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# *The Dahlstedts – a family tale*

## **The origins of a Småland family**

BY CAROL J. BERN

Långemåla is a parish in Kalmar *län*. It is slightly southwest of Oskarshamn near the east coast of Sweden. Parish church records go back to 1734. It is here that our story begins.

In the year 1771 on the 22 of April, Magnus Dahlstedt began his service as a soldier in the J.W. Sprengtporten's Infantry Regiment. He was designated soldier No. 22 and his age is recorded as 21 years and 5 months which would indicate his year of birth was 1749. Magnus was single when he joined the service and was trained as a carpenter. He was recorded as a Lutheran from the province of Småland. He was shown on the military rolls as 5 feet 8 inches tall. He participated in the Finnish War of 1788-1790.

He served in that unit until 1805 which entitled him to a pension. Magnus was assigned to Långemåla parish in Kalmar *län*.

### **The allotment system**

During this period of time Sweden had a regular system of military service which allowed for permanent soldiers to be stationed throughout the land. Each soldier was supported by a small allotment of land with maybe a cow supplied by the community. He worked for the other farmers when not taking care of his military duties. In time of war his wife and family would be looked after by the community.

Many years after his retirement, a notation appears in the records that he had become blind. It was an



*A typical soldier's cottage.*

affliction which was passed down through the generations.

### **The start of the family**

It did not take long for Magnus to find and marry Stina Ericsson who the records say was born in 1750. Stina's birthplace is also unknown. Their first child was a daughter named Anna Maja, born 5 June 1777, followed by Lars Magnus in 1780, Ingeborg in 1783, and Eric in 1786. The father Magnus died in

Långemåla 11 November 1821,

Although she was unmarried, Anna Maja had a son named Carl Dahlstedt on 27 April 1808, when she was 31 years old. She did not marry during her lifetime, and died in Långemåla on 12 December 1863. She raised her son, Carl, all by herself. Census records indicate that Magnus, Anna Maja, and her son, Carl, lived together in the parish while Carl was growing up.

Carl Dahlstedt met and married Stina Lisa Nilsdotter, who was born 28 December 1809. Stina Lisa was from Fliseryd parish and they were married there 29 December 1839. The couple had four children – Carl Eloff and Johan Fredrick were born in 1842 and 1845 respectively. Carl Eloff died 26 December 1848 and his brother, Johan Fredrick, died 9 December 1859. By this time they had had their third child, Carl August, who had been named to replace the first Carl. Carl August was born 4 October 1849. Frans Oscar was born 1 September 1854.

Carl was the first in his family to have a trade. He worked as the village blacksmith in Långemåla his entire life, and the Dahlstedt family became the village blacksmiths for several generations. Carl died 18 October 1867 in Långemåla, and his widow Stina Lisa followed him on 13 October 1891.

## Fire in the house

The next generation of this blacksmith family was Carl August again in Långemåla. Carl August was second in his family to carry the blacksmith trade forward. They lived above the blacksmith shop. This later proved to be a catastrophic problem as the blacksmith shop caught fire and burned up all of family's belongings about 1900. It was rebuilt, but many of the old photos and other family articles were lost in the fire. During a visit to Sweden we had taken some photos from my grandfather's belongings in the hope that we could learn the identity of the people. The Swedish cousins knew immediately who all the people were and we were able to replace some of their old photos lost in the earlier fire.

Carl August married Johanna Fredrika Gustafsdotter on 15 March 1873 in Långemåla parish. She was from the nearby parish of Högsby. To this union were born six children. Carl Oskar was born in 1874, Johan August in 1877, Augusta in 1879, Sigrid in 1882, Axel Edward in 1885, and finally Albin Herman in 1889.

Carl August died on 20 June 1915

of gallstone and kidney problems at age 65, and was buried in a family plot in the Långemåla churchyard. Relatives helped us locate his tombstone which had been placed against the wall of the cemetery. When asked why the tombstone was no longer at the burial plot in the cemetery, the relatives explained that if no one tended the grave, the stone would be removed and someone else would be buried in the plot. Carl August's widow Johanna Fredrika Gustafsdotter died 19 August 1922 in Långemåla 2.

## The immigrants

Of this family, the youngest two children, Axel Edward and later Albin Herman immigrated to the United States. Axel left Copenhagen 27 August 1902 with a ticket for Chicago, and arrived at Ellis Island on 8 September on the *Oscar II*. Although Axel had been trained as a blacksmith in Sweden, he worked as a hired man and was able to save enough money to buy a farm of his own near Bishop Hill, Illinois.

Axel married Jennie Christine Lind in Henry County, Illinois, on 5 March 1913. Jennie was a first generation American. Her parents were Johan Erik Lind from Hvena (modern spelling: Vena) in Småland and Martha Hanson from Svärdsjö in Kopparberg, Sweden. Axel and Jennie's first child was Francis Marguerite Dahlstedt, who was my mother, born on 25 March 1914. Then



*Carl August and Johanna Fredrika Gustafsdotter.*

came Herman Edward in 1916, Beverly Marie in 1919, and finally Dorothy Mae in 1926. In 1930 they all lived at Walnut Grove in Knox County, Illinois. Axel was blind with glaucoma in later years as was his ancestor before him.

Albin left Göteborg 13 October 1909 with a ticket for Galesburg. In 1930 he lived in Moline with his wife Emma, son Edward, and daughter Jeane. Albin was a smith in a plow factory.

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*Axel and Albin Dahlstedt.*