

Who Was Elsie Benson and How Am I Related to Her?

By Burks Oakley II
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Introduction

In my condo in Naples, Florida, I have a beautiful woven mat on my dining room table:



My Swedish-American first-cousin Susan Baker (nee Brorström) gave me this mat about five years ago and told me that it was woven many decades ago by our Swedish cousin Elsie Benson.

Elsie Benson? Who is she and how am I related to her?

I know that Elsie Benson had a son named Roy Benson. I know that she lived in Corte Madera, California, which is located north of San Francisco in Marin County. I remember that when my mother visited my wife and me when we were living in San Francisco in the late 1970's, we all drove to Corte Madera and had lunch with Elsie at her house. My wife recalls that it was the first time that she had eaten avocado.

I had a dim recollection that Elsie was related to me through my maternal grandmother, Edna Florence Larsson (married name Brorström).

My Swedish-American first-cousin Janet Nathe Potts grew up in our grandmother's house in Pleasantville, New York. I sent her an e-mail asking about Elsie Benson, and she replied:

I think she was a friend of Grandma Brorström's from Sweden. She stayed with us in Pleasantville for a few days when I was 6 or 7 – in 1956 or so. She taught me to knit – I still have the scarf I made then! I remember her with a strong Swedish accent.

This narrative is about how I figured out how Elsie and I were related.

Looking Online for Information about Elsie Benson

I first became interested in my Swedish genealogy in 2013, when I learned that I have a DNA match with a Swede named Göran Grotting.¹ Göran is an expert genealogist, and in order to figure out how we are related, he spent a great deal of time researching the ancestral lines of my mother's four grandparents who immigrated from Sweden to America in the 1880's.

Göran eventually learned that he and I are related through my mother's maternal grandfather, Lars Emil Larsson (1864-1945). The connection through Lars Emil Larsson was quite difficult to identify, since he was born with the name Lars Emil Börjesson – his father was Börje Larsson and using the patronymic naming convention in place in Sweden at that time, his last name became Börjesson (literally Börje's son). He apparently changed his name to Larsson when he immigrated to America, and he also changed his birth year by one year. So he wasn't easily found in the church records in Sweden. As an aside, it appears that he left Sweden without permission from the church.

At any rate, Göran sent me a great deal of information about Lars Emil Larsson's family. The following screenshot shows his parents and four of his sisters:

Generation I

I:1 f
Börje **Larsson** (300). Född 1835-12-18 i Fjärås (N). Döpt 1835-12-20 i Fjärås (N). Död 1878-03-26 i Fjärås (N).
Dödsorsak: "Brain fever". (Barn Proband, Far II:1, Mor II:2)

Gift 1859-04-08 i Fjärås (N) med efterföljande ana.

Barn:

Anna Lovisa **Börjesdotter** (373). Född 1859-12-12 i Örmevalla (N). Changed to Anna Louise in America.
Emigrated probably together with Lars Emil 1887.

Hilda Evelina **Börjesdotter** (374). Född 1862-06-23 i Fjärås (N). Changed to Hanna in America.

Lars Emil **Börjesson-Larsson** (298). Född 1864-10-01 i Fjärås (N). Död 1945 i Dania, Florida, U.S.A.. (Se Proband).

Thekla Elise **Börjesdotter** (375). Född 1873-04-02 i Fjärås (N). Emigrated together with her two children 1897-04-12.

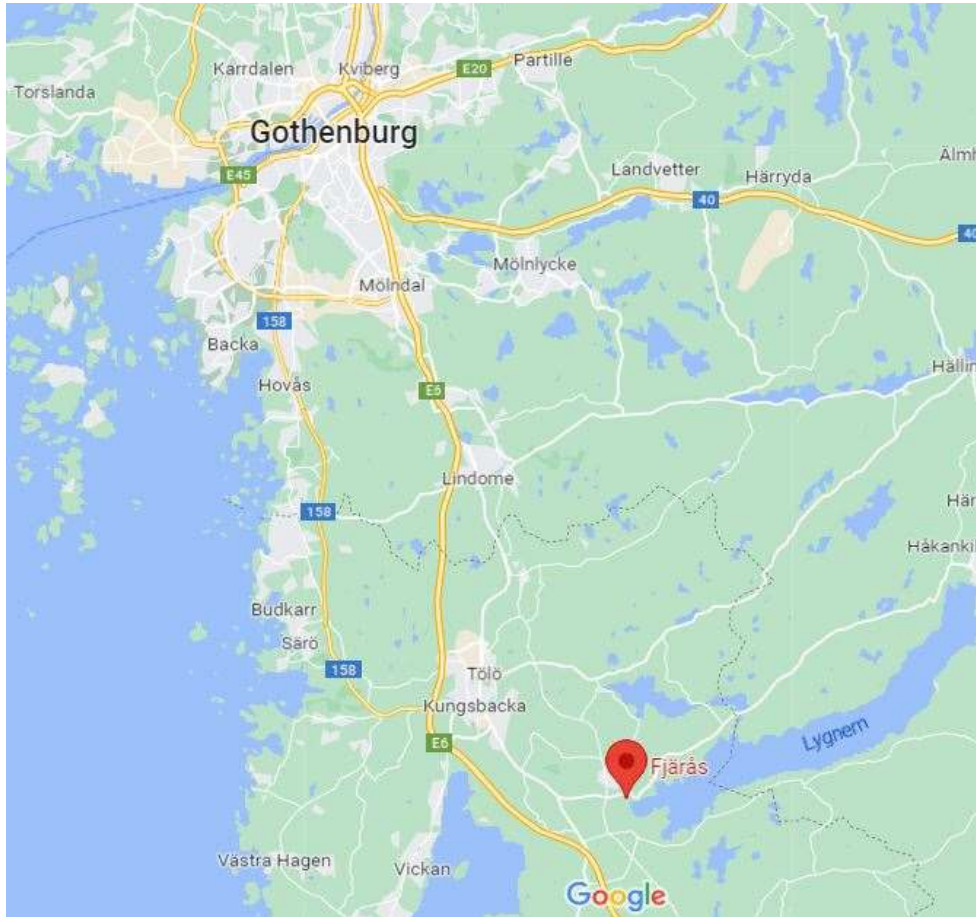
Helga Bernhardina **Börjesdotter** (376). Född 1876-04-18 i Fjärås (N). Emigrated alone 1895-03-08.

I:2 m
Anna Helena **Andersdotter** (301). Född 1837-12-08 i Fjärås (N). (Barn Proband, Far II:3, Mor II:4)

Gift 1859-04-08 i Fjärås (N) med föregående ana.

According to Göran's research, Lars Emil and his four sisters all immigrated to America. I should note that Lars Emil's family lived in Fjärås, which is a small town in Kungsbacka Municipality, Halland County, Sweden. Fjärås is about 45 km south of Göteborg, as shown in the following Google Map:

¹ My narrative about my DNA match with Göran is at:
<http://www.burksoakley.com/SwedishGenealogy/GöranGrotting-LarssonConnection.pdf>



I first visited Fjärås in the summer of 2016, when I was visiting Göteborg with my Swedish-American cousin Susan Baker (nee Brorström). Göran drove us there and arranged a tour of the area, including the old church and several places where Lars Emil lived. I subsequently visited Fjärås with my cousin Jenny in the spring of 2019. [See photos in the Appendix].

But I digress... Getting back to Elsie Benson – At this point, I knew that Lars Emil Larsson had four sisters who immigrated to America. I wondered if Elsie Benson was a direct descendant of one of them. I started with a basic search on Ancestry.com – I searched for Elsie Benson, and I assumed that she had died in Corte Madera, Marin County, California. Of course, I didn't have a lot of hope for this search, since I figured that Elsie was just a nickname. I also added her son, Roy Benson, to the search:

Public Member Trees

Search

First & Middle Name(s)	Last Name
<input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="Elsie"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="Benson"/>

	Day	Month	Year	Location
Birth	▼	▼	<input style="width: 60%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="City, County, State, Couni"/>
Death	▼	▼	<input style="width: 60%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="Corte Madera, Marin, Ca"/>

Add family member: [Father](#) [Mother](#) [Spouse](#) [Child](#)

	First & Middle Name(s)	Last Name
Father	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/> X
Mother	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/> X
Spouse	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/> X
Child	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="Roy"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="Benson"/> X

Here are the results of this search:

All Public Member Trees results for Elsie Benson

Hildur Elsa Alexandra ("Elsie") Andersson found in **6 trees** [View all](#)

Hildur Elsa Alexandra ("Elsie") Andersson from tree **bradley holway Family Tree**


Birth	19 Aug 1905 Göteborgs Gamlestad, Västra Götaland, Sweden	Father	Henry Alexius Andersson (1881-1951)
Marriage	19 Apr 1926	Mother	Hanna Justina Andreasson (Alexandersdotter) (1883-1961)
Residence	1940 San Francisco, San Francisco, California, USA	Spouse	(Olof) Arvid Roy Berntsson (Benson) (1901-1980)
Death	6 Feb 1996 Marin, California, USA		

167614 People **10** Records **10** Sources

OMG! Elsie Benson appears in six family trees on the Ancestry.com website!! The first tree is shown here – the “bradley holway” family tree, which contains an amazing 167,614 people.

I viewed Elsie’s profile in the “bradley holway” tree:

bradley holway Family Tr... **Tree search** **bh** **bhborn1951**





Hildur Elsa Alexandra ("Elsie") Andersson

BIRTH 19 AUG 1905 • Göteborgs Gamlestad, Göteborg och Bohus, Sverige
DEATH 06 FEB 1996 • Marin County, California, USA


Family


Parents

**Henry Alexius Andersson**
1881-1951


**Hanna Justina Andreasson (Alexandersdotter)**
1883-1961

Spouse and children

**(Olof) Arvid Roy Berntsson (Benson)**
1901-1980

**Roy Arvid Benson**
1929-2009

This profile shows that Elsie Benson’s full name was Hildur Elsa Alexandra Andersson. She was born in Göteborg in 1905, and died in Marin County, California, in 1996. It shows her husband, Arvid Roy Benson (1901-1980) and their son, Roy Arvid Benson (1929-2009). This profile also shows that she immigrated to America in the summer of 1925, just as she turned twenty years old:



1925
19

Departure
31 Jul 1925 • Göteborgs och Bohus
1 source

1925
20

Arrival
21 Aug 1925 • New York, New York
2 sources

1926
20

Marriage
19 Apr 1926
1 source

Now that I found Elsie Benson on Ancestry.com, it was just a matter of looking at her various ancestral lines until I could connect her back to Lars Emil Larsson. Or it was quite possible that I would find a different way in which we were related – or even no relationship at all. Stay tuned!

Elsie Benson’s father was Henry Alexius Andersson (1881-1951). Here is his profile from the “bradley holway” family tree:

bradley holway Family Tr... Tree search bh bhborn1951

Henry Alexius Andersson
BIRTH 28 SEP 1881 • Fjärås, Halland, Sverige
DEATH 16 MAR 1951 • Ucklum, Göteborg och Bohus, Sverige

I note that he was born in Fjärås, which is where Lars Emil Larsson lived, so this is encouraging. Unfortunately, the “bradley holway” family tree doesn’t go back to Henry’s parents. So I had to look for his parents in other trees on Ancestry.com.

I found another profile for Henry Alexius Andersson in the “Stenborg” family tree, which is owned by Kent Stenborg:

Stenborg Tree search kent_stenborg

Henry Alexius Andersson
BIRTH 28 SEPT 1881 • Fjärås, Halland, Sverige
DEATH 16 MAR 1951 • Hålkekärr Södra, Ucklum (O)

Family

Parents

- Anders Petter Svensson 1854–1911
- Hilda Evelina Börjesdotter 1862–1944

Spouse and children

- Hanna Justina Alexandersdotter 1883–1961
- Hildur Justina Alexandra Andersson 1905–
- Tage Reinhold Andersson 1906–
- Paul Helge Alexius Andersson 1912–1993
- Josef Eugen Andersson 1916–1970
- Selma Tullan* Florence Justina Andersson Gotlén 1918–2005
- Henry Astor Andersson 1920–2009

OMG! Henry’s mother was Hilda Evelina Börjesdotter (1862-1944), and she was one of Lars Emil Larsson’s sisters!! Bingo!

Here is Hilda’s profile from the “Stenborg” family tree:

Stenborg Tree search kent_stenborg

Hilda Evelina Börjesdotter

BIRTH 23 JUN 1862 • Fjärås, Halland, Sverige
DEATH 17 JAN 1944 • Sverige

Facts

1862 (AGE) **Birth**
23 Jun 1862 • Fjärås, Halland, Sverige

1864 2 **Birth of brother Lars Emil Larsson** (1864–1945)
1 OCT 1864 • Fjärås, Halland, Sweden

1878 15 **Death of father Börje Larsson** (1835–1878)
26 MAR 1878 • Fjärås, Halland, Sweden

1881 18 **Marriage**
11 Mar 1881 • Fjärås, Halland, Sverige
Anders Petter Svensson (1854–1911)

Family

Parents

Börje Larsson 1835–1878

Anna Helena Andersdotter 1837–

Spouse and children

Anders Petter Svensson 1854–1911

Henry Alexius Andersson 1881–1951

Karl Oskar Andersson 1886–1971

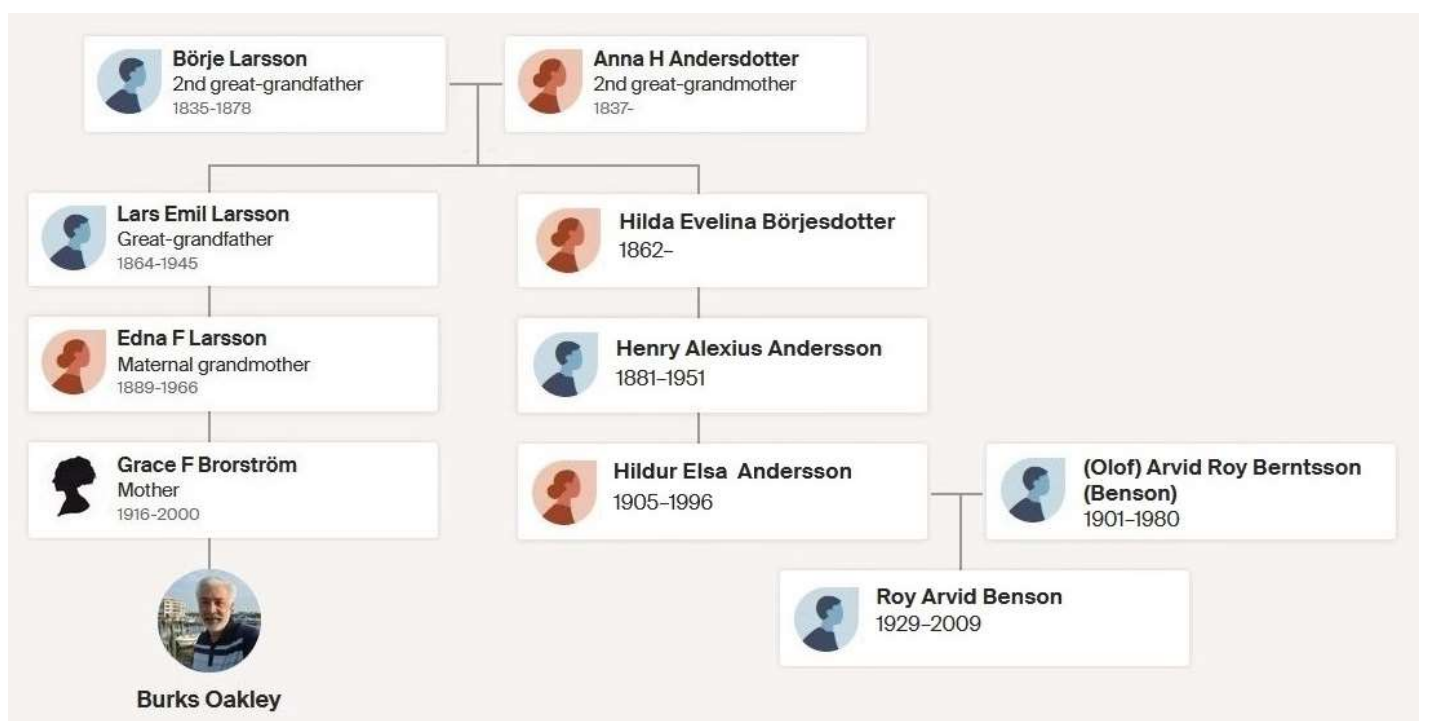
Ester Svensson Ogift 1891–1981

Rut Naemi Svensson 1901–1990

This shows that Hilda's parents were Börje Larsson (1835-1878) and his wife Anna Helena Andersdotter (1837-). This couple were my second-great grandparents.

Hilda was born in Fjärås. This profile has her death in "Sverige" (Sweden), but Göran Grotting found that she immigrated to America. The "Stenborg" family tree has her husband dying in Fjärås in 1911, so maybe she immigrated to America after that.

At any rate, I now have learned how Elsie Benson and I were related. Here is a chart showing this relationship:



Based on this chart, Elsie and my mother were second-cousins, so Elsie and I were second-cousins once-removed. And Roy Benson and I were third-cousins.

And Elsie's father and my maternal grandmother were first-cousins.

Other Connections to Lars Emil Larsson and his Ancestors

I previously have written about my DNA connections with individuals who have ancestral lines going back to the ancestors of Lars Emil Larsson in Fjärås, Sweden.

One DNA match is with Robert Bergmark, who is descended from Lars Emil's sister Anna Louisa (Lovisa) Larsson:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/SwedishGenealogy/BergmarkLarssonConnection.pdf>

I have multiple DNA matches with several relatives in the Thackaberry family. Recall that Lars Emil's father was Börje Larsson. Gail Thackaberry and Mark Thackaberry are descended from Börje's younger sister Anna Lovisa "Louisa" Larsdotter:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/SwedishGenealogy/ThackaberryLarssonConnection.pdf>

I have several more DNA matches with descendants of Inger H. Larsdotter, who was an older sister of Börje Larsson:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/SwedishGenealogy/GingerWalgren-HanssonCousin.pdf>

Overall, I have twenty-five DNA matches with descendants of the parents of Börje Larsson.

Links to all my narratives about my DNA connections going back to Fjärås can be found at:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/SwedishGenealogy/#Lars-Emil-Larsson>

Summary

In this short narrative, I documented how I was able to find out how I was related to the Swedish immigrant, Elsie Benson. She was the granddaughter of Hilda Evelina Börjesdotter (1862-1944), who was an older sister of my great-grandfather Lars Emil Larsson (1864-1945). Elsie was my mother's second-cousin, making her my second-cousin once-removed.

Knowing how Elsie and I were related makes my woven mat even more special.



Appendix – Photos from Fjärås, Sweden



Church in Fjärås. I took this photo on July 12, 2016.



View from the church looking west towards the sea. July 12, 2016.



Lars Emil Larsson's house is shown in the center of this photo – taken during my visit to Fjärås in July 2016.



The church in Fjärås. I took this photo on May 11, 2019, when I was visiting Fjärås with my cousin Jenny and her family.



Selfie taken by a rapeseed field just outside of Fjärås – May 11, 2019.