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Who Was the Father of Carlos J. Stolbrand, Civil War General?

Tom Risbecker*

In a book published in 1951, written by Axel Paulin, a former Swedish diplomat, and entitled *Svenska öden i Sydamerika*, a history of early Swedes in South America, I came across a brief note, when reading about Swedes in Venezuela. It referred to a report by the Swedish consul general in that country to the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 1844, referring to a total of eighteen Swedish subjects who resided in his district. Among these was a certain Carl Gustaf Tornérhielm.¹ He had been born on the Tunbyholm estate in Smedstorp Parish (Krist.) 27 Nov. 1809, the son of Adolf Fredrik Tornérhielm, later a lieutenant colonel in a Swedish regiment, and his wife, Erika Catharina von Engeström. In 1831 he became a lieutenant in the Skånska Husar Regiment, later in 1837 he transferred to the Skånska Infantry Regiment. Two years later he resigned his commission and left for the U.S. Later he continued on to Venezuela, where he is to be found in 1844.²

During my research on the life of the Swedish-born brigadier general Carlos J. Stolbrand, the name of Tornérhielm comes to mind in a significant way and I'll explain why.

The father of Carl Gustaf, i.e. Adolf Fredrik, had left the Swedish military service in 1799 and had settled down on the Dömestorp estate on the border between the Swedish provinces of Halland and Skåne. He owned this estate from 1799 to 1810. A subsequent owner of the same estate, Peter von Möller, said of Adolf Fredrik Tornérhielm, that "he was a man with a very sharp mind, but was very inconsiderate and one of the first to go into the business of real estate as a profession."

From Dömestorp Adolf Fredrik and his family moved to Tunbyholm, which he had bought in 1809, and where his son Carl Gustaf was born that same year. He kept this property until 1816, when he exchanged it for another estate. In the meantime, his mother, Baroness Christina Eleonora Silfverskiöld, had died in 1811 and had left the lovely estate of Össjö for her son to inherit. Össjö is located in the province of Skåne, not far from the city of Ängelholm. As a matter of fact,

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the present main building of the estate was built by Adolf Fredrik during the years 1814-1815 after a fire had destroyed the previous building. His inability to deal with money matters or affairs of the heart caused him to have to sell Össjö in 1828 because of heavy debts. He sold to his brother, Gustaf Tornérhielm, whose son later exchanged this property with the owners of the Wrams Gunnarstorp castle, which still to this day is in the hands of the Tornérhielm family.

There are two things of particular interest in what just has been said. First of all is the fact that Adolf Fredrik Tornérhielm lost his wife 15 Dec. 1821—the same year in which Carlos Stolbrand was born. The second fact deals with Tornérhielm's hopelessly irregular affairs. These facts certainly carried a negative impact, among other things, they must have influenced the life of his son, Carl Gustaf. The bad economy of the father probably more or less forced the son to emigrate, first to North America and then later to South America and Venezuela. But Carl Gustaf also had another handicap in life—he was not blessed with the rights of primogeniture, i.e. being the firstborn in the family.

Now, what has all of this to do with our Civil War general Carlos Stolbrand? In order to properly answer this question, we must elaborate a little bit on Adolf Fredrik Tornérhielm and his interest in women. We know that he had an affair with Gunhild (Gunilla) Fredrika Cronhamn (1781-1856), which resulted in a son being born—Johan Peter Cronhamn—in 1803. The latter became a famous professor of music at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music in Stockholm.³ His mother later was married to an overseer at the Össjö estate, Jöns Andersson. The Tornérhielms owned Össjö at this time.

Another servant at Össjö soon caught the eye of Tornérhielm, namely young Christina Möller, born in Örkelljunga Parish (Krist.) in 1798, and who became involved in a lengthy love affair with Adolf Fredrik Tornérhielm, which resulted in no less than nine children. The eldest of these was Carl Johan, perhaps named in honor of Carl XIV Johan, the new king on the Swedish throne, who ruled from 1818 to 1844. Carl Johan was born in Össjö and was later to become the famous Civil War officer, who rose through the ranks to become a brigadier general in the U.S. Army. But for the sake of good order, let me list all of the nine children born to Adolf Fredrik and Christina Möller:

1. Carl Johan, born at Össjö 11 May 1821.
2. Gustaf Ferdinand, born at Össjö 15 March 1823.
3. Erik Abraham, born at Össjö 11 April 1825.
4. Christjern Lambert, born at Rössjöholm, Tåssjö Parish (Krist.)
5. Aurora Helena, b. at Lundegård 26 April 1829.
6. Christina , born and died at Ugglarp.
7. Adolfine, born and died at Ugglarp.
8. Eleonora Sigrid, born 19 Nov. 1835.
9. August Leonard, born 19 Nov. 1835.

My wife happens to be a descendant of the fourth son, Christjern Lambert, who later in life became the founder and the principal owner of an insurance firm, *Svenska Lifförsäkringsbolaget* (The Swedish Life Insurance Company). He changed the spelling of his name and became the progenitor of the Swedish family Lambert-Meuller.⁴

Christjern Lambert joined his older brother, Carl Johan, when the latter emigrated to the U.S. in 1850. Also on this voyage were Carl Johan's wife, Maria, and their son Adolf.⁵ In this connection, one wonders what impact the departure for North America ten years earlier by Carl Gustaf Tornérhielm could have had on his two half-brothers, when they contemplated the same journey a decade later.

Through the courtesy of my wife's uncle, Lieut. Col. Fredrik Lambert-Meuller, I have been able to borrow two hand-written diaries as well as a family Bible. The latter was a Christmas gift to Christina Möller from Adolf Fredrik Tornérhielm in 1833, on the fly leaf of which he tells her of his love.

The two diaries were written by Christjern or Christiern (as he wrote his name later) Lambert when he was working as a surveyor's assistant in Åstorp near Össjö. A few entries from 1844, when he was but 18 years old, demonstrate aptly how the son felt about his father.

On 5 January Christjern walked to the city of Ängelholm and was "met by the sad news that his father's property was being sold at an executive auction to satisfy some debts."

On 11 January the auction was held, but everything "worked out well since Adolf Fredrik's brother and a friend were the successful bidders."

On 7 April, which was Easter Sunday, "Father, Gustaf (his brother) and I were invited for lunch with the splendid old man Ehrencrona.⁶ In the afternoon at the exhortation of my honored father to return to him whenever I could, I left for Össjö."

On Christmas Eve 1844 Christjern writes: "Dad gave a shaving kit including a razor strop, which the old man had bought in 1798 and which had been along in the Finnish War. My father gave a little speech in which he expressed the wish that I would keep this as a remembrance of him."

These samples constitute incontrovertible evidence of the warm relationship which existed between father and son.

Carl Johan Möller, the eldest son of Christina Möller, assumed the name of Ståhlbrand in 1838 when he entered Swedish military service. On 15 Jan. 1845 he married in Kristianstad Maria Sofia Petersson, born in Kristianstad 6 Dec. 1825, the daughter of Carl Ludvig Petersson, a staff sergeant (*styckjunkare*) in the Swedish Army and his wife, Margareta Lovisa Werner. Scarcely a month later Maria gave birth to twin sons—Carl and Gottfrid Ludvig, who both died, however, as infants.

On 10 July 1847 another son was born to the couple, Adolf, who was to accompany the parents to America and who was later married in the U.S. and who died in Cincinnati, OH 20 Jan. 1881. His death caused his younger brother Vasa Edvin some serious problems, but that is another story and will not be dealt with here. Adolf supposedly left a wife and two children, but I have not managed to find out what happened to them.

The Ståhlbrands had the following children in the U.S.—

1. Fannie, born in Cook Co., IL in 1851. Not traced.
2. Vasa Edvin, born in Cook Co., IL in 1856; died in New York City after 1917. Colonel.
3. Alma, born in Cook Co., IL in 1858, died in the great fire in Grand Central Station in New York in 1911.
4. Gertrude, born in 1867. Not traced.

After his military successes in the Civil War, Carl Johan Ståhlbrand (or Stolbrand as he now wrote his name) and his appointment as brigadier general by President Abraham Lincoln, the Swedish newspapers were filled with stories about him. This prompted an anonymous writer to send an article to the newspaper *Nya Christianstadsbladet*, printed 15 April 1865, in which the writer felt moved to give “closer and accurate information” as to Stolbrand’s antecedentia. The article claimed that Stolbrand was the natural son of the former Lieutenant Colonel Tornérhielm, now deceased.

In 1904 a quite famous book, *The Art of Heraldry* by Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, was published in England. This book includes among other things certain genealogical musings. The author states in his book, referring to illegitimacy, that “the social status of an offspring of a given person depended little upon the legal legitimacy of birth, but rather upon the amount of recognition the bastard received from his father.”

If we examine the household examination rolls of the parishes in which Adolf Fredrik Tornérhielm resided in the 1830’s and the early 1840’s, we are not surprised to find that several of the Möller sons were registered in the household of Adolf Fredrik. The diaries of Christjern Lambert Möller cited above, also furnish us with frequent references to the excellent relationship which existed between the lad and his father.

Another indication of the closeness of the family is the pattern of names, which have been passed on from one generation to the next. This is certainly evident so far as the main personalities in this article are concerned. It is interesting to note that the first-born son of Christjern Lambert Meuller was named Charles Adolf and his second son was given the name Fredrik. General Stolbrand, carried the name of Charles early in his career and it was not until much later in life that he changed it to Carlos.

Postscript

Since we are in the midst of a jubilee year, marking the 350th anniversary of the coming of Swedish settlers to the Delaware Valley, it is only proper to remember some of those Swedes who aided the American nation in achieving greatness. One of these was Carlos Stolbrand. Though his kinsman, John Ericsson, made enormous technical contributions to the victory of the Union forces, very little could have been achieved without the bravery and fighting spirit of such men as Brigadier General Stolbrand. Let us keep the memory of this great warrior alive! Maybe it is time for the city of Kristianstad to do something to commemorate this great son. And why not Chicago?

Notes

¹Axel Paulin, *Svenska böden i Sydamerika* (Stockholm 1951), P.A. Norstedt & Söner, p.533.

²Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor 1-IX* (Stockholm 1925-1936), VIII, pp. 327-328.

³*Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*, IX (Stockholm 1931), pp. 158-164.

⁴For a complete genealogy of the Lambert-Meuller family see *Svenska slüktkalendern*, Vol. 24 (Stockholm 1984), pp. 232-234.

⁵Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820-1850* (Stockholm and Chicago 1967), pp. 248-251.

⁶Johan Gustaf Gammal Ehrencrona (1755-1851), resided in Ängelholm. At the time of the diary entry he was 89 years old. See Elgenstierna *Svenska adelns ättartavlor*, II, p. 428.



Vasa E. Stolbrand, son of Brig. Gen. Carlos J. Stolbrand. Photo taken in Ft. Leavenworth, KS in 1882 where young Stolbrand was stationed as second lieutenant in the 13th U.S. Infantry Regiment. Picture was sent to his uncle, Christjern Lambert-Meuller in Stockholm.