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Småland letters

BY SUZANNE ERICKSON WALLACE

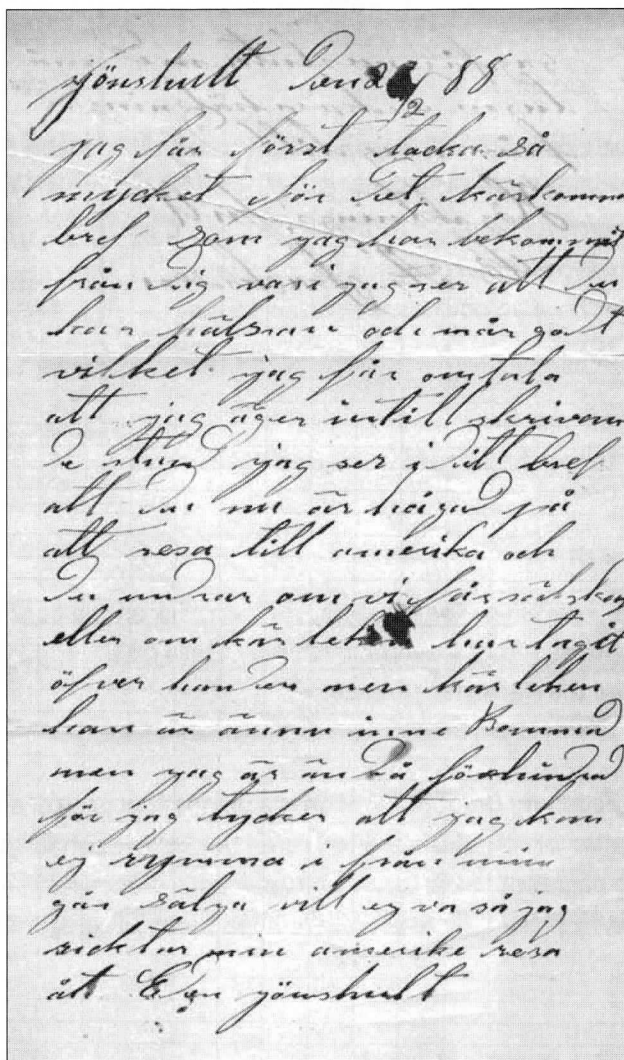
Justus Andersson, born and raised in Hagshult (Jön.), was a collector. When he died in 1952 in Racine, Wisconsin, he left behind many old photos from his days in Sweden and several letters he had received dating back to 1888.

Letter of 2 February 1888 to Justus, written by friend Claes

In February of 1888 Justus Andersson, just 21 years of age, was on the verge of a decision that would determine his future. Justus had been working at Björkeholm, Nässjö, and was thinking of emigrating from Sweden. He had written to another young man, Claes August Isacsson, about this, and the earliest letter Justus saved was this response from Claes. Just two years younger than Justus, Claes was the younger brother of Justus's step-father Anders Johan Isacsson. Justus and Claes had both been raised at Jönshult Södergård in Hagshult (Jön.).

Justus Andersson, like so many other Swedes, had reasons for considering immigration. He already had several family members living in America. His grandfather, Gustaf Johannesson, had five children from a second marriage, and all but one was already in America. Also, Justus's only brother, Johan Gustaf Andersson, had immigrated to Racine, Wisconsin, four years earlier, in 1884.

Justus had also another reason to join his brother. Their father, Anders Magnus Johannesson, had died in 1870 when Justus was very young. Justus's sister, Amanda Carolina Andersdotter, was born one month later. Justus's mother, Johanna Gustafsdotter, now owned and managed a ¼ mantal of Jönshult Södergård.



The letter of 2 Feb. 1888 to Justus.

Translation

First I want to thank you so much for the dear letter that I have received from you. I see that you have your health and feel fine, and I can tell you that I am also in good health as I write this. I see in your letter now that you are thinking of going to America and you want to know if we can go together or if love has taken over, but love...is still in Bornnad(?) but I am still so prevented because I think I cannot run away from my farm(.) Sell I will not do so I am directing my America trip now

to Jönshult.

(page 2 [not in picture]) I am closing with many thousand dear greetings from me to you.

Sincerely,

C[laes] A[ugust] Isacsson



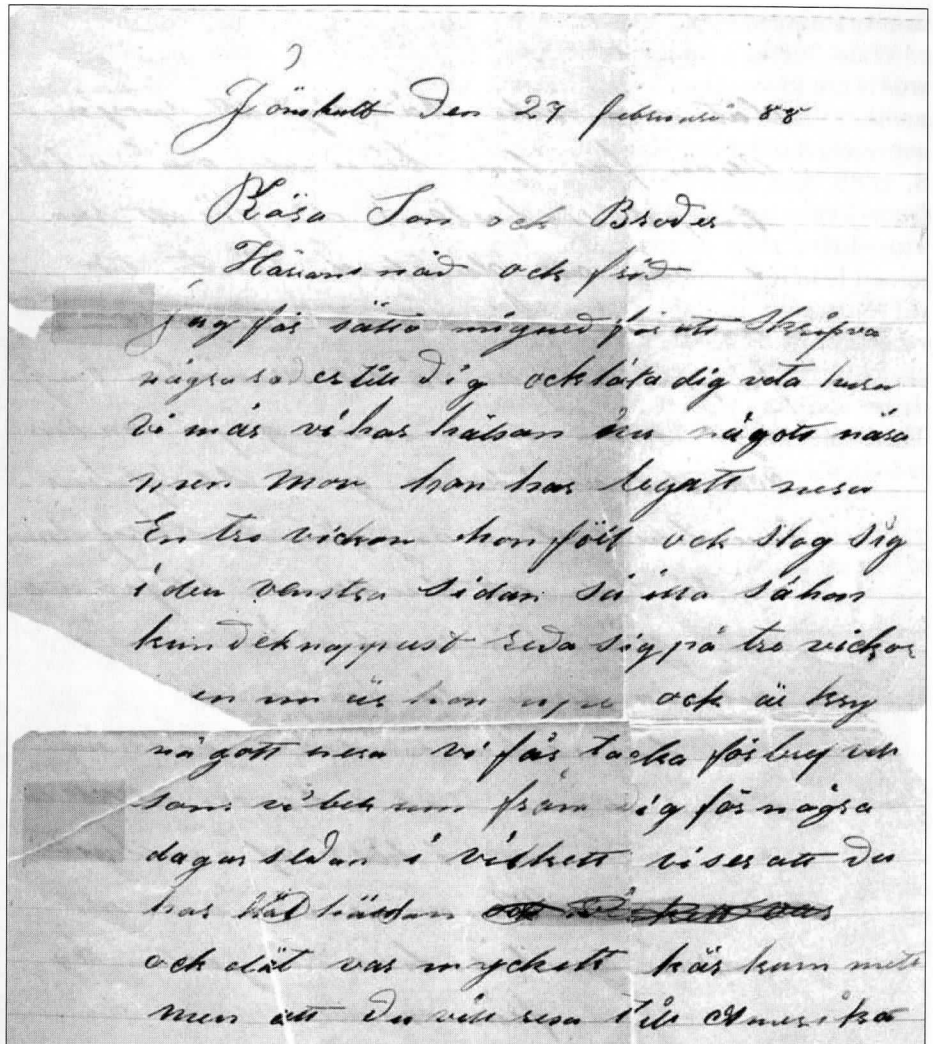
Johanna Gustafsdotter and her husband Anders Johan Isacsson.

She also had two sons and three daughters to raise. When Johanna remarried six years later, it was to her very young neighbor, Anders Johan Isacsson. A daughter, Anna Maria Isacsdotter, was born in 1875, the year before the marriage. Johanna was forty-four and Anders Johan was a mere twenty at the time of the marriage, 6 May 1876. Anders Johan Isacsson became the owner of the ¼ mantal of Jönshult Södergård at the marriage. Neither Justus nor his older brother Johan Gustaf would inherit the land.

In this letter of February 2, Justus's friend Claes Isacsson wrote that he would not be travelling to America with him. This, however, did not stop Justus's plans to immigrate.

Letter of 27 February 1888 to Justus, handwriting of Amanda Carolina Andersdotter

This second letter from 1888 on the subject of immigration was to Justus Andersson at Björkeholm, Nässjö, and was from Justus's mother Johanna Gustafsdotter, but written by his younger sister Amanda. It is a



Translation

Dear Son and Brother

The Lord's grace and peace

I must sit down to write a few lines to you, and let you know that we have our health, but Mother has been staying in bed for about three weeks, she fell and hurt her left side so badly, that she could not care for herself for three weeks, but now she is up and feeling fit and almost well. We have to thank you for the letter, that we got from you some days ago, in which we see that you have your health, which was good, and it was so welcome, but that you want to travel to America, [2nd page, not shown] that was not

response to a letter that Justus had written to his family about going to America. From this letter Justus learned that his sister Amanda was writing because their mother Johan-

na was recovering from an injury to her hip. Justus also learned that the young stepfather, Anders Johan Isacsson, believed Justus should wait another year and not burden the

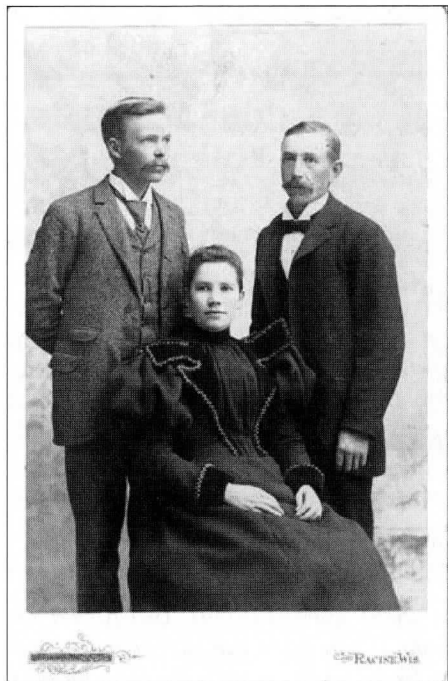
so good to read about. But father he asks if you have not already decided to travel in the spring, that you should wait until next year as it is so difficult here to get money so it is almost impossible unless one has to go to the bank here and that is not so easy(.) Write and tell us how you have decided about this(.) Write soon, we thought that you should staydo here soon, thus you could... be at home as long as we are decided in this matter(.) Write soon about how about America...

.... In haste by your Sister Amanda Andersson

Many loving greetings from your Mother

family financially at this time.

What Justus's financial situation was is not known, but he did not wait another year to leave. Justus Andersson emigrated from Hagshult June 8, 1888, and sailed steerage class from Göteborg to New York City, arriving later that same month. He joined his older brother, Johan Gustaf Andersson, in Racine, Wisconsin, where he worked with his brother and his future brother-in-law, Andrew Erickson, at the J.I. Case Thrashing Co.



Justus, Amanda, and brother Johan Gustaf in Racine, WI, 1898.

Letter of 12 May 1902 to Justus by Andrew E. Erickson

This third letter was sent from Racine, Wisconsin, to Justus Andersson, who had now returned to Sweden. He could not have been there long because he was listed in the 1900 U.S. Census in Racine and in the Racine city directory in 1902. This letter places Justus's younger sister Amanda Carolina now in America. She had immigrated in 1894, accompanied by her brother Johan Gustaf, who had returned to Sweden for her. In 1899 she had married another immigrant from Sweden, Andrew Erickson. At the time of this letter, Amanda was

Racine den 12 May 1902

Älskade svägerska jag får fatta
pennan i hand och skriva några
rader till dig och låta dig veta
att vi ännu lever och har en
god helma för hvilket vi äro tack-
till Gud för. Jag får tacka dig
för det kärleksfulla bref som
vi med glädje fick motaga och
vi äro glada att höra att du
kommer tillbaka igen och
vi helka dig alla välkommen.
När du kommer hit så finner
du oss icke på samma plats
som när du reste för vi håller
på att flytta till Hägenmore
just nu så jag minner icke att

Translation:

Dear Brother-in-Law,
I have to take pen in hand and write a few lines to you and let you know that we are still alive and have good health, for which we are thankful to God. I want to thank you for your letter which we were happy to get. And we are glad to hear that you are coming back again and we want you to know you will be welcome.

When you come, you will not find us at the same place as we were when you left because we are in the process of moving to Hägenman's wood house, so I don't have time to (page 2, not in picture) write many lines.

My [Andrew's] sister's husband Martin Berg is asking if you would

be so kind to buy 2 knives for him of the best material from Eskilstuna about 4 or 5 inches long. Signed Andrew Erickson.

Amanda wanted me to write for her because she is sleepy. She wants you to ask mom to send her a spoon for stirring oatmeal, and a few small wooden spoons. You talk about money. It does not make any difference if you pay us with the money you have here or the money you have at home there. You can decide what is right for you. What is easier for you.

Greet everyone at home,
Dictated by your sister Amanda

seven months pregnant with her second child and tired, so she dictated the letter to her husband to write. This letter does not indicate why Justus had returned to Sweden, but he must have had thoughts of remaining there. Now, however, he evidently was planning to return to America again. One event that had taken place in 1898 was the marriage of his half sister, Anna Maria Isacson, to Karl Justus Johansson and the further division of Södergård. Karl Justus Johansson received 1/8 *mantal* and Anders Johan Isacson retained 1/8 *mantal*.

Justus did return to America, most likely bringing with him the wooden spoons his sister Amanda had asked for and the knife his brother-in-law Andrew Erickson had requested. As in the previous letter of 27 February, the subject of money is raised. Justus apparently had money both in Sweden and in America. Justus joined his sister and brother-in-law and their children at their new house in Racine.

Epilogue:

Justus left Sweden and sailed 6 June 1902 with a ticket for Chicago, according to database *Emihamn*. He never went back to Sweden again, but there were more letters through the years. Like many Swedes, he was an exceptional craftsman. On his return to Racine, Wisconsin, he helped build the Swedish M.E. Church. Around 1904 he built a large home at 1701-1703 Jones Street for rental property. In the upper level of the 3-car garage there he set up his workshop where he specialized in rocking chairs. In 1930 he built an apartment building at 720 Chicago Street as another rental property. He re-



Swedish Methodist Evangelical Church in Racine, WI.

mained a bachelor and lived in his sister's home until his death in 1952 at the age of 85. In his will he left an inheritance, not only to his sister Amanda's sons and his brother Johan's sons in Racine, Wisconsin, but also to his nieces and nephews in Sweden.

The Andersson family

Anders Magnus Johannesson, b. 28 Aug. 1821 in Jönshult Södergård in Hagshult parish, farmer at this place, where he died in 10 July 1870 of a chest inflammation. He married on 27 Dec. 1855 to *Johanna Gustafsdotter*, b. 8 Mar. 1831 in Fagerhult, Hagshult.

They had the following children, all born in Jönshult Södergård:

Kristina Andersdotter, b. 28 Sep. 1856, died 11 Dec. 1939 in Lekeryd (Smål.). Married.

Johan Gustaf Andersson, b. 28 Nov. 1858, immigrated in 1884, settled in Racine, WI, where he died in Jun. 1937. Married.

Wilhelmina (Mina) Andersdotter, b. 31 May 1862, died 1921 in Vrigstad (Smål.). Married.

Justus Anderson, b. 9 Nov. 1866, immigrated in 1882, settled in Racine, WI, where he died 9 Jan. 1952. Not married.

Amanda Carolina Andersdotter, b. 25 Aug. 1870, immigrated in 1894, settled in Racine, WI, where she died 28 Dec. 1947. Married.



Anders Magnus Johannesson.

After the death of her husband Anders Magnus, his widow Johanna Gustafsdotter remarried on 6 May 1876 to her neighbor *Anders Johan Isaksson*, born 6 June 1854 in Jönshult Södergård.

Johanna and Anders Johan had a daughter, born in Jönshult Södergård:

Anna Maria Andersdotter, b. 18 Feb. 1875, died 22 Oct. 1902 (no cause of death recorded). She married 8 May 1898 to *Karl Justus Johansson*, b. 15 July 1873 in Hagshult. The young couple farmed with her parents at Jönshult Södergård.

After the death of their daughter, Johanna and Anders Johan moved to Gräshult Norrgård, also in Hagshult. Later on they moved to a house called Bäckaskog on the lands of Gräshult. Here Johanna died 27 Oct. 1917 of old age.

Anders Johan moved on 31 Dec. 1918 to the city of Värnamo, where he first lived at Villa Åbo, and in 1919 moved to another house in Värnamo, called Edit on Helmershus lands. Here he remarried on 24 April 1920 to *Anny Elisabeth Andersson*, b. 14 June 1881 in Gällaryd (Smål.).

They had two sons, born in Värnamo:

Johan Evert Vincent Isaksson, b. 9 June 1922, died 28 Oct. 1999 in Gnosjö (Smål.).

Anders Ingemar Emanuel Isaksson, b. 22 Aug. 1925, died 24 June 2007 in Nässjö (Smål.).

Anders Johan Isacson died 15 June 1929 in Värnamo, of stomach cancer.

Widow *Anny Elisabeth Isaksson* died 27 Jul. 1955 in Värnamo.

Anders Johan Isacson's younger brother *Claes August* was born 12 Dec. 1864 in Hagshult. He left from Jönshult Norrgård 5 Mar. 1890 for the U.S. with a ticket for New York.

Sources: church records for Hagshult and Värnamo, Swedish Death Index 1901-2013, and death records extracts from the Central Bureau of Statistics (SCB).

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