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Anna Lena Slättengren – life of a poor *piga* (1805-1874)

BY DAVID ANDERSON

For some reason serendipity has played a part in my search to find out more about my ancestors. One day while scrolling through a microfilm looking for an ancestor from Hogstad, Östergötland, I paused scrolling and there was the family name of Slättengren. Slättengren is not a common surname, and in my ancestors' cases it derives from the farm Slättö in Hjälmseryd, Jönköping, where Jöns (or Jonas as he was later called) Jönsson, the first of my ancestors to take that surname, was born 15 Dec 1769.¹

I think I might have been at the FHL (Family History Library) in Salt Lake City when I serendipitously found Anna Lena Slättengren living and working as a maid at Beletorp, Hogstad, Östergötland. To confirm her identity and relationship, Anna Lena's birth record for 3 Oct. 1805 from Ekeby, Öst., was inspected and it was confirmed that she was indeed born to the scissors maker (*saxmakaren*) Jonas Slättengren and his wife Stina Tylin, aged 35.²

Anna Lena and her younger brother Jonas Fredrik Slättengren both move to Beletorp, Hogstad, in 1826; Anna Lena from Åsbo to work as a maid (*piga*), and Jonas Fredrik from Ekeby at age 17 to work as a farm hand (*dräng*). There the head of household is the *Skatteman* P[eter] Carlsson who was born in 1778 in Krigsberg (now: *Kristberg, Östg.*) and who is married to Brita Andersdotter. Brita was born in 1757 in Hogstad. Jonas Fredrik stays at Beletorp until 1828 when he moves back to Ekeby.

In the meantime the first of Anna Lena's children, Carl Peter, is born 26 Oct. 1827.³ The birth record for Hogstad records Carl Peter's birth as

“*öagta*,”⁴ or as an illegitimate birth. Three more children followed: son Gotfrid, b 5 May 1833; daughter Anna Lovisa, b 28 Feb 1835; and finally son August, b 25 Nov 1844. All of Anna Lena's children were born at Beletorp and are *öakta barn*.

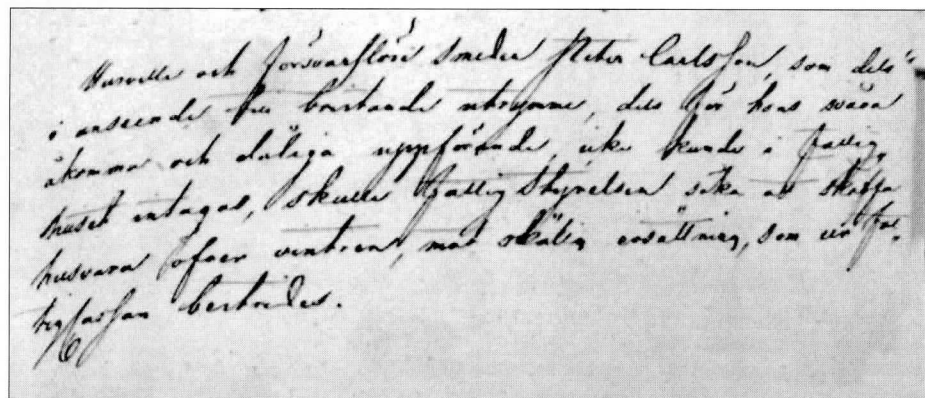
On 28 Oct 1843 Brita Andersdotter, at the age of 86, dies at Beletorp leaving a husband and a maid with four “*öakta barn*.” A note in the clerical survey seems to indicate that the five survivors may have moved to Rinna, but this appears to be the case only for Anna Lena's son Carl Petter since only his name is found in the moving out records for 1845. At the same time Petter Carlsson, who is now described as having no lodgings and being poor, applies to the parish council to be taken in at the local *Fattigstuga*, which he is denied because of lack of space.⁵

In 1846 the names of Petter Carl-

son, Anna Lena, and three of her children, Gotfrid, Anna Lovisa, and August appear on the parish's “*Försvarslösa Personer*” list, or list of people without a guardian or legal protection.

On 29 Oct 1848 Petter Carlsson dies in the parish poor house at the age of 70 (no cause of death listed).⁶

From about 1852 Anna Lena and her three youngest children are also found living at the poor house. In 1861 Anna Lena's son August moves to Hogstad *Skattegård* where his surname is recorded as “*Pettersson*.”⁷ He remains at Hogstad *Skattegård* for two years before moving in 1863 to Hogstad *fogdegård* until 1865⁸ when he moves away from Hogstad entirely having moved to Motala *Verkstad*. Daughter Anna Lovisa Persdotter, maid from Hogstad *Östergård*, gets married to Sven Petter Jonsson (1839-1874) on 25 Mar 1865



Hogstad parish Council minutes Nov., 21, 1845 (Hogstad KI:2, p. 143, Regional archives at Vadstena, photo E. Thorsell): Husville och försvarslöse Smeden Peter Carlsson, som dels i anseende för bristande utrymme, dels för hans svåra åkomma och dåliga uppförande icke kan i fattighuset intagas, skulle Fattig styrelsen söka att skaffa honom husvara öfver vintern, mot skälig ersättning, som af Fattigcassan bestrides. The houseless and defenseless smith Peter Carlsson, who partly because of lack of space, and partly because his bad sickness and bad conduct can not be placed in the workhouse, the poor board will try to find him some place to live during winter, for a reasonable amount, which will be paid by the poor cash.

in Hogstad.⁹ Son Gotfrid Pettersson moves to Hogstad Ljuna *Mellangård* in 1849 before moving to Högby (Östg.) in 1850.¹⁰ Son Carl Petter Petersson returns to Hogstad from Rinna and in 1862 is found at Hogstad's *Fattigstuga* where at age 46 he pre-deceases his mother on 8 April 1874 from chest fever.¹¹ Shortly thereafter on 29 May 1874 Anna Lena Slättengren also dies at the Hogstad *Fattigstuga* at age 68 years. She died from chest fever.¹²

The father?

Who then is the father of Anna Lena's four children? Is it the head of house Petter Carlsson? Maybe. In the Clerical Survey notes for 1842-1848 a note was made by the parish pastor for August, and only August. He noted: "*smeden Petter Carlsson säges vara fader*,"¹³ or the smith Petter Carlsson is said to be the father. In his note the parish pastor acknowledges parish gossip that the father is quite possibly Petter Carlson, but that Petter has not made a formal acceptance of that fact.

I have wondered if the name of Anna Lena's eldest son, Carl Peter, is a clue to his father's name since it is a reverse of Petter Carlson's name. Without proof that idea remains only conjecture. The surnames of the four children are given as Petterson, Peterson, or Persdotter would seem to indicate the father's name was Petter/Peter or Per, but without a formal acknowledgement of parentage by Petter Carlson we may never know who the biological father really is.

It was customary for a woman to be fined for having children out of wedlock. And in Oct. 1828 and again in March 1833 Anna Lena was fined after the births of her 1st and 2nd children. Records of these fines appear in Hogstad's church accounts which are not yet online.¹⁴ The minutes of the Göstring *Häradsrätt* (District Court) were also searched for the time when the children were born, with no results.

Petter Carlsson appears in these records since he had to pay fines in 1835 for not helping when there was

a forest fire in the area, and again when he instructed his farm hand to cut some trees down on a neighbor's property.¹⁵

In an estate inventory, or *boupp-teckning*, a man will sometimes acknowledge parentage of an illegitimate child. It was hoped that Petter Carlsson might acknowledge parentage of one or more of Anna Lena's children in his estate inventory, if one exists.

At the behest of Åke Strähle a search at the regional archives in Vadstena for the estate inventories of Anna Lena, Brita Andersdotter, and Petter Carlsson was made. Not unexpectedly since Anna Lena and Petter both died in the poorhouse, none could be found for them, or for Brita Andersdotter, Petter's wife, either.¹⁶ It is probable that we will never know for sure who the father of Anna Lena's four children is. What we do know is that the presence of one maid with four children born without the benefit of marriage in the early half of the 19th century would have proved to have been a headache for the parish pastor.

I would like to thank Elisabeth Thorsell for helping to find the father of Anna Lena's children by making a search of records in the Vadstena archives. At this point we will probably never know for sure who the father is, but it is most probable that it is Petter Carlsson.

Endnotes:

- 1) Hjälmseryd parish (Smål.) Births (1745-1779) C:2, pg 215; (accessed through Ancestry.com, digital image pg 112).
- 2) Ekeby parish (Östg.) Births (1760-1840) CI:1, pg 315.
- 3) Hogstad parish (Östg.) *Hfl* (1826-1831) AI:3, pg 136 (accessed from ancestry.com, digital image pg 148).
- 4) Hogstad CII:1 (1844-1854) Bild 27 / pg 43, Hogstad parish (Östg.) Births (1827-1860) CI:4, pg 4 (Ancestry.com, digital image pg 8).
- 6) Hogstad parish (Östg.) Deaths (1844-1854) CII:1, pg 42, (Ancestry.com, image 30).

- 7) Hogstad parish (Östg.) *Hfl* (1861-1866) AI:9, pg 6, (Ancestry.com, image 12).
- 8) Hogstad parish (Östg.) *Hfl* (1861-1866) AI:9, pg 18a (Ancestry.com, image 24).
- 9) Hogstad parish (Östg.) Marriage (1865) (Ancestry.com, digital image 176).
- 10) Hogstad parish (Östg.) *Utflyttning* 1850 (AI:7) (Ancestry.com, digital image 178).
- 11) Hogstad parish (Östg.) Death (1874) (Ancestry.com, digital image 481).
- 12) Hogstad parish (Östg.) Death (1874) (Ancestry.com, digital image 481).
- 13) Hogstad parish (Östg.) *Hfl* (1842-1848) AI:6, pg. 106 (Ancestry.com, digital image pg. 122).
- 14) Hogstad Lib:2. Provincial archives; Vadstena, Sweden.
- 15) Göstring *Häradsrätt* (District court) minutes AIa:98-105. Provincial archives, Vadstena, Sweden.
- 15) Elisabeth Thorsell, Sweden to David Anderson e-mail 29 Oct 2013.
- 16) Åke Strähle, Sweden to David Anderson, e-mail, 30 Apr 2013.

For an in depth discussion (in Swedish) I recommend the following website: <http://www.genealogi.se/oakta.htm>.

SAG 2010/1 has an article on "Father unknown – what to do" by Elisabeth Thorsell.

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