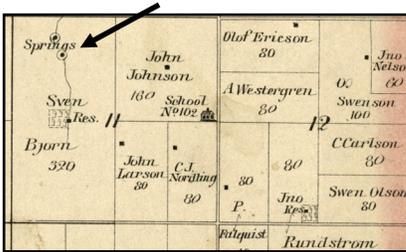


# Vår Historia

## SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

### BJÖRN'S GOLDEN BLUFF



John Björn

**PUBLISHED  
BI-MONTHLY**

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Björn, meaning "bear" is a name that is well known as a first name, like Björn Ironside (the Viking) or Björn Ulvaeus (ABBA), but the Björnfamily in this story had lived many generations in one place, Norra Råda, Sweden. Two brothers ventured out though, first to Örebro, then to America.

At age 24 Sven was a farmhand in Örebro, where he met a young lady by the name of Augusta Catherine Karlsson. Four years later they wed and their first child, Elias was born 1866.

Sven brought his new family to America in 1867, and their second child, Maria, was born July of 1867 in Stockholm, WI. The town of Stockholm was only thirteen years from its Swedish founding. Another child, David, was also born in Wisconsin in 1869.

One of Sven's brothers, Jan, or John, had also came to America but went to Chicago in 1868. John heard about Kansas and traveled to the community house at the base of the butte now known as Coronado Heights. He feared all the land would be taken once Olof Olsson came with his group. He wrote to Sven and Sven's family made their way to Kansas in 1870. Sven and Catherine had Josef (Joseph), born just north of Lindsborg. The family first homesteaded in Walnut Grove township, which is near Mentor, close to Bridgeport.

Four more children were born in or near Lindsborg, Jonathan 1872, Han-

na 1874, Isaac 1877, and Jacob 1879. His brother, John, married in 1887 to Matilda Charlotta Janson and raised two daughters, Ruth and Hannah, and two sons, Carl and Paul, all in Lindsborg.

Both brothers sought out to buy land, some in town, but being farmers and ranchers first, always had farm land in the family. Sven had bought 320 acres four miles west of Lindsborg, stretching up to within a mile and a half southwest of Coronado Heights. His land also had unfarmable hills, or bluffs, which made livestock more feasible. John bought 160 acres just north of Lindsborg on the Saline County side.

Both brothers joined the congregation of Bethany Lutheran Church in 1870, became naturalized in 1876, both could speak, read and write English, and when Olof Olsson started his first church choir Sven sang bass along with Dr. Rundstrom.

As Lindsborg started to grow, Sven took on a job as a teller at Ober, Hageman, & Co. on the corner of Main and Grant Streets, now a parking lot. His younger children were still going to schoolhouse



**Sven Björn Family Portrait c1885**

S. BJÖRN

### Björn's Golden Bluff {CON'T}

No. 102 aka Fallquist School, and all were top students.

August of 1882 the broomcorn harvest was getting underway, and the church grounds had a good crop. Pastor Swensson organized a two-day thrashing with himself as General-in-Chief, Sven and Francis Johnson as Generals-in-Division. They had seventy five men, women, and children volunteering their time and backs to get it accomplished. The crew thrashed \$700.00 worth of brush in what Swensson labeled as "Field Days".

Sven had bought another 80 acres one mile east of the Swanson Brick Plant in 1884, that same year the brothers got word that their father, Anders Ericksson Björn had passed away at their birth home in Sweden.

Sven sold the 80 acres east of town to Jacob Christian for \$4,000.00 and traveled to Oklahoma to invest in land. Upon returning he brought a sample of the red dirt and expressed his disgust of it.

During this time, Sven's son Joseph had been attending Bethany College and got his certificate from the business department in 1890 and graduated Bethany College in 1894. Joseph entered the oil field business as a book keeper in Texas, but after his father, Sven joined nine prominent farmers, including Peter Elving and Charles Ferm, the two original owners of Coronado Heights, in incorporating the Union Mercantile Company in Lindsborg in 1891 he eventually came back and was hired to manage it. In 1895, Joseph became a livestock dealer, rancher, and livestock feeder. It wasn't uncommon to drive up to 200 head of cattle from Hutchinson, KS to the ranch west of Lindsborg.

Sven retired from the board of the Union Mercantile Co. and moved to Texas in 1894 and returned 1897, just in time for his 320 acre farm to be auctioned off by a Sheriff's sale. Fortunately, his brother, John bought it and kept it in the family.

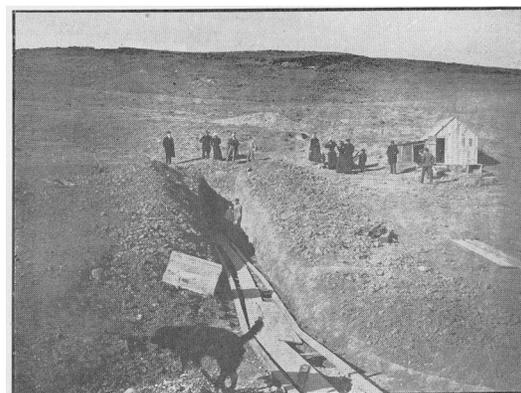
Another one of Sven's sons, Isaac, had a saddle stolen and Isaac's brother, Joseph and City Marshal Van Horn chased the man all the way to Soloman. They retrieved the saddle but the man and his wife escaped, it turned out the outlaws were wanted in Wichita and a few other places for horse thieving. Two years later the thieves returned and this time caught by Van Horn.

In 1898 Sven returned to Lindsborg and was hired at Bethany College as a Night Watchman. His

son, Joseph, also became the manager of Bethany Band and often filled in as Deputy Postmaster. The two lived on north 2nd street.

April 1900 Elias Björn and Mark Gunnerson were arrested for larceny, being accused of cattle rustling. Joseph had sent the two to Brookville to drive a herd back and somehow an extra steer got mixed in. They were acquitted that December, but in the meantime, Elias discovered something.

October of 1900 Elias and Arvid Alderine discovered rocks on the farm that appeared to contain gold. It was "tested by experts" and by December decided to dig for gold in the bluff on their (Uncle John's) property. The famous photo in many books and newspapers was taken February 1901. They dug day and night, achieving about eight feet a day. By March they had dug 150' in the hillside. Joseph took samples to Colorado to determine its value, and decided to just stay and start mining. Any results were kept



BJÖRNDYKE. GRUFDRIFT I LINDSBORG

quiet, so no one really knows if there was real gold in this part of Kansas, but over the years people just accepted that there was only "fools gold" in them there hills.

John ordered a thrashing machine from Train Bros., one so large it hung over both sides of the railroad flat car it was delivered on. The wheels were 24" wide and it was the largest machine any farmer had ever seen.

Tragedy struck in 1904, John lost his eldest son to appendicitis, then six days later his brother, Sven, died in a freak accident at Bethany College. The generator in the gas plant behind the Ladies Hall had not been working right, and Sven stooped over to look for the problem when it exploded, killing him instantly. Two students found him later in the day.

Over the years, Joseph moved to Seattle, WA, got married and incorporated Rainier-Wyoming Oil Company. Elias moved to Texas where he also got married but died in 1914 at only 47 years old. One son of Sven's, Jonathon, ended up mining in Alaska. Sven's brother, John, lived a full life and passed in 1932.



Want to help update the Lindsborg Business Directory?

SVHA has started the project of updating and expanding the Lindsborg Business Directory. This directory was created in 1994 by the Lindsborg 125th Anniversary Committee and updated by SVHA in 2005. At that time, many blanks were left for future updates, and more resources will lend to going even further back in time as well as filling in the past 20 years.

If you have ever owned a business (or commercial building) in Lindsborg, please scan this QR Code and take this quick survey. Our intent is to have this completed by the end of 2026. Thank you!

Ruth, Jean, Eldora

Upcoming SVHA Programs

March 10th, 2026

The Connection Between Lindsborg and Bucklin, MO.

Gretchen Esping



May 12th, 2026

Women Instrumental in Developing Bethany College

Ryon Carey and Denise Carson



July 14th, 2026

The Real Ike—Fact and Fiction

Mark Teasley



All programs start at: 7:30 pm

Location:

Messiah Lutheran Church—Fellowship Hall 402 N. First Street—Lindsborg, KS.

Please cut along the dotted line

Smoky Valley Historical Association P.O. Box 255 Lindsborg, KS. 67456



Membership options: \$25, \$50, \$100, Other \$

Name: Date: Address: City: State: Zip Code: Phone: Email:

Smoky Valley Historical Association is a non-profit organization and is registered under 501(c)3

All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.

Please mail to P.O. Box listed above. Thank You!

Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year



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**VÅR HISTORIA FEATURES!**

**ALL PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS ARE POSTED TO OUR WEBSITE IN THE "NEWSLETTER" PAGE. ALSO, THE CURRENT ISSUE FEATURES PHOTOS AND NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS PERTINENT TO THAT ISSUE, AND SOMETIMES IS THE ONLY PLACE TO SEE THEM.**

[WWW.SMOKYVALLEY-HISTORY.ORG](http://WWW.SMOKYVALLEY-HISTORY.ORG)



**Funding**

Membership contributions are the SVHA's major source of on-going funding. A free-will donation in any amount will secure your membership in the Association for the year.

**\*Memberships are renewed in the First quarter of each year!**

Grants, such as those awarded by the Kansas Humanities Council, are also available from time-to-time to further the mission of Smoky Valley Historical Association.

**Smoky Valley Historical Mission**

*The purpose of this association shall be to collect and preserve historical photographs, manuscripts, and other items pertaining to the early history and settlement of our community in general and the City of Lindsborg in particular; to preserve and beautify places of historical interest in our city, its vicinity, and properties entrusted to the association; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.*

**Contact info:**

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[www.smokyvalley-history.org](http://www.smokyvalley-history.org)



TACK SÅ MYCKET!



SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
LINDSBORG, KANSAS 67456

Smoky Valley Historical Association  
PO Box 255  
Lindsborg, KS 67456

*"History preservation and education"*



*Thank you for your contributions, and supporting the historical preservation of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley of Central Kansas.*

*Our pioneers left their legacy long after they were gone, so can you. Managing estates, bequests, and gifts through retirement plans can help keep our preservation ongoing and long-lasting.*

**All donations are tax exempt, we are a 501-(c)3 organization.**