

# **The Origin of the Brorström Name in Sweden**

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## ***Introduction***

My mother was Grace Florence Brorström (1916-2000). Her four grandparents were Swedes who immigrated to America in the 1880's. Their family names were Brorström, Wennström, Larsson, and Larsson – and yes, in that generation of my family, Ida Gustava Larsson married Lars Emil Larsson.

I have always wondered where the family name Brorström came from. Loosely translated, Bror ström could be “Brother stream”. I know that some Swedes have taken family names based on nature, like Sandström (Sand stream) or Cederholm (Cedar island). But the actual origin of the family name Brorström is much more interesting. In this narrative, I will present one version of the origin of the Brorström family name. However, I'm first going to provide a lot of background about Swedish family names, so please bear with me.

## ***Patronymic Names in Sweden***

When Swedes first started using first and last names, the last names were chosen based on a patronymic naming convention. Patronymic (/patrə'nimik/) is a term denoting or relating to a name derived from the name of the father (or male ancestor). For example, if Lars Svensson and his wife had a son that they named Jöns Erik, the son's full name would be Jöns Erik Larsson – literally Lars son. If they had a daughter named Petronella Katarina, her name would be Petronella Katarina Larsdotter – literally Lars dotter (daughter).

If Jöns Erik Larsson then married and had a son, the son's surname would be Jönsson. And if Petronella Katarina Larsdotter married Per Eriksson, her married name would be Petronella Katarina Eriksson (and their son would have the family name Persson).

In this example, in three generations of this family, the males in the same family would successively have family names of Svensson, Larsson, and Jönsson. For genealogists in America, such as myself, this makes it very difficult to trace Swedish ancestors from one generation to the next.

As an aside, Swedes often have multiple given names. For example, several of my Swedish cousins are Per Erik Magnus\* Ivarsson and Bengt Anders\* Brorström. The calling name (Swedish *tilltalsnamn*) by which the person is normally identified in conversation is one of the given names, but not necessarily the first. In a context where the full name is spelled out, the calling name is often indicated by an asterisk, by capital letters, or underlines or italics. For example, Per Erik Magnus\* Ivarsson is known as Magnus Ivarsson, while Bengt Anders\* Brorström is known as Anders Brorström.

Per Erik <b>Magnus</b> Ivarsson Hulebäckserödsvägen 32	54 år Hjärnarp	  
Bengt <b>Anders</b> Brorström Bräckevägen 511	55 år Fagerfjäll	   

Entries from ratsit.se for Magnus and Anders. Their calling names are shown in bold on the ratsit.se website.

One other aside. In 1901, the Names Adoption Act became law in Sweden, and abolished the patronymic naming practice. From 1901 on, everyone had to have a family name that was passed down to the next generation.

But I digress far too much. How the heck did we get the family name of Brorström?

## Heritable Family Names

Heritable family names were generally adopted rather late in Sweden. Nobility were the first to take names that would be passed on from one generation to the next. Later, clergy, artisans and merchants in cities took heritable names.

An example of clergy taking on a family name is Bengt Jönsson Berzelius (1654-1710), who was the great-grandfather of Jöns Jacob Berzelius (1779-1848), a Swede who was one of the fathers of modern chemistry.<sup>1</sup> Even though Bengt was the son of Jöns Håkansson, he took the Latinized family name Berzelius, which was passed down to subsequent generations.



**Bengt Jönsson Berzelius** 

Gender: Male  
Birth: 1654  
Bergsäter, Motala, Aska, Sweden  
Death: May 19, 1710 (56)  
Linköping, Linköping, Östergötland County, Sweden

Immediate Family: Son of [Jöns Håkansson](#) and [Lucia Bengtsdotter](#)  
Husband of [Gertrud Wigert](#)  
Father of [Niils Berzelius](#); [Gertrud Berzelius](#);  
[Jöns Johannes Benedicti Berzelius](#); [Henrik Berzelius](#) and [Ingrid Berzelius](#)

Added by: [Dag Henrik Gösta Lundqvist](#) on April 29, 2009  
Managed by: [Dag Henrik Gösta Lundqvist](#)

Bengt Jönsson Berzelius from the Geni.com website

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<sup>1</sup> From Wikipedia: Berzelius is considered to be one of the founders of modern chemistry. He is especially noted for his determination of atomic weights, and his experiments led to a more complete depiction of the principles of stoichiometry.

Berzelius's work led to his development of a modern system of chemical formula notation; his system abbreviated the Latin names of the elements with one or two letters and applied superscripts to designate the number of atoms of each element present in both the acidic and basic ingredients.

Berzelius himself discovered and isolated several new elements, including cerium (1803) and thorium (1828). The mineral berzelianite was discovered in 1850 and named after him. He is known in Sweden as “the Father of Swedish Chemistry”. Berzelius Day is celebrated on 20 August in honor of him.

When a family was ennobled, it also was usually given a family name. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the surname was only rarely the original family name of the ennobled; usually, a more imposing new name was chosen. An illustration can be seen the ennoblement of the brothers Johan Henrik Lang and Lars Adam Lang (in 1772) taking the surname Langenskjöld (Long shield).

### ***Ornamental Family Names***

In Sweden, the patronymic ending is –sson, e.g. Karlsson (Karl's son). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these “son names” were transformed into permanent family names. [Two of my mother's four grandparents had the family name Larsson, and according to ratsit.se, there are 106,893 adults living in Sweden who have the family name Larsson, making it the sixth most common family name in Sweden.] At the time when family names were becoming permanent, people of the Swedish middle class adopted family names in imitation of the gentry. Ornamental family names joining two elements from birthplace or nature, such as Bergman (mountain man), Holmberg (island mountain), Lindgren (linden branch), and Åkerlund (field grove), were quite frequent and remain common today. Sometimes the first part of such a composite name refers to the family's place of origin; e.g., the Strindberg family originating from Strinne. An example of an ornamental family name based on a location in the Brorström family relates to Pella Hanna Petronella Gustafva Brorström (1853-1922), who was my great-grandfather's sister. Pella was married to Frans August Åkesson (1860-1928). He changed their family name from Åkesson to Guttorp, and he selected Guttorp since they were living in Gudmundtorp at the time.

### ***The Brorström Family in Sweden***

Using ratsit.se, I found that there are twenty-eight adults with the family name of Brorström living in Sweden today, and all of them are descended from Thure Petter Brorström (1768-1855).<sup>2</sup> Thure Petter was a priest (or vicar or minister) at the church in Borrby, in southeast Skåne, and I visited his grave in May 2018. The grave is one of just a few adjacent to the church – there is a large cemetery two or three blocks down the street. I assume that Thure Petter and his family are buried there since he was the church priest (or vicar or minister).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.burksoakley.com/SwedishGenealogy/TheBrorströmFamilyInSweden.pdf>

Here are some photos from my visit to Thure Petter's grave and the church in Borrby:



The old church in Borrby (Borrby St. Maria kyrka)



Selfie on the grounds of the old church in Borrby (Borrby St. Maria kyrka)



Prosten (Dean) Brorström's gravemarker.



Prosten (Provestess) Brorström's gravemarker.



The Brorström family plot adjacent to the church.

It is instructive to examine Thure Petter's ancestors:



The male line starts in the first generation with Jöns Olsson (1667-1702). His son Bror was named Bror Jönsson (1700-1768), and this is consistent with the patronymic naming convention (he was Jöns son).

The next generation is Bror Jönsson's son Jöns Lars, who I have listed in my family tree as Jöns Lars Brorsson Brorström (1731-1802).

The next generation was our common ancestor Thure Petter Brorström (1768-1855). And after that, all subsequent generations continued to use the family name of Brorström.

So why do I have Thure Petter's father in my family tree listed as Jöns Lars Brorsson Brorström (1731-1802)? Well, that is the full name I got in 2014 in a detailed family tree that was prepared by my Swedish cousin Göran Grotting.

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*Generation III*

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III:1 ff f

**Jöns** Lars **Brorsson Brorström** (167). Född 1731 i Hörup (M). Död 1802 i Södra Åkarp (M). This man was the first person to take the name Brorström. His father's name was Bror, which means "brother". (Barn II:1, Far IV:1, Mor IV:2)

Gift 1766 i Hörup (M) med efterföljande ana.

Barn:

Thure Petter **Brorström** (164). Född 1768 i Fågeltofta (L). Död 1855 i Borrby (L). (Se II:1).

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*Generation IV*

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IV:1 ff ff

Bror **Jönsson** (170). Född 1700 i Hörup (M). Död 1768 i Hörup (M). (Barn III:1, Far V:1, Mor V:2)

Gift 1728 i Hörup (M) med efterföljande ana.

Barn:

**Jöns** Lars **Brorsson Brorström** (167). Född 1731 i Hörup (M). Död 1802 i Södra Åkarp (M). (Se III:1).

Note that Göran wrote "This man was the first person to take the name Brorström." I could understand if his name was Jöns Lars Brorsson, since he was Bror's son. But it seemed that he started using the family name of Brorström himself and passed the Brorström name on when he named his son Thure Petter Brorström. Why?

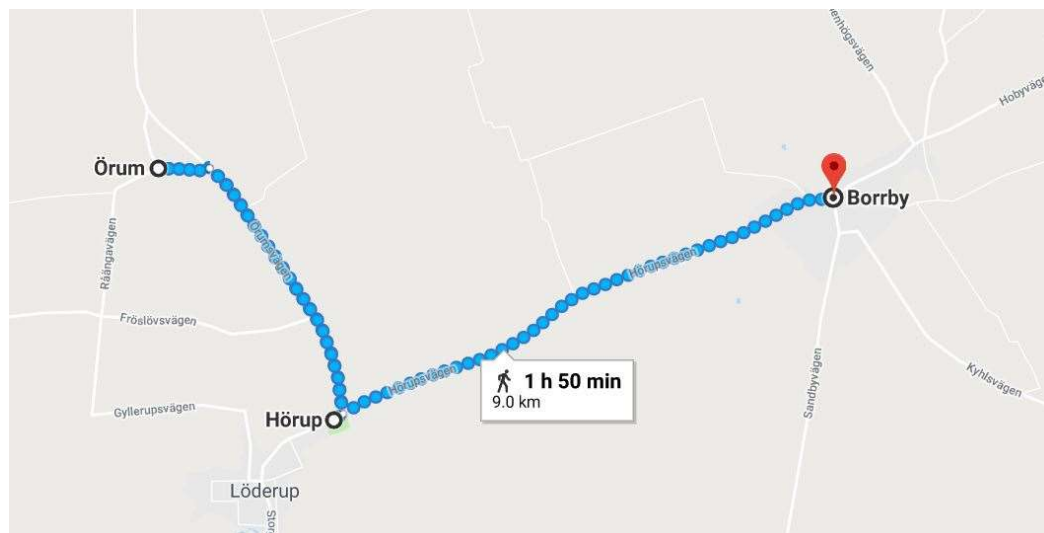


When I met my cousin Hans Brorström at a family dinner party in Nacka, Sweden, in May 2018, he told me about his understanding of all of this over an excellent meal and a few glasses of an adult beverage.



Hans Brorström, May 2018

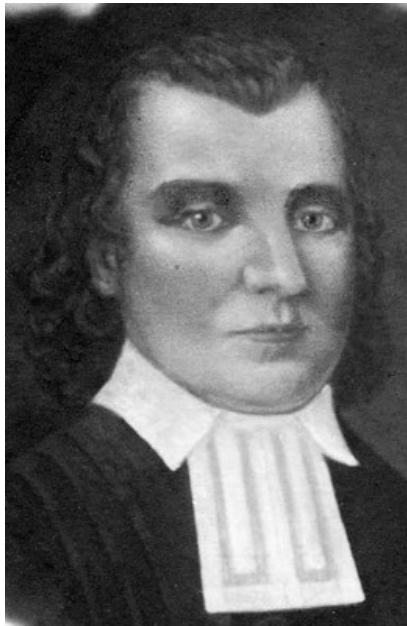
According to Hans, our ancestor Jöns Olsson (1667-1702) lived in Örum, Sweden, which is in Skåne, just a few miles west of Borrby. He had a son Bror who was given the patronymic name Bror Jönsson (1700-1768). Bror Jönsson lived in homestead no. 11 in Örum. He was buried in Hörup, a village a few miles southwest of Borrby.



Bror had a son who was originally given the patronymic name Jöns Lars Brorsson (1731-1802), and here is where it gets interesting. Jöns Lars Brorsson left Örum and went to school in Ystad, where he decided to change his surname to Brorström. It is believed that his new family name of Brorström is a twisted form of “Bror of Örum”.

## **Brorström = Bror of Örum**

After Jöns Lars Brorström had been ordained in Lund, he worked as a minister/vicar/priest in various parishes. One of his and Christina Charlotta's five children was Ture Petrus (Thure Petter) Brorström, born on 10 October 1768. Thure Petter continued in his father's footsteps, working as a priest in the church.



Thure Petter Brorström, from the [gutturps.se](http://gutturps.se) website  
[http://gutturps.se/wc01/wc01\\_150.htm](http://gutturps.se/wc01/wc01_150.htm)

Perhaps Jöns Lars Brorsson took the Brorström family name because he was an educated member of the clergy, and other clergy were adopting permanent family names at that time.

## ***Summary***

In this verbose narrative, I have rambled on and on about family names in Sweden, and then finally provided one explanation of how the clergy member Jöns Lars Brorsson (1731-1802) changed his name to Jöns Lars Brorström. According to my cousin Hans Brorström, Brorström is a twisted form of “Bror of Örum”. And that, my friends, is how we came to be Brorströms.

If any of the readers of this document have different explanations, please let me know.

## ***Appendix***

As long as I mentioned Berzelius in this narrative, here is a photo of the statue of Berzelius in Berzelii Park, located just southwest of the Royal Dramatic Theater (Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern) in central Stockholm:



Berzelius, the “Father of Swedish Chemistry”.