

## Daniel Teodor Rönberg's Early Life

Daniel Teodor Rönberg was born April 2, 1869 to Erik Daniel and Ingrid Martha (Malberg) Rönberg. His siblings were Kristina Andrietta, born on February 18, 1865; Martha Seraphia, born on May 29, 1866; Nils Anders, born on February 9, 1872; Erik Alfred, born on February 28, 1873; Katarina Charlotta, born on November 18, 1875; and Hulda Elizabeth, born on September 27, 1879.

At sometime in Daniel Teodor Rönberg's early years, he dropped one "n" and changed his name to Rönberg. It was fairly common to change your name in Sweden and only required notification of the parish minister of the new name and registered in the records.

Teodor's brother, Erik Alfred, changed his name to Kjellman. Needless to say, this custom makes genealogical research tricky (i.e., "Rönn" in Swedish means "ash" and "berg" means "mountain").

Teodor's grandmother was a Laplander and worked as a maid. His father was from the village of Klingsta and was a soldier.



Teodor also served in the Swedish Army in the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division from June 6, 1890 to July 14, 1891 for his one-year active duty. His record book of military service also shows stamped papers proving his eligibility for military services for the years required by law for the ages between 21 and 32. This military service was compulsory for all Swedish

men. His record book has his name as Daniel Teodor Rönberg. As related to the author, Teodor's oldest daughter, Thora remembered that at one point during Teodor's service, while on a

night ski maneuver, he detected a sharp drop-off in the landscape. Fortunately, he was able to take action and prevent serious injury.

On December 1, 1896, Teodor moved to the parish of Skönsmon with his brothers, Nils Anders and Erik Alfred, to work in a factory.



## Märta Brita Norberg's Early Life

Märta Brita Norberg was born March 24, 1873 to Johann Martin and Anna Märta (Rolander) Norberg. Her siblings included Johanna Erika, born on December 2, 1875; Erik August, born June 10, 1878; Selma Andrietta (I),

born on June 19, 1880 (died in 1885); Johan Albert, born on January 20, 1883; and Selma Andrietta, born May 6, 1885.

Records show that in 1880 the Norberg family moved to a farm near Harvbodarna. Märta Brita was seven years old when this move took place.

## Daniel and Märta Brita's Marriage and Start of a Family

On July 17, 1897, Teodor and Märta Brita married and moved to Sundsvall. While in Sundsvall, their oldest son, Johan Einar was born on November 10, 1898. Approximately a year and a half later, after they had moved to the Skönsmon parish, Nils Viktor was born on July 12, 1900.

Before their daughter, Tora Albertina, was born on April 22, 1903, the Rönberg family moved to a small farm northeast of the Norberg farm at Harvbodarna.

## Rönberg Farm near Harv

The Rönberg farm is located within a few hundred feet of Viskarn Lake, with the nearest village being Harv.



The two farms, while connected by roads, were also connected by a trail, which was a shorter route. This path is still well defined (i.e., 1993, 2001), although not easily found. From the road that leads to the Rönberg farm, the path runs



*The Norberg farm in Sweden*

between two cultivated fields with evergreen trees, brush, and wooden fences on each side. Beyond the fenced portion, the trail starts up an incline in a timbered area to a point shortly before reaching Harvbodarna. This would have been about a 20- to 30-minute walk for Märta Brita and her three small children to visit her mother and step-father, Olaf Olsson Snäll and her three half-sisters, Anna Olivia, born May 28, 1894; Sigrid, born September 20, 1897; and Hulda, born October 15, 1888.

Today the Rönberg farm is a small area with fields of grass hay and a garden area. There is a small barn, a root cellar, and several other outbuildings. The original farmhouse burned down and has been replaced with another smaller farmhouse. (i.e., During my 1993 visit, the original outhouse was still in place; however, it was not in use. It had been torn down prior to my 2001 visit.)

It can be assumed that even with Teodor working as a carpenter and the subsistence of living on the farm, the family's livelihood would have required a lot of hard work.

The Sundsvall area is approximately 300 miles south of the Arctic Circle. Timber covers a considerable amount of land with the soils and climate restricting the types of crops that can be grown. For comparison purposes, the Arctic

Circle is approximately 150 miles north of Fairbanks, Alaska.

## **Daniel and Märta's Emigration to America**

Daniel Teodor and Märta Brita decided to emigrate to the United States of America in 1904.

Undoubtedly, they had heard of the cheap land that was available, as well as the opportunities.



*Town of Harv*

They wanted to be part of the eventual 1.2 million Swedes who left for America between 1850 and 1925. In the period of 1901-1910, a total of 10,983 individuals emigrated from Västernorrland county, of which the Sundsvall area is part.

It should be noted that "the total population of Sweden was, on an average, less than five million at the time of the great exodus 1850-1925" (*Cradled in Sweden*, p. 90).

Teodor was 35 years old in 1904, with Märta Brita being 31 years old. Johan was 5 ½ years old, Nils Viktor was 4 years old, and Tora Albertina was 1 year old.

They decided that Teodor would go to Cloquet, Minnesota first, with Märta Brita to follow at a later date with the children. It is logical that he wanted to build a house before the rest of the family came over. On April 16, 1904, Teodor filled out the emigration paper (Flyttningensbetyg) for approval by the Attmar parish priest (Kyrkoherde), E.J. Wellstrom. As part of the



application he had to identify that he was a carpenter (Snickare) by trade.

Records show that on May 18, 1904, he left Trondhiem, Norway for North America. At this time we do not know what port city he arrived at on his way to Minnesota.

### **Rönberg's Auction at the Farm**

Märta Brita stayed on the farm that summer as she prepared for the trip to America. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1904, she held an auction on their farm. A large number of varied household goods and furniture was listed as sold at the auction. A photocopy of the sale shows a large number of people attended and bid on the varied items.

Among the purchasers is J.A. Norberg of Harv. It can be readily assumed that J.A. Norberg is the younger brother of Märta Brita: Johan Albert Norberg.

The photocopy of the sale was of great interest to the relatives in Sweden when I traveled there in 1993. Most everyone recognized their relatives or other local people that were listed as buyers. The auction netted 471.80 Kroner for Märta Brita and Teodor.

On September 5, 1904, Märta Brita filled out her application (Flyttningsbetyg) to migrate. The application identified her as the wife (hustru) of Daniel Teodor and married on July 17, 1897.

Records show that Märta Brita Rönberg, age 31; Einar, age 5; Viktor, age 4; and Tora, age 1, left Göteborg, Sweden on September 23, 1904 for Boston, Massachusetts on the way to Cloquet, Minnesota. (Note: Cloquet is near Duluth, Minnesota on the west end of Lake Superior.)

The records also reveal that Selma A. Norberg, age 19, traveled from Göteborg to Cloquet, Minnesota via Boston on the same date. It would appear that it had been planned for Selma to travel with Märta Brita for sometime for mutual purposes. It would have been difficult for Märta Brita, with her three young children, to make the

trans-Atlantic trip and journey from Boston to Cloquet without her sister's help.

(Author's note: Regina Nordstrand, one of our cousins in Sweden, was able to find the information about Selma A. Norberg's emigration through the records number Kallkod 77:152:3733. In Thora A. Runberg Hessel Zimmerman's interview by Kris Runberg Smith, labeled March 1984, Thora said that her Aunt Selma A. Norberg "was supposed to come when we came too, but the quota was full so she got left behind. She waited until a later date.")

### **Americanization of the Rönberg Name**

American immigration officials changed the names of immigrants if necessary. Accordingly, Rönberg was changed to Runberg because the English alphabet does not contain an ö, which is a vowel having an umlaut. The letter ä is the same way.

Teodor was changed to Theodore, Märta to Martha, Johan to John, Viktor to Victor, and Tora to Thora. We will use the new names from here on.

### **Cloquet, Minnesota**

One of the principal reasons that Theodore immigrated to America in April 1904 without his family undoubtedly was to build a house before the family arrived. He knew some people (e.g., neighbors, distant relatives) that had emigrated previously. He was able to get a job with Weyerhaeuser in a mill at Cloquet.

Being a carpenter, he had the summer to build a house. The house was mostly finished by the time the rest of the family arrived. The second daughter Ellen was born on September 16, 1905.

At a later date, the Runbergs purchased a farm near St. Michael, Minnesota in 1907. Also on June 6, 1907, the third son, Eric Walfrid was born.

After living on the farm for three years, they sold this acreage and moved to Spokane, Washington in 1910. Again an auction was held, resulting in



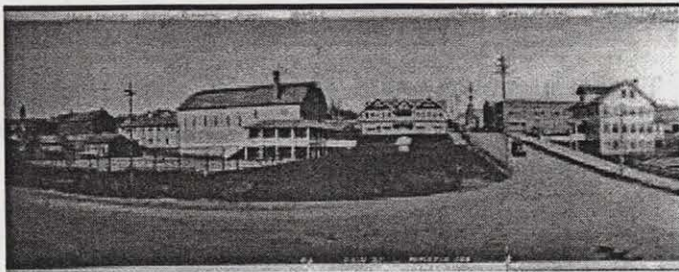
sufficient funds to travel by train to Spokane in 1911. A third daughter, Mabel Anna was born on September 25, 1910 prior to the move.

## Traveling to Spokane, Washington

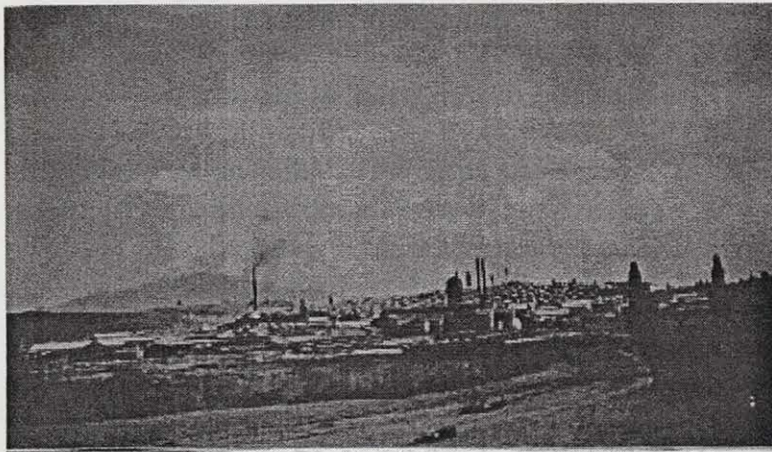
Martha's sister, Selma, and her husband George Mattson, and their children George, Jr. and Esther were already living in Spokane on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, so the Runbergs were able to stay with them until they rented a house on Perry Street. Theodore worked for a while in Spokane before moving to Potlatch, Idaho, where a number of his friends were living and working in the Potlatch Lumber Company mill.

## Living in the Potlatch Area

In 1905-06, the Potlatch Lumber Company, owned by Weyerhaeuser affiliates, constructed the Potlatch mill near the mouth of the Rock



*Potlatch, Idaho (Boarding house, confectionary, gym, hotel, church, general store, main office [mill])*



*Potlatch Lumber Mill with town in background*

Creek along the Palouse River. To provide a community for the mill workers, the company



*House Theodore built; 730 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Onaway, Idaho*

constructed the town of Potlatch, Idaho. The town was very unique in that it was completely owned by the Potlatch Lumber Company. It included single-family dwellings, boarding houses for single workers, a store, two churches (one Catholic and the other Protestant), a school, hospital, hotel, train depot for the railroad, and other facilities that a community would need. No privately owned houses or businesses were allowed. No liquor was available in the town.

It can be assumed that Theodore and Martha wanted to own their own land and home, and were not able to do so in the town of Potlatch. Subsequently, they purchased property in Onaway. While working in the mill on the night shift, probably staying at one of the boarding houses in Potlatch, Theodore built a small house in Onaway. After the house was finished in 1911, the entire family was able to move.

While in Onaway, their seventh child, Albert Theodore Runberg was born on October 30, 1913 and died on January 27, 1914. The obituary notice states that:

“The baby was not well from its birth and death was a relief to the little sufferer. The funeral was conducted in the Scandinavian language by Rev. O.P. Anderson of Troy (Idaho) and the remains were buried at the Potlatch Cemetery.”

My efforts to locate the gravesite in the Potlatch Cemetery have been without success. There is no record of his burial. I also checked the Onaway Cemetery, but nothing there either. At the



Potlatch Cemetery, they did say there are a number of child gravesites that are not identified. Except for a small IOOF cemetery, the larger Potlatch Cemetery was not established until 1914.

On April 7, 1916, the Runberg family sold their house in Onaway and moved to a farm south of Potlatch, between Rock Creek and Flannigan Creek. The farm consisted of 60 acres, of which only 15 acres were cultivated. The remainder was covered with timber.

Theodore did the farming and clearing of the timbered land in the daytime and also continued to work the night shift in the mill in Potlatch. At the mill, he worked primarily in the planer mill and lumberyard. The older boys helped on the farm.

In 1926, Edward Norberg, Erik Norberg's son, age 16, worked briefly on the farm and probably stayed at the farm. His older brother, Martin, probably did too. Shortly, Edward went to work

at the Potlatch mill.



*Farm*

Martha, besides raising and taking care of the six children, ran the dairy operation of the farm.

They had

18-22 cows and had a milk route in Potlatch and delivered milk and cream. The kids helped out in the milking twice a day, washing and scalding the milk bottles, separating the cream from the milk, delivering the milk. At first, horses were used on the delivery route and later a car. The family made butter also, but only for their own use. The milking was done mostly by hand even though they did have a milking machine.



*Runberg Family (left to right): Victor (Vic) Nils, Mabel Anna, John Einar (Sr.), Daniel Theodore, Thora Albertina, Märta Brita, Eric Walfrid, Ellen*

They belonged to the Dairymen of Potlatch. This was an organization of ten different dairy operations in the Potlatch area. A notice issued by the dairymen established new prices for milk and cream at .09 and .40 per quart, respectively.

In 1928, Martha traveled back to Sweden to visit her mother Anna-Märta Rolander Norberg Snell and other relatives including Johanna, her sister, and three half-sisters, Hulda Norberg, and Anna and Sigrid Snell. Both Martha and Theodore kept in touch with their family members in Sweden.

The boys helped their father with the farming and clearing the land. However, when they turned 12 years old they went to work in the box factory at the lumber mill in Potlatch.

As the reader can tell from these various accounts, both Martha and Theodore were hard workers. While living in Onaway, Martha took in washing, did sewing, crocheting, knitting, and similar work at the school. She even did weaving when they lived in Sweden.

After Selma's husband George died, she had to go to work. Martha was instrumental in getting Selma a job at one of the boarding houses in Potlatch. During this time, Martha and Theodore took care of George, Jr. and Esther.



## Naturalization

On July 30, 1921, in Moscow, Idaho, Daniel became a naturalized citizen of the United States of America. The description of Theodore on the Certificate of Naturalization, No. 862740, identified him as 52 years old, a height of 5'6", white color with a complexion of medium, blue eyes, and black hair. The names, age, and place of residence for the minor children included: Thora Albertina, age 18; Ellen, age 15; Eric



*Theodore Runberg*

Walfred, age 14; and Mabel Anna, age 10; residing with parents at Potlatch.

The Certificate shows his name as "Danil Thedor Romberg". This is another example of how names can be erroneously entered on official documents, which confuses the researcher.

## Advanced Age

In the early thirties, Martha's health declined as a result of arthritis. It can be assumed that she had both rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. To assist her in walking and getting around, Martha used crutches. In January 1933, she fell and broke her hip. The recovery process included staying in bed. Because of the healing process coupled with the arthritis, she never walked again and was bedridden.

That same year, Martha and Theodore moved to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho to be closer to medical facilities and doctors. In addition, her sister, Selma and husband Louis Olson and family were living there.

Thora, who was living in Potlatch with her husband, Gustaf and daughter, Margret, moved temporarily to Coeur d'Alene to help her parents during the winter of 1933 and 1934.

In 1934, Martha and Theodore moved back to the farm south of Potlatch.

Using his skills as a carpenter, Theodore later reconstructed a garage that was adjacent to the larger farmhouse and made it into a three-bedroom house. Subsequently, Mabel, their youngest daughter and her husband Edwin Johnson purchased the farm. In this way, in keeping the Swedish custom, the older generation could live somewhat independently on the farm while the younger generation would work the farm, and assist and keep an eye out for the older generation.

Theodore was also a woodcarver and made items for two of his grandsons, Stan and Terry Johnson.

In the late 40s, Theodore could also be seen walking to town, a distance of 1.5 miles, when he was well into his 70s.

In 1939, Theodore traveled by train to East Orange, New Jersey to visit his sister Hulda Larson, who had emigrated there. He accompanied Martin Norberg as far as Michigan, where Martin was going to pick up a new car.

Theodore has been described as a naturally quiet and a very good-natured person by Thora, and a "sweet and gentle, hard-working man" by his granddaughter, Mary Runberg Massaia. He was also deaf, which hampered his communications with others.

In child rearing, neither parent believed in spanking and relied mostly on being firm.

## Family Customs

Christmas, Easter and birthdays were celebrated with all the relatives coming for Martha's birthday. They both belonged to various lodges, including the Scandinavian Lodge and the Swedish Ladies Aid. The family attended the Union Church in Potlatch.

The following is Mary Massaia's June 23, 2003, remembrance of days gone by many years ago in Potlatch at our grandparents' farm:



*"It is Christmas Eve day and there is snow... lots of snow, and the families would all be going out to the farm to celebrate Christmas. There would be Gus, Thora and Margaret, the five Norbergs, Alice, Martin, Ed, Cliff, and Ted. Eric and Madge, my parents Vic and Mabel, Peggy, Jack and me as well as our Grandmother Vivian we called "Ganga."*



*The farm is on a hill between Rock Creek and Flannagan Creek, so Gus and Dad would discuss which was the best road to take. Usually we went by Rock Creek, and the cars would still not be able to make it up the hill. Grandpa Ted (who us kids called "Pa"), would come for us with the horses and wagon and take us the rest of the way. Since there were so many of us it must have taken more than one trip. Years later there would be more kids when Ted, Don, Stan and others were born. I believe at that time John and Dora had moved to Longview, Washington so they were not there with us. Mabel and Ed Johnson were there. Ellen and her husband were away most of the time. (In later years our grandmother [who we called "Ma"] became so crippled with arthritis we could no longer go there for Christmas.)*

*We would be greeted by Ma and all the fragrances of dinner cooking. There would be potato sausage, and of course lutefisk. (I've missed having potato sausage only three years, when we were stationed in England and Okinawa.) The lutefisk, hard dried cod, had been soaking in lye water for weeks before Christmas. It was served boiled with a white sauce sprinkled with All Spice. You have to be a true Swede to like it, I don't. The best part would be all the good Swedish cookies Ma and the other ladies baked, Spritz, Berlin Wreaths, Rosettes (a lot of work), others and of course home made fruitcake.*

*Christmas Eve dinners seemed to take forever, then the ladies would clear the tables and the dishes would be washed. I'm sure all us kids were*

*impatient. We would all go into the living room and sit by the Christmas tree and look at the presents under the tree. The tree was decorated with candles. Peggy still has one of those candles! It's amazing there never was a fire. After opening the presents, probably only for the children, we would have more cookies before loading up the wagon, going back to our cars and home.*

*I remember watching Pa putting a sugar lump in his mouth and drinking his coffee through it. He was a sweet and gentle, hard working man. As long as I can remember he was deaf. Pa would drive the horses into town to deliver milk. Beside farming and raising dairy cows, he worked in the mill. Ma worked very hard raising five children, milking cows morning and evening, then walking to town to help Aunt Selma at her boarding house."*

## Final Resting

Martha died in 1945 on the farm and Theodore died in 1952 in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. Both are buried in the beautiful Forest Cemetery in Coeur d'Alene (i.e., Section C, Block 46, lots 4 and 5, respectively).

A great-granddaughter, Karen Lee Petragallo, is buried next to them in lot 3.

*Note: In writing this brief history, I have used information/data from numerous sources. I have relied heavily on Kris Runberg Smith's interview of Thora in 1984. Much information has been supplied by some of our cousins in Sweden. This includes Regina Nordstrand, Ulla Jonsson, LilliAnn Ottoson, and Lindor Soderberg, now deceased, to mention a few.*

*Mary Runberg Massaia, Stan Johnson, John E. Runberg II, Donna Runberg Ruccia, and Kay Runberg Chamberlain also have provided information that has been very helpful. A special thanks is given to my daughter, Sonja K. Runberg, who was very instrumental in preparation of this brief history. A thank you is warranted for all of these people, and others not mentioned, for their contribution.*

*In reconstructing my grandparents' history, I am sure there are some errors and misinformation that have crept into the document. If you have information to make corrections and/or additions, please notify Sonja K. Runberg so that she may incorporate your edits. She may be reached at 541-686-3459; 70 E. 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Eugene OR 97405; or [cnsrunberg@msn.com](mailto:cnsrunberg@msn.com).*

*Donald Eric Runberg  
July 2004*

*\*There may be discrepancies in the spelling of names based on various documents, of which the author has copies.*