

Sweden



Description of Arms :

Azure a cross formy throughout or, in the 1st and 4th quarter 3 open crowns 2 and 1 or ; in the 2nd and 3rd quarter, 3 streams bendwise sinister argent surmounted by a lion rampant crowned with an open all or armed and langued gules ; an inescutcheon overall party per pale, dexter tierced in bend azure, argent and gules, a garb or (House of Vase), sinister azure issuant from water in base a bridge of 3 arches and 2 crenellated towers all argent, beneath an eagle wings inverted head turned to sinister grasping a lightning-bolt and in chief the constellation of Charles Wain all or (House of Bernadotte).

Principal Title : King of Sweden.

Subsidiary Titles : Duke of Vestrogöthmand, Värmland, Hälsingland etc.

Family Name : Bernadotte.

Family History: Contrary to its modern image, Sweden has a turbulent - even bellicose - history. True, Queen Margaret (who came from Britain) served in the British Red Cross during the Great War and Count Folke Bernadotte died in an air crash while acting for the United Nations in Africa. But it was not always like that.

The story of Sweden is mostly about two dynasties:

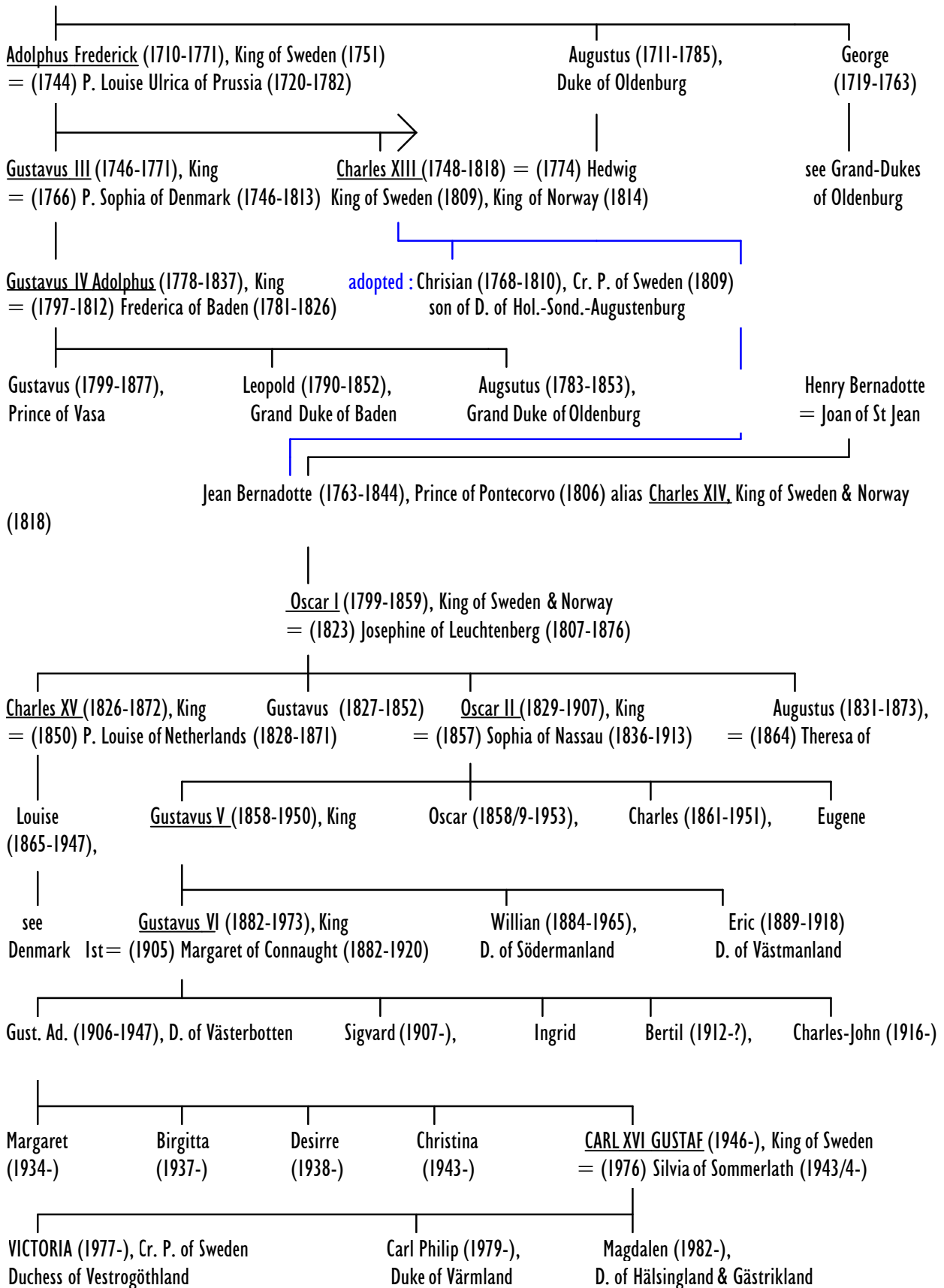
Vasa: Gustavus Vasa freed his country from the “domination of Denmark, its economic dependance on Germany and the yoke of the Church”. The latter was reckoned to possess as much as two-thirds of the territory. He was the first national king of Sweden. From him stem the two features which characterised his dynasty.

While not fighting between each other, members of the Vasa clan were prepared to take on all comers. Gustavus II Adolphus, 1594-1632, challenged Denmark-Norway, Russia and Poland. They then were embroiled in the Thirty Years War, when the Vasas took the Lutheran side. He also dispossessed the Church of its huge holdings.

There followed many years of almost continual strife. They allied themselves to anyone they considered might be of help in maintaining their independence. They also established a tradition of precocity, many members entering into national debates - and those with other powers - from the early age of twelve or thirteen. Meanwhile, the family was in continual dispute between themselves. Often they aggrandised their territories and, equally often, lost them again. But all this took its toll.

Charles XIII adopted the son of the Duke of Holstein-Sonderberg-Augustenburg as his heir in 1809. There were, however, other descendants waiting in the wings. One was known as the prince of Vasa; two others went on to become Duke of Baden and Grand Duke of

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Oldenburg, respectively. The adopted heir, Christian, unfortunately died in 1809. Charles XIII, King in 1809, died after a short reign, in 1818. In 1810, Parliament confirmed the decision of Charles XIII and this opened the way for the new dynasty, that of the Bernadottes.

Bernadotte: Jean Bernadotte must count as one of the most unlikely monarchs in Europe. He began his career, as a Frenchman, as a private in Napoleon's armies. He then worked his way up through the ranks. Largely thanks to his stunning victory at Austerlitz, Napoleon created him a *Maréchal de France* and Prince de Pontecorvo in 1806. He married a commoner, Desideria Clary.

Despite all this, when Charles XIII died in 1818, he became King of Sweden and Norway and a new chapter began.

His grandson, the first of the family to be born in Sweden, succeeded his father as king in 1850. He was a man who enjoyed life and the company of women. But he found time to open an age of great liberal reform and won over his subjects. He looked askance at the German side in the Franco-Prussian war.

He was succeeded by his brother, Oscar, and the succession has been more or less regular since then.

The Bernadotte family still reigns, despite the collapse of the German thrones. Though the reforms and social experiments of his grandfather still pertain. Sweden is one of the few countries where daughters count as much as sons and the present heir to the throne is Victoria; even though she has a brother living.