

Olof Thorsson of Swanwick and his Tussey Descendants

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*'Bomärke' of
Olof Thorsson,
the legal
signature for an
illiterate person.*

Among the men sentenced for some minor crime and ordered to go to New Sweden in 1641 was one Olof Thorsson. As yet, his place of origin in Sweden and the nature of his crime is unknown. But it is known that when he boarded the ship *Kalmar Nyckel* in Göteborg he was accompanied by his wife and children.

After three years of servitude at the Christina plantation, Olof Thorsson won his freedom and chose to remain in New Sweden. He was hired as an agricultural worker at a wage of ten guilders per year, the same wage as a common soldier. As the years wore on, however, he found working for Governor Printz increasingly intolerable.

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Co-founder of Swanwick

A new opportunity arose for Olle Thorsson and other disgruntled settlers in 1651 when the Dutch built Fort Casimir at present New Castle, Delaware. This led Olle Thorsson and a number of other New Sweden settlers to move across the Christina River and live under the Dutch. They were not permitted to live within the Dutch fort but were allowed to build a community of log cabins north of the fort at Swan Cove (Swanwick). This was to be Olle Thorsson's home for the rest of his life.

In May 1654 the Swedes, under Governor Johan Rising, captured Fort Casimir from the Dutch, so Olle Thorsson and his Swedish neighbors once again were under the Swedish flag. But Governor Stuyvesant retaliated in 1655, conquering all of New Sweden and with it the young settlement of Swanwick.

Olof Thorsson would see four more changes in government before his death in 1678. In 1657, Stuyvesant surrendered jurisdiction over Swanwick to another Dutch colony, called New Amstel. In 1664 the English captured all of the Delaware from the Dutch, only to surrender it back to the Dutch in 1673. Finally, in 1674, the area was returned to English rule.

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2. Elizabeth Ollesdotter, born in Sweden c. 1635, married by 1655 Matthias Eskilsson, who also took up residence in Swanwick. Both of them were dead by 1677, when their minor children were placed under the guardianship of her father, Olof Thorsson, and her sister, Maria Block. They had four known children:

- Peter Matthiasson, born c. 1656, married Metje, daughter of Gerrit Sandersen of Swanwick [Dutch] and died in Swanwick in 1683. Their son George Petersson was progenitor of the Peterson family of Swanwick.
- Margaret Matthiasdotter, born c. 1658, still living in 1685; not further traced.
- Simon Matthiasson alias Cock, born c. 1660, still living in 1688, not further traced.
- John Matthiasson alias Cock, born c. 1663, still living in 1688, not further traced.

3. Lars Olleson Toarson, born in Sweden c. 1637, married Annika Clementsdotter, of Finnish descent. He lived at Bochten and was fined in both the Long Finn Rebellion and the dike rebellion. He died in 1685, survived by six known children:

- Olle Larsson Toarson, born c. 1659, married Sarah, daughter of Foppe Jansen Outhout and Sarah Neering [both Dutch] and died in Lower Penns Neck in 1695, survived by sons Fabius and Saffredus Toarson and two daughters.
- Matthias Larsson, born c. 1661, apparently never married and was last found working for John Williams Neering at Middle Neck in New Castle Hundred in 1698.
- Ellen Larsdotter, born c. 1663, married Abraham Van Heyst of Lower Penns Neck [Dutch] and had two children before the death of her husband in 1686: Abraham and Gertrude Van Heyst.
- Margaret Larsdotter, born c. 1665, married [1] Sicca Olleson, [2] William Simpson of Chester County, Pa., and died after 1702.
- Lars Larsson Tussey, born c. 1668, never married and died in Lower Penns Neck c. 1699.
- Jacob Larsson Tussey, born c. 1674, whose wife was named Mary, moved to the Pennsylvania frontier where his family later provided the name for Tussey Mountain in Huntingdon County, Pa.

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A Family Divided

These changes brought an international flavor to Olle Thorsson's family. Under Dutch rule, his daughter Maria married a Dutch gunner Hans Block. Under English rule, his daughter Petronella married Captain John Carr.

Rifts, however, occurred in the family over the political issues of the time. During the Long Finn Rebellion of 1669, when Pastor Lars Lock sided with those prepared to take up arms against the English if, as was expected, Sweden attempted to retake its lost colony, Olle Thorsson's two sons sided with the rebels, while their father stood fast with the English government and his son-in-law Captain John Carr. The incident also led to Olle Thorsson inviting a Lutheran minister in New York, Jacob Fabritius, to establish a church at Swanwick to compete with Lock's church at Crane Hook.

Again, in 1675, there was a family split when the New Castle Court ordered every able-bodied man in the county to build a dike for Justice Hans Block's convenience. Rev. Fabritius was one of the leaders opposing this, and Olle Thorsson's two sons drew fines for refusing to work on the dike. This incident also led Olle Thorsson to withdraw his support for Fabritius and to return to Lars Lock's Crane Hook church. Fabritius had to look elsewhere and in 1677 became pastor of the new Swedish church at Wicaco.

Olof Thorsson died at Swanwick between May and November 1678. His widow Elisa (apparently short for Elisabeth) died after 22 December 1679, when she joined her eldest son Olle in agreeing to sell one of Olle Thorsson's properties at Swanwick to her granddaughter Barbara Block's husband, Peter Maeslander. ✱

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From Thorsson to Tussey

The name Thorsson was not a surname, but rather Olof's patronymic, meaning that he was Olof, son of Thor. However, in succeeding generations it became the family surname (spelled Toarson, or variants thereof), later evolving into Tossa, Tossava and finally Tussey.

Five children of Olof Thorsson and his wife Elisabeth have been identified:

1. **Olle Olleson Toarson**, born in Sweden c. 1633, married Anna Hendricksdotter, of Finnish descent, c. 1658 and lived at Bochten (also known as Verdrietige Hook, now Edgemoor, DE) in Brandywine Hundred. He was fined for his involvement in both the Long Finn Rebellion and the dike rebellion and died in 1687, survived by six children:

- Hendrick Tussey, born c. 1659, became one of the first settlers at the Maurice River in New Jersey around 1700, but returned to St. Georges in New Castle County, where he died after 1720. He married and had at least one child (Margaret).
- John Tussey, born c. 1661, married Anna, daughter of Måns Pålsson, and had six sons and two daughters before his death in Bochten in 1722: Annika, Maria, Olof, John, Peter, Måns, Elias and Hendrick.
- Margaret Tussey, born c. 1664, married Benedictus Stidham and had five surviving children: Timothy, Sarah, Anna, Benjamin and Margaret.
- Matthias Tussey, born c. 1673, married Sarah, daughter of Lucas Stidham, and had five children before his death in Bochten in late 1712: Ingeborg, Olle, Annika, Sarah and Maria.
- Olle Tussey, born c. 1678, married Gertrude Petersdotter, widow of Johan Månsson, c. 1701 and died in Bochten in 1713, survived by at least four children: Annika, Christina, Stephen and Catharine.
- Stephen Tussey, born c. 1680, married Catharina, daughter of Anders Stalcop, and died in Bochten in February 1715, survived by at least three children: Thomas, Anders and Catharine.

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4. Maria Ollesdotter, born in Sweden c. 1639, married about 1659 Hans Block, a Dutch gunner and later a justice on the New Castle Court, who died in 1676. She was still living in 1692. She had one child: *

- Barbara Block, born c. 1660, married [1] Peter Maeslander c. 1678, and [2] Adam Hikey alias Hay [both Dutch] and had two surviving sons: Cornelius and William Maeslander.

5. Petronella Ollesdotter, born in New Sweden c. 1645, married c. 1665 Captain John Carr, chief officer for New York's possessions on the Delaware. They lived in the town of New Castle. After the Dutch recapture of former New Netherland in 1673, they fled with their children and Patrick Carr (John's bachelor brother) to Cecil County, Maryland, where they were granted a 2,000-acre tract known as "St. John's Manor" on the west side of Elk River. After a prolonged illness, Carr died in 1676 and Petronella remarried George Oldfield, also English. To handle their New Castle County affairs, the Carr family relied upon Hans Block and their Tussey relatives. In 1695, George and Petronella Oldfield and her son Richard Carr sold Carr's lands in Cecil County and moved to Chester in Chester County, Pa., where Petronella died after 1697. She had five known children:

- Richard Carr, born c. 1666, still living in 1716.
- Elisabeth Carr, born c. 1668, married Peter Clawson [Swedish] in Cecil County.
- Maria Carr, born c. 1670, married John Bristow, Jr., of Chester County, Pa.
- Petronella Carr, born c. 1672, married Peter Mainardo of Cecil County, Md.
- Susannah Oldfield, born c. 1677, married Lawrence Rawson [Swedish] of Marcus Hook, Chester County, and lived in Cecil County on George Oldfield's former land.

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