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# A mystery in Vasa, MN

## Is there a nobleman buried in Vasa?

BY ELISABETH THORSELL

In May of 2002 my husband and I were driving from Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, to Minneapolis, following the river, visiting places like Stockholm (pop. 97). Then we crossed the Mississippi at Red Wing, MN, a well-known landing place for Swedish immigrants. We stayed the night there and went on the next morning to Vasa, also in Goodhue County, and another early settlement for Swedes.

There we took photos in the cemetery by the church, and in another little cemetery close by. In either place we were intrigued by a couple of tombstones that were inscribed with the name *Tigerhjelm*. I recognized the name as that of a family of the Swedish nobility, and wondered if some member had immigrated to Vasa.

When I got home I promptly forgot all about it – until now. My computer has a screen saver that picks pictures from my picture files. One day a tombstone for a Tigerhjelm appeared on the screen, and I got the idea that I should look them up and see who they were.

The first step was to get out volume VIII of the *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, by Gustaf Elgenstierna (published 1926-1936), which is the standard reference work for the history of the Swedish families of the nobility.



*Tigerhielm coat of arms.*

The *Tigerhielm* (also Tigerhjelm) family was ennobled in 1669, and is still alive, but barely. The living members are three women in their 70s. Among the older members there was no one named Carl Petter, born in 1830, as according to the tombstone.

### The next step

Now it was time to try *Emihamn* and *Emibas*.

The *Emihamn* yielded two women by the Tigerhjelm name:

Efternamn: TIGERHJELM  
Förnamn: WALBORG  
Ålder: 33      Kön: K  
Född: 1836/1837  
Församling: LINNA    Län: W  
Titel/Anm: H  
Utresehamn: GÖTEBORG  
Utvandrdag: 1870 06 10  
Destination: REDWING  
Medåkande: JA  
Källkod: 3:467:1141

Huvudman: TIGERHJELM WALBORG  
Förnamn: MATHILDA LOV  
Ålder: 1      Kön: K  
Född: 1868/1869  
Församling: LINNA    Län: W  
Titel/Anm: D  
Utresehamn: GÖTEBORG  
Utvandrdag: 1870 06 10  
Destination: REDWING  
Medåkande: JA  
Källkod: 3:467:1141

This was evidently a mother, Walborg, who travelled with her small daughter. They had tickets for Red



Wing, which fit in nicely with the tombstones in Vasa.

In *Emibas* only one person was found: Tigerhjelm, Matilda Lovisa Dotter (unmarried woman), b. 3/27/1869. Emigrated 5/21/1869 from Skäggeberg, Sunne, Värmlands län (Värmland) to Amerika Source: Household Examination Roll, p. 1211.

This girl born in 1869 had to be the same as the Matilda Lovisa who left Göteborg in 1870 June 10 for Red Wing.

She and her mother Walborg Tigerhjelm were listed in *Emihamn* as emigrating from the parish of Linna, Kopparberg county. There is no parish of Linna, but I thought that it might be Lima, but could not find them in the moving-out records.

In *Emibas* there was a reference to a page in the Sunne cl. survey, so I next looked up that page. The place was called Skäggeberg, and there little Matilda Lovisa was listed without her parents, but she was marked as having been born in Sunne. In *Emibas* she had no place of birth. In note there were the parents: Karl Petter Tigerhjelm and Walborg Larsen, but further information about them.

Luckily enough the birth records had more information: "the home of the parents is said to be North America, but they had a testimony from Transtrand parish in Kopparberg län."

Transtrand is the neighboring parish to Lima, which also fits with the information from *Emihamn*.

Transtrand cl. survey showed that Carl Petter and Walborg lived in Transtrand village, and had come there in 1862 from Elverum i Norway. Carl Petter was recorded as having been born in 1829 Oct. 3 in Uppsala, and Walborg was born 1837 Feb. 16 in Åmot parish in Norway, and they had been married in 1860 Aug. 24, possibly in Norway.

The had received their testimony to leave for North America already in 1868 Aug. 18. They might have been on their way to the Norwegian



Transtrand church in 2010.

coast when Walborg found out that she was pregnant, and wanted to give birth in Sweden.

Carl Petter has not been found as being born in Uppsala on the above date, nor has it been found when and from where he emigrated.

## In America

Carl Petter's profession is not known, so he might well be identical with Tilva, Carl P, age 41, physician, born in Sweden, who is listed in Vasa in the 1870 U.S. Census. This man has a wife Valberg, age 33, keeping house, born in Sweden(!), and no child. The name Tigerhjelm might be a mouthful for an American census taker, so he might have used an easier name.

Daughter *Matilda Lovisa* seems to have survived the voyage across the sea, as she is listed with her mother and sisters in the Vasa Lutheran Church Membership book, when her mother and her children joined in 1882. Valborg and Carl Petter had another daughter *Matilda Caroline*, who was born in 17 June 1872 in Minnesota, according to the Vasa church records. When she was born her father had already died, according to his tombstone.

Valborg was recorded on her tombstone with the name Tigerhjelm Olson, which indicates that she remarried to an Olson.

In the 1880 U.S. Census for Vasa, she is probably the woman Valborg, age 43, with a daughter Caroline, age 8, who is married to Easton(? Östen?) Olson, age 34, tailor, born in Sweden. They had daughters Clara (5 years), Anna (3 years) and Ellie (11 months).

When Valborg joined the Vasa Lutheran Church in 1882 there is found some additional information on her family. Her husband Östen did not join, and it is not known if he was still alive. In the Membership Record it is noted that Mathilda Carolina was born 17 June 1872, Clara Wilhelmina was born 2 Feb. 1875, and Ettie Amanda 15 July 1879. Daughter Anna who was listed in the 1880 Census is not recorded here, and might already have died.

In the 1885 MN State census, she

is alone again, probably widowed. She is living with daughters Clara (10 years) and Attie (5 years). In her home is also Matilda Tigerjelm (no age), so this confirms that this is the right family.

Valborg, (Valberg etc.) died 28 Dec. 1898, according to the Vasa Lutheran Records of Funerals, and there is also a note that she had lived in Minneapolis.

By them Matilda had already moved to Minneapolis, where she is found in the 1889 city directory.

In 1907 Nov. 23 she was married in Hennepin county to Carl Albert Onstrand. The indexer for the marriage database had problems with her surname and came up with Figerly(!).

In the 1920 U.S. Census the Onstrands live in Minneapolis. Carl is 37n years old and emigrated in 1902 from Sweden, and works as a printer. Matilda is 45, and they have a little daughter, Louise Elizabeth, 5 years old. Carl was born 1883 July 20 in Sweden, according to his draft card for WWI, but has not been found in *Emibas*.

Matilda died 1929 May 27 in Hennepin County (Minnesota Historical Society Death Index).

Daughter Louise Elizabeth was born 24 Feb. 1914, and died 31 Aug. 1982 in Hennepin County (MHS Death Index). Her mother's maiden name is given as Tigerhjelm.

There is probably more to find out about this family, as the origin of the name was not found, but that would also need some digging in Norwegian records, and that would have to wait.

## Sources:

- Transtrand B:1 (1862-94)
- Transtrand AI:12a, p. 173
- Sunne C:14, p. 226
- Sunne AI:58, p. 1211
- Vasa Lutheran Church (Swenson Center)
- Minnesota State Census 1885
- World War I Draft registration (Onstrand)
- U.S. Federal Census 1880
- U.S. Federal Census 1920
- Minnesota Official Marriages System
- Minnesota Birth and Death Index