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The search for Lillie M. Gidmark's Swedish origins

A research example

BY DAVID A. ANDERSON

Death certificates are wonderful sources of information since they will generally not only tell the place and circumstances of a person's death but they may tell when and where a person was born in addition to the parents of that person.

I thought that was the case when I found Lillie M. Gidmark's 1918 death certificate from Coos County, Oregon. Her death certificate reports that she died in Marshfield (renamed in 1944 to Coos Bay),¹ Coos County, Oregon, on 15 Dec 1918 from pulmonary TB, the informant M.D. was Geo. E. Dix. She was buried on 18 Dec. 1918 at Sunset Cemetery. She was a single white female who was born 6 Jul. 1897 in Sweden. She was 21 years, 5 months, 9 days old at the time of her death. Both of her parents were born in Sweden. Her father's name was originally marked as 'unknown' but later crossed out and he was named as "E. Gidmark." Her mother's name was given as Marie Venalo. The informant was Mrs. Eva Gammill who lived in Marshfield. The death certificate provided space for length of residence in the state and the U.S., but this information was not filled in.¹

Based upon that information, it would be tempting to think you now had the names of Lillie's parents, but this would be an incorrect assumption. Who is the informant and how are they related to the deceased? Was the informant present at the birth of the deceased? How did the informant obtain that information? These are questions that should be asked before accepting as fact birth information, found on death certificates.

To verify Lilly's birth information I turned to two databases found on Ancestry.com. I used a combination of information, including no sur-

names and no parent's names, and spelling her name as Lillie and Lilly. The first, the Swedish Select Baptisms, 1611-1920² did not turn up any useful leads. The second, the Swedish Indexed Birth Records, 1860-1941³ did show two girls by the name of Lilly born in Sweden on 6 July 1897. Neither girl unfortunately had parents with the surname of Gidmark, but one of the records would end up being the birth record for our Lillie.

Emigration records help

I searched the *Emigranten Populär* 2006 database CD and it has listings for 8 people with the surname of Gidmark, 5 of which have origins in Skön (Vn.) One of them is a "Lilly M," who emigrated in 1907 and was bound for Minneapolis. Two other Gidmarks were also bound for Minneapolis in 1907, 14-year-old Anna C., and 54-year-old Maria.⁴

It is easy to conclude that the 54-year-old Maria emigrating with Lillie/Lilly is the Marie reported to be the mother listed on Lillie's death certificate. This is ultimately a correct assumption that they are the same person, but not however, Lillie's mother.

Thinking that I had located Lillie's birthplace, Skön, based on information from the *Emigranten Populär* 2006 CD, I checked the birth records from Skön for 1897 (Skön C:7, 1895-1905; ArkivDigital), but there was no Lilly/Lillie born there whose father's name was Gidmark.

I went back to the Indexed Birth Records, 1860-1941 on Ancestry.com and using a 'less-is-more' approach searched using just births from "Skön" and a father's surname of "Gidmark." There were five listings, none of which were for Lilly/Lillie.

Since Lillie was about 10 years old at the time she emigrated, I figured she should show up on the 1910 Swedish Census.⁵ That makes perfect sense! The search proves that Gidmark is a very uncommon surname in Sweden. There were two entries where people with that surname lived in or were born in Skön, but neither of them included Lilly/Lillie. Where is she?

Since Lillie died in Oregon I tried *Find A Grave* for her but didn't find her. I did find an Emil Gidmark and a Maria Gidmark buried in Oregon. The birth date on Emil's headstone is November 30, 1886,⁶ the same date as Bror Emil's indexed birth record in Skön!^{7,8}

I figured that researching Emil may lead me to Lillie. His birth record from Skön confirms that he was born 30 Nov 1886 and his parents are the *Arbetare* (laborer) Erik Gidmark and his wife Maria Wärmelin and that they are found on page 678 of the *Husförhörslängd*. It is also noted that he was not baptized (in the Lutheran church) since his parents are "baptister" (Baptists).⁹

On page 678 of the *Husförhörslängd* (AI:9b, 1883-1893, pg 678) we find Bror Emil's family in the house Gärde but they have moved in 1892 and can be found on page 1488, where they are found in Tunadal. In the *Husförhörslängd* for 1894-1911 we find the family in Tunadal as follows¹⁰: an Erik Jonsson Gidmark, b. 28 Jul. 1848, in Gideå, (Vn.), (married 30 Aug. 1874); his wife: Maria Wermelin, b. 10 Oct 1852 in Värmskog (Värm); a d. Emma Kristina Valentina, b. 26 June 1875; s. Adolf Bernhard, b. 2 Sep. 1877; d. Hilma Katarina, b. 25 Mar. 1881, (unbaptized); d. Maria Emilia, b. 11 May 1884, (unbaptized), s. Bror Emil,

b. 30 Nov. 1886, (unbaptized), d. Mina Ottilia, b. 9 July 1890, (unbaptized); and d. Anna Charlotta, b. 18 Sep. 1893, (unbaptized).

Separated by two spaces after Anna Charlotta is: a) d. Lilly Maria Gidmark, b 6 Jul. 1897, Östersund. The note a) indicates that Lilly had a connection to Emma Kristina Valentina, with the same note, further up the page. A note on the facing page also indicates that she is the daughter to Emma Krist. Valentina Gidmark. We go to the birth records for Östersund and find the proof of Lillie M's birth. She is confirmed to have been born on 6 Jul 1897 in Östersund to the unwed mother Emma Kristina Valentina Gidmark.¹¹

I think we can now safely say that it is with her grandmother and aunt that Lillie emigrated to America at the age of 10 probably never to see her birth mother again. Her mother Emma Kristina Valentina Gidmark moved in 1900 with Lilly to Stockholm, where she worked as a maid in several places. Lilly moved to her grandparents in 1900. In 1909 Emma moved to Säby (Jön.), and in 1910 to Linköping, where she on 16 Apr. 1910¹² married the painter Ernst Vilhelm Olofsson (b. 27 Oct. 1874 in Ronneby (Blek.), who later assumed his wife's surname. Emma died in Linköping, Sweden, in 1970.¹³

Endnotes:

- 1) Oregon State Board of Health, Certificate of Death no. 224, Coos County, Lillie M. Gidmark (1918); Oregon State Archives, Salem (scanned 24 March 2015).
- 2) Ancestry.com. Sweden, Select Baptisms, 1611-1920, [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; Original data: Sweden, Baptisms, 1611-1920. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.
- 3) Ancestry.com. Sweden, Indexed Birth Records, 1860-1941, [database on-line]. Provo, UT, U.S.A.
- 4) Emigranten Populär 2006, database CD. *Emigrantregistret i Karlstad och Göteborgs-Emigranten i Göteborg.*

a) d. Emma Kristina Valentina	1897	7	Östersund	✓
d. Lilly Maria Gidmark	1897	6	Östersund	✓
d. Anna Charlotta	1893	18	Östersund	✓
d. Mina Ottilia	1890	9	Östersund	✓
d. Emma Kristina Valentina	1886	30	Östersund	✓

Skön AIIa:3 (1894-1911) Image 303 / page 1429. Tunadal. (Arkiv Digital).

- 5) *Sveriges Befolkning 1900*, database CD. Riksarkivet / *Sveriges Släktforskarförbund*, 2006.
- 6) Find A Grave, Crystal Lake Cemetery, Oregon, Emil Gidmark, Memorial 111325967.
- 7) Sweden, Indexed Birth Records, 1860-1941. Ancestry.com.
- 8) Information on Maria's, and Emil's Find A Grave pages have been updated, and Lilly was added subsequent to my research.
- 9) Skön C:4 (1870-1887), pg 404, 1860, nr 388, Bror Emil; ArkivDigital, Image 411.
- 10) Skön AIIa:3 (1894-1911), pg 1429, lines 19-30; ArkivDigital, Image 303.
- 11) Östersund C:6 (1895-1899), pg 75, 1897, nr 102, Lilly Maria; ArkivDigital, Image 850.
- 12) *Linköpings domkyrkoförsamling EI:5* (1908-1916) Image 57 / pag. 53
- 13) Swedish Death Index 1901-2013, database DVD. *Sveriges släktforskarförbund.*



The Tunadal Sawmill where Erik Gidmark worked.

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