

The story of Svante Stensson



by Tommy Thörnqvist

Cover image:

The picture depicts the soldier and fiddler Svante Stensson born in Dalhem's parish in Småland. The picture is taken from the publication “Musiktraditioner i Östergötlands skogsbygder” by Anders Thörnquist. It is part of a larger picture of 12 fiddlers who participated in the fiddler competitions at Adelsnäs, Åtvidaberg in 1909.

Content

| | |
|--|----|
| Preface | 4 |
| A brief look back | 4 |
| What happened next | 5 |
| The true story of Johan Julius' father | 6 |
| Genealogical facts (source references) | 14 |
| Afterword | 20 |
| Some explanations | 21 |

Preface

The story of Johan Julius, which was published in 1998, is largely based on my genealogy from the years 1996 and 1997. The tools that were then available for genealogy were primarily church books on microfilm and the original books that were kept in the national archives. At the archives, each book must be ordered individually, and you could only borrow one book, in original or on film, at a time. From SVAR (Swedish Archive Information) you could borrow microfilm for many books at a time, but it did not change much. Because what you found in a certain book often gave the answer to which book to look for, you did not know in advance which books you would need next. Genealogy research was therefore an extremely slow process. Many times, you came across an obstacle because church books were missing, unreadable or because the person who kept the books failed to enter certain information.

In recent years, the possibilities for genealogy have developed incredibly much. Internet connection via broadband, digital photography of all church books in addition to indexed data registers where you can search with input data such as name, date of birth, place of birth, etc. provide fantastic opportunities that did not exist just a few years ago.

The question that initially aroused my interest in genealogy - "Was Johan Julius' birth on Christmas Eve 1841 the result of a maid's indiscretion with a nobleman on the estate Tyllinge in Dalhem's parish in Småland the same year?" - in the 14 years that have passed since I published the genealogy, it has become a "Cold Case" that has now been able to be resumed. Read this sequel to "The story of Johan Julius" and decide for yourself if the evidence and clues you get here means that Johan Julius' father has finally been revealed.

A brief look back

Let us first revive the old family history of "The Count" who got his maid pregnant.

The first version, which I heard in my youth, was, in a nutshell, that a count once long ago made a got a maid pregnant and this child would be an ancestor of my grandfather. It was also grandfather who told this and jokingly called himself "Count Duval". With a twinkle in his eye, he bent his left index finger so that the skin was stretched over a steel chip from a stonemason's chisel that had penetrated under the skin and remained in the finger and appeared as a small blue bump in the finger. "Here you see my blue blood," he said. The way he told this and pointed at the "evidence" was why the story was not taken too seriously. At a large family reunion in 1996 in Ulebergshamn, the place where Johan Julius lived his last 27 years, the story of noble origins was revived. Gradually, more details emerged.

In the story that eventually appeared to be "true" it was not the count but his son Sten Svante Duvall who was the father of the children (by the way, the count was not a count but was the Baron of Tyllinge Manor in Dalhem parish). This baron's son was, as claimed, put into music education and later became cantor in St. Gertrude's Church in Västervik. He began to misbehave, drink alcohol and live a frivolous life. He also made the estate maid pregnant. This caused his father, the Baron to reject his son and send him away from home.

So this was the story I started with when I started my research.

As short as it is, this story still turned out to contain some verifiable "facts".

Thus, Johan Julius' mother, Anna Lotta Frode, had been a maid on the estate Tyllinge for a period. Johan Julius was born without any father being recorded

in the birth register (father unspecified). No one was officially accused or convicted of paternity, so it could very well be someone on the estate. Johan Julius later changed his last name from Johansson to Stensson (which would have been after the Sten he thought was the father). His last name Johansson was from his grandfather, Johan Frode.

However, it seemed not to be possible to verify the story and there were several details which did not add up. The Baron had e.g. no son but only three daughters. In St. Gertrud there was no cantor who could fit into the story. The time of Anna-Lotta's employment as a maid at Tyllinge does not coincide with the time when she became pregnant. This put an end to the attempts to find this connection to the baron at Tyllinge.

What happened then

A visit to what remains of the house Johan's son, Gerhard Stensson built for himself of Bohus granite at Valarne in Hunnebestand and a chat with the landowner resulted in me finding out that there was a small exhibition about the "hermit cottage" at Bohuslän's museum. Visiting the museum, I came in contact with one of the antiquarians at the museum. She had started writing an article about Gerhard and needed more information. In connection with this exchange of information, I learned that there was an article about Gerhard in the book *The Pens* from 1957. This article mentions a story that Gerhard had written down in September 1932 in one of his many diaries. There he told, among other things, the following about his father's lineage:

- "the father was a ringer named Sten and hence it came about that he took the name Stensson. The mother's name was Tilda and she was the daughter of

horseman, Frodig in the equestrian croft Slättflogen under the farm Hackenäs. He had only a very obscure memory of her because she died when he was five years old ”.

Gerhard goes on to say that he (Johan Julius) was taken care of by his grandmother, but when his grandfather, horseman Frodig, died shortly afterwards, they were forced to leave Slättflogen "to make room for the next designated horseman".

The grandmother, who was both literate and "able to talk to the priest", was authorized to supervise the paupers in the poorhouse and would then be allowed to have her grandson with her. She was also in charge of the school. The school was housed in the poorhouse's other room where she and the boy were also allowed to live.

This story does not differ significantly from the previous one but contains more details that correspond with the information from the church books. In this way, it becomes even more credible. What is new is that here Gerhard says that Johan Julius' father was a ringer, not a cantor as we have heard before.

However, neither cantors nor ringers with the first name Sten were found in Västervik or Dalhem. The Baron at Tyllinge did not have a son named Sten. He had, as previously mentioned, only three daughters. So it would seem that hopes of finding this mysterious Sten had been shattered once again.

One wonders where Gerhard got the information that his grandmother's name was Tilda. She was christened Anna Charlotta and was mentioned in all church records as an adult, Anna-Lotta.

It has now been almost 14 years since I first wrote down my findings. In mid-January 2011, the latest edition of Sweden's census published by SVAR was

purchased, covering all persons written in Sweden at the end of the 1880s. Everything is gathered in a database on a CD with a search program. You can do searches with several different facts as input. When you first try such a disc, it is natural to first do searches where you know the expected result to test the features of the search program. What could be more natural for me than filling in Surname: Stensson and parish of birth: Dalhem and then pressing SEARCH. The result of this search was the beginning of a new intense period of genealogy. Here follows the new version of the story of "The Count and the Maid".

The true story of Johan Julius' father

That was in 1813. Baron Svante Duvall at Tyllinge needed a new servant. The Baron was 67 years old. He had become a widower in 1804 and had been remarried to the 24-year younger Anna Christina Stålhammar for a couple of years. The Baron's children from the first marriage, the son Svante Gustav was 17 years old and the daughter Sofia Magdalena 11 years old also lived in Tyllinge.

The man who came to Tyllinge in the autumn of 1813 to work as the Baron's servant had experience in the profession. He had namely been a servant to the Chamberlain and Count Charles Emil Lewenhaupt at Nygård Manor in the neighboring parish Lofta.

Tyllinge's new officer was named Peter Stensson but was usually called Petter. He was 25 years old when he started with Baron Duvall. The years passed and Petter remained with the Baron. He carried out his duties in an exemplary manner and quickly gained the Baron's trust. When Petter had been a servant at

Tyllinge for a little more than five years, the baron was suddenly struck by a stroke. Not just once, but twice. The second time was fatal and ended the Baron's life in May 1819. His son Svante Gustav, who had reached the age of 23, was to shoulder his father's role as Baron. Of course, this entailed many duties to be responsible for an estate as large as Tyllinge, but that did not stop the young Baron from also spending time having fun. Including with the maids on the estate. It was no longer the 18th century and the position of the maids had improved a lot. It was no longer free for landlords and their sons to freely use the housemaids sexually whenever the desire arose. Although the custom was still maintained, some form of approval from the girls was normally required. During the time of the old Baron, no courting was allowed with the servants. When he was gone, the son took back what he had previously missed. The result turned out soon. At least one of the farm's maids got pregnant. It was the cook Anna Caisa Högström. As the winter progressed, her condition began to become apparent. The most common thing in such a situation was to pay the maid a small sum of money and send her away. It worked with young inexperienced girls, but Anna Caisa did not intend to be turned away so easily. The Baron began to get cold feet. He was engaged and was to get married in the Spring. He did not want to take the risk of being accused of having an illegitimate child with a maid just after he gets married. Not because he thought that the priest would believe more in a maid than in himself, but evil tongues can hardly be protected against and the people in the area would probably like to spread the rumor if this became known.

It was all solved in the best way and at the last moment. The father's faithful servant took responsibility for the child and married the estate's cook. As a thank

you for the help, he received a home in Dalhem, the house Davidsborg, whose owner recently died. The wedding was arranged in a hurry, partly due to the condition of the highly pregnant Anna Caisa but also because it was important for the Baron that this cleared up before his own marriage would take place. It also succeeded, in the nick of time, and with the assistance of the priest inclined, to get them married before it was the turn of the Baron. The priest bent the rules that applied to announcing their pending marriage in the church which according to custom would be three consecutive Sundays, before a wedding. Before Peter and Anna Caisa's wedding, twice was enough. After the announcement on the second Sunday, the priest wrote "approved" in the church register and consecrated them the following Friday.

For the Baron and his intended, the first church announcement was just two days after Peter Stensson and Anna Caisa Högström's wedding.

One and a half month after the wedding, Anna Caisa gave birth to a son who was christened Svante Gustav. Baron Duvall and his mother, the Baroness, appeared as witnesses at the baptism. In addition, Baroness Pauli at Larum, the innkeeper in Dalhem who lived next door to the couple's new home Davidsborg and a colleague of Peter, the servant at Tyllinge. Why so many of the "nobility" lined up for this baptism, one can only speculate.

Svante grew up and proved to be very musical. He got an unusual opportunity to study at that time and began training to be an organist. Svante graduated as an organist and could play notes. But it was not so easy to get a job as an organist. Organs were only found in the churches. The congregations in the country were poor and often could not afford to hire anyone just to play the organ. Most often

it was therefore the bell ringer who also had to take on the task of serving the church organ. Still, when Svante was 20, he got his first job as an organist. It was a temporary position in Kättilstad parish. At the end of August 1840, he set off on the 30 km long road to Klockaregården in Kättilstad. The temporary appointment was only for six months and at the beginning of March 1841 he took out a moving permit to move back to Dalhem and the parents' home again.

He had probably already been become known in Dalhem. His origin was hardly a secret in a small town like Dalhem where everyone knew everyone. It was uncommon for poor people to get a house or for their children to receive organ training. That Peter, when Svante was nine or ten years old, was back at Tyllinge who served for a couple of years did not hurt either.

After the temporary position, Svante returned home as a "full-fledged" organist. Now he had played in the church many times. Many wanted to hear about his experiences. Not least the young ladies of the area. Svante was already a great charmer who was happy to get on well with the girls.

Not far from Davidsborg was Opphem where Maja Jansdotter lived. She was the widow of Lifeguard grenadier Johan Frode from the soldier's croft Slättflogen. Maja lived in poverty due to a disability that made her unable to support herself through regular work. Therefore, she was tax-exempt but also in need of help from her children. She had five children, four daughters and a son who did his best to visit and help his mother when there was time. The youngest daughter Lena Sofia had recently left home to become a maid in the nearby rectory, so

she did not have far to go even if she did not have much free time. The working days were long, and you did not get more than one day off a week. The eldest daughter Ann-Lotta, who turned 27, was a maid at Möckelhult Rusthåll. It was admittedly at least 7 km walk to Dalhem but she also had her day off.

Anna-Lotta, who had previously been a maid at Tyllinge for about a year, was certainly not unfamiliar with Peter Stensson and his family. Maybe Peter even put a good word for her with the Baron when she applied for a job there. He had lived next door to Anna-Lotta's mother for years, who was both known and respected in the area. So, it was only natural that Anna-Lotta and Svante met now that he had returned home. And as I said, he was a real womanizer and was probably also seen as a good catch. Anna-Lotta was old enough to get married. A few years older than Svante but what that matter. One thing led to another and she became pregnant. What she did not count on was that Svante was not at all interested in a sequel. And Anna-Lotta did not try to force herself on him. There were, of course, several reasons for that, his origin, his youth and that he had actually come to belong to a class above her own. Such things were not easy to bridge. Maybe Svante also told her that he was already engaged and would soon get married.

Anna-Lotta was forced to quit her job as a maid at Möckelhult when the birth was approaching and instead moved in with a crofter and his wife and two small children. As a maid on the croft, she could easily perform simple chores and look after the children while she took care of her own son Johan Julius, whom she gave birth to on Christmas Eve 1841.

Svante did not stay in Dalhem. Instead, he set off to meet his future wife, who lived a couple of miles from Dalhem. Just one month after Johan Julius' birth, Svante Johan and Carolina Forslind announced their pending marriage in Ukna Church. Carolina was the daughter of the bailiff at Stenebo iron mine. She was 24 years old but still lived with her father and stepmother. On April 21, they were married by bailiff Jonas Forslind. It had thus been some time since the third Sunday announcement on February 6th. Svante had used that time to get a job as a deputy ringer in Lofta parish. From Dalhem to Lofta it was about 30 km and there they moved into the Ringer's quarters, Klockaregården.

Next door lived the 53-year-old curate Sven Gustav Stenborg and his young wife Anna Sofia Wernmark. She has known Svante's wife Carolina for a long time. Anna Sofia was the daughter of the owner of Stensnäs, the manor on whose land Stenbo mine, which had previously been called Stensnäs iron mine, was located. It is only natural that the bailiff's daughter was acquainted with the daughter at the manor. There were not so many other girls of class to hang out with on the farm. Carolina had been 18 years old when Anna Sofia, then 23 years old, married the 24-year older priest and moved to Lofta. Therefore, it was only natural that the priestess spent a great deal of time in the Ringer's quarters. Especially since Carolina was already heavily pregnant when they arrived in Lofta and gave birth to a daughter who was baptized Augusta Octavia on July 18, 1842. Svante was of course, as always, a suitor and charmer. However, it turned out to be a little too much of that product, it would turn out. The priest's wife was easily lured, they were exposed and to top it all, she became pregnant.

The scandal was a fact and could not just be covered up. So something had to be done.

The priest wanted to get rid of his temporary ringer as soon as possible while he did not want to broadcast what the real cause was. Svante therefore accused of misconduct in his job, was convicted and dismissed. But what one knows, often soon everyone knows. The rumors spread throughout the area.

The young wife of the priest was hidden from scrutiny during pregnancy. The child she bore was not entered in the birth register in Lofta parish.

At the same time, Svante and his wife stayed away. They left Lofta to move back to Dalhem but did not register there. For over a year they stayed away. In the summer of 1844, a small family appears and settles in the soldier's croft Blåborg in Björsäter parish. The family then consists of the father, Svante Stensson, mother, Carolina Forslind, daughter, Augusta Octavia who was born during the time in Lofta and a new small family member, son Filip Herrman who in the census book is stated to have been born on November 10, 1843 in Dalhem. The birth of the son is not registered in the birth register in Dalhem's parish.

Already in the Spring of the same year, the priest and his family had left Lofta without giving notice of where they would move.

It is not entirely uncommon for there to be uncertainty about who is a child's father. For Herrman's part, it is safe to say that Svante was the father. But who

was actually the mother? Was it really Carolina his wife? Or could Herrman be the child who became the result of Svante's association with the priest's wife? Did the priest force his unfaithful wife to leave the child and Svante to take care of his "illegitimate" son? Not everything tells this story.

Svante had thus given up his ambitions to be a man of the church and instead allowed himself to be recruited as a private soldier. He came to belong to the 2nd Life Grenadier Regiment, Tjust Company and was called the Life Grenadier. He had wisely realized that the rumor would catch up with him and that no priest would ever hire a ringer with his track record.

The year after the family came to Blåborg, a farmhand moved from the farm Sunnebo to Blåborg and stayed for about 1 year. Tenant soldiers were allotted land to cultivate to support themselves. Svante was new to the role of soldier and was away on training a lot at the beginning of his soldier life. Maybe that was why they needed a farmhand on the croft to help with the first year's sowing and harvesting. During the remaining time on the soldier's croft, there were no servants or maids.

House interrogations were held by the priests at that time mostly every year. But in 1848 Blåborg did not participate. For a short period during the summer and into the autumn of 1848, Sweden lent out soldiers to deter Germany from entering Denmark during the so-called The Danish-German war. Svante was one of these soldiers who were on Fyn in Denmark at the time. The Swedes were well received by the locals and especially the girls were welcoming to these uniformed boys. When Svante was asked much later if they "killed many"

during this war, he replied: "we made more than we killed". This was the only time during his time as a soldier he participated in something that could be considered war.

From 1862, the children began to leave their parents' home. First out was Augusta Octavia and Philip Herrman who both moved to Gärdesrum parish on 16 Nov 1862. Next followed Hedda Seraphia 24/11 1863. But the same day she moved, Philip Herrman came home again. Hedda Seraphia became a maid at Sunnebo Nergården very close by, she also returned home quite soon. Instead, Carl Ferdinand moved to Sunnebo Rusthåll, where he remained for about a year before returning to his parents' home. Hedda Seraphia left again after a few years at home and Svante Gustav finally moved to Svinstad 11/11 1865. For about three years it had been quite a lot of moving in and out of Blåborg. At the beginning of 1866, at least, the household had shrunk from 10 to seven people. In this family, as in so many others, there were those who wanted to broaden their horizons and go to America. Svante Gustaf and Carl Ferdinand moved there in 1872. Otto Fredrik and Filip Herrman followed the following year. Filip Herrman returned to Sweden and the parental home in 1875 "without merits". What he and the others did during his time in America has not been told. When he was 56 years old, Svante Stensson "retired" and moved from the soldier's croft. He built his own house nearby, which he named Stensborg. Since he had been faithful to the crown for many years and behaved well, he moved into his new home as a "gratualist". As such, he received a modest pension, SEK 24 per year (this corresponds to today's money value around SEK 1,100 or SEK 3 / day). At this time, only Philip Herrman lived with his parents. When Johanna

Carolina had a child out of wedlock, she also moved back to her parents and there gave birth to a son who was quickly baptized Adolf Arvid. Unfortunately, he died the very next day and a year or so later she moved to North America. In 1883, Philip Herrman also moved away from home again. Svante and his wife Carolina were for the first time since they married alone in their home without any of the children living with them. Svante was then 63 years old and Carolina 65 (Björsäter AI: 17 page 266).



Typical soldier's croft. Maybe Blåborg and Stensborg looked like this

After another brief stay in the parental home, Philip Herrman was to return to N. America. The year was 1888. He probably did not travel there. On October 25, 1889, he was married in Norrköping, S:t Olai parish with his cousin Hulda Maria Forslind. Her father, Sven Magnus, was the older brother of Svante's wife Carolina. In 1893, their son Einar Filip was born.

In 1892, David Konrad returned from America to Stensborg. The priest noted in the census - "is said to have been in America 88-92". In 1894 he set off again, this time to Norrköping.

In 1897, the sons David Konrad, then called Carl David, and Philip Herrman lived with their parents again. Philip Herrman's wife and son remained in Norrköping, S:t Olai. His wife Maria Forslind died there on January 29, 1898. Their son then moved to his father in Stensborg. David moved away again in 1899 but Philip Herrman and his son remained. Modern Carolina Forslind, however, August 1, 1908.

Svante Stensson remained in his house Stensborg together with his son and grandson until his death on September 22, 1812. They lived in poverty and sometimes barely had food for the day. Svante became over 92 years old and in the end he was completely blind. But despite that, he continued to perform musically for as long as he could. When Svante died, Philip Herrman, who worked as a stonemason, and his son Einar Filip Hermansson remained in Stensborg. The latter died on Sunday, February 18, 1919, only 26 years old. Two and a half weeks later, on Wednesday, March 7, Filip Herrman moved to the retirement home and Stensborg ceased to be a residence. Herrman died at the retirement home on December 29, 1930. He was then 87 years old.



Stensson was in Åtvidaberg at the fiddler competitions (1909). He wore a cotton suit, blue with white stripes ".