth was announced at the reunion, is now called to serve in the New York City Cantonese-speaking mission. Post reunion great-grandbabies Daniel Blair, Jim Powell, Ben Tingey, Brian Sabey, and Tom Powell are respectively serving or preparing to serve in Japan, Korea, Russia, Taiwan, and Samoa.



Newest DVG great-great-grandson Alex Lifferth with sister Gabriella.

As the last of the grandchild and first of the great-grandchild generations come of age, Gr.Gr.Gr.'s eternal "joy and rejoicing" in their posterity's missionary service is almost tangible. It is equally easy to imagine the radiant love and enthusiasm Gr.Gr.Gr. felt at the birth of their second great-great-grandchild, Alex, son of Kaila and Noah Lifferth and the marriage of their second great-granddaughter Kristina Lewis to Landon Prisbrey.

May we who remember the 1984 reunion also always remember and make real for the rising generations Gr.Gr.Gr.'s love and devotion to us and to the reunion theme of "Building the Kingdom at Home and Abroad."



Newlyweds Landon and Kristina Prisbrey

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Daniel Blair Ben Tingey Andrew Groberg



Whitney Owens Brian Sabey Tom Powell

So Elder, What Did You Do On Tuesday? The Beat Goes On

"Tracted during the forenoon. Had several good conversations. Invited to a cup of chokolade by a Baptist lady, whom I had a good conversation with. Had English in the evening."

John Enoch Groberg
Tuesday, January 18, 1898
Göteborg, Sweden



"We tracted a lot, had an interesting talk with a guy we met at the subway station on our way here (he's either drunk, or our next golden investigator, not sure which and possibly both) and tonight is our English class."

James Groberg Powell
Tuesday, August 16, 2005
Seoul, Korea

