

3-1-2015

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Recommended Citation

Lindau Persson, Agneta and Pehrsson, Blenda (2015) "A murderer in the family, Part 2," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 35 : No. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol35/iss1/7>

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A murderer in the family. Part 2.

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Continued from SAG 2014:4

The post mortem

On 17 Nov. 1842 a postmortem was conducted by the local provincial doctor J. G. Andersson at Rigatorpet on the body of Helena Olsdotter in the presence of the crown bailiff J. Palm, the juryman Erasmus Svensson of Rävetofta, and the homestead owner Pehr Appelqvist from Munka Ljungby and others.

The cause of death was established by the minutes taken by the bailiff when this crime happened and have been given to the court.

The deceased was 10 years old, with an ordinary body for her age, more fat than slim, and about 4 feet tall. Any external defects could not be found on the body.

On her right shinbone, on the lower part, there was an inch-long wound, through which the bone could be seen. Above the right knee, there was a reddish part of her skin, which was bruised. There were three smaller wounds on her right kneecap, which had only penetrated the skin.

On her left thigh there were several reddish areas, but without bruising. Six smaller wounds were found on her right forearm, and a large crushed area, almost 3 inches long on the same upper arm with bruising. The left arm was detached from her wrist by a wound. On the left of the upper arm's outer side was a wound one inch long, but not very deep. This arm's outer side was red and blue with bruising between the muscles. The entire thighbone was red and blue with large bruises under the skin. On her back was a seven

inches long wound, close to the spine on the left side, from the neck down. On the upper left shoulder blade's lower part was also a wound, one inch long, but not deep. On the left side of the breast there were five minor bruises, with blood under one of them.

The head as well as the facial bones was crushed into almost innumerable pieces, and as well the outer and inside bones and the dura mater were ripped apart into several pieces. There was no brain, except for a little on the bottom of the head. The face was destroyed and bloody.

It was concluded that Helena had died from the horrible violence that she had been the victim of, and that she had died instantly.

The trial

On the day of the trial, 22 Nov. 1842, the prosecutor had brought in the imprisoned Christian Andersson for a hearing.

The prosecutor had also summoned the parents of the victim, the former hussar Ola Schill and Bengta Månsdotter of Wennerborg in Tåstarp, Kersti Hansdotter (Christian's mother), and Johan Daniel (Christian's half-brother). Other witnesses were the sharecropper Anders Pålsson from Brantehus, Pehr Eriksson from Nykterheten, the artilleryman Swen Hellström from Warschau, and the farmhands Pål Pålsson and Pehr Nilsson from Freden, and the maid Kersti Jönsdotter from Riga [all these places were cottages nearby].

At this hearing was also shown a rifle, a very simple gun where the barrel was detached from the butt-end, the latter splintered into several pieces. The prosecutor claimed that this was the murder weapon, and that Christian after the event had broken it. In the deposition from the bailiff Palm there was also a question if Christian had been raving mad.

Under his interrogation Christian did not show any remorse, nor mention that he regretted the deed that he had done.

After the trial it was decided that the minutes from this and all other documents, relevant to the case, would be sent to the Royal Board of Health and Welfare (*Sundhetskollegium*) in Stockholm to obtain their opinion about the madness of Christian. The Board stated that he was to be taken to a hospital to be evaluated with regard to the severity of his madness.

In the hospital

In January 1843 he was transported from the Ängelholm prison to the hospital in Kristianstad. It was in the middle of the winter and he had to travel in irons, sitting in the front seat of the wagon, with a guard behind him, and with two horses in the lead.

The treatment Christian was to undergo in Kristianstad was to decide if he was totally mad or not. He was placed in a solitary cell, had his head shaved and was put on very small portions of food, and was observed by the staff at all times. He

also was subjected to having many buckets of water poured over his head every day. He was also given emetics and laxatives. He had to endure this for more than a year. All this was supposed to cure him of insanity.

In prison

In March 1844 Christian was taken back to Ängelholm and was on 22 March sentenced to life in prison for manslaughter, the sentence to be carried out at the Landskrona fortress in Skåne. The fortress had been used as a prison for convicts sentenced to imprisonment for life since 1827, as it was outdated for military use. In 1845 there were 189 prisoners serving life sentences.

His time in the fortress started with 28 days on water and bread, which was judged to be the maximum time a man could survive on that diet. He was placed in irons in a dungeon, where the only light came from small windows high up on the wall. There were many other prisoners in that place. There were no toilets, so the floor was used for such business, which made it a dangerous, smelly place to be, with many illnesses among the inmates. The food was not of good quality, and several inmates starved to death.



Landskrona fortress.

In 1844 the old King, Karl XIV Johan died, and was succeeded by his son Oscar I, who was much interested in reforming the Swedish prisons. One of the round towers at Landskrona was now rebuilt and fitted with individual cells. In 1848 Christian was transferred to this building, where he had his own cell, and was also allowed to talk to a clergyman now and then, who also became a link to his family in Munka-Ljungby. As he was able to read, he was given a New Testament and some other religious books. He had to get up every day at 5 in the morning, clean his cell and fold away the bed for the day. He was now a prison laborer (*arbetsfånge*), and was given a new suit of clothes every three years. During the day he worked in silence with other prisoners, usually working with carpentry, tailoring, shoe-making, etc.



A prison dungeon.

Released again

After ten years in prison Christian was released on 7 July 1854, and was again a free man, and was fetched by some relatives of his now widowed mother at Rigatorpet in Munka Ljungby. When he came home he was very thin and had major problems with his bowels and stomach. He also had a diagnosis of being feeble-minded.

He worked for a year for a farming cousin, but in 1855 he was placed in an annex to the Malmö hospital, where he could be supervised all the time, as he had again shown signs of madness. At this place he could work at farming, and did so until he died on 8 June 1867, at age 45.

Relationships

The author Agneta Lindau Persson is descended from Anna Greta Olsdotter, a sister to the unfortunate Helena.

Anna Greta married Nils Persson, and their daughter Betty Oliva Nilsdotter, b. 1868, married the homesteadowner August Lindau, b. 1861. Among their children one son became Agneta's *farfar* (paternal grandfather).

Research helper Blenda Pehrsson is descended in the fifth generation on the female line from Pernilla Hansdotter, a sister of Kjerstina Hansdotter, mother of Christian.

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