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On the Death of Gustaf Teodor Berglind: A Police Report

George Bernard Hanson*

Gustaf T(h)eodor and Anna Lisa Berglind of Stockholm, Sweden, came to Barnesboro, Pennsylvania, in 1908 to visit their daughter and my mother, Hildur Berglind Hanson, and the growing Hanson family. After the death of my *morfar* (maternal grandfather) in 1912, my *mormor* (maternal grandmother) returned to Barnesboro to live with our family (see figure 1). My parents never spoke of the cause of his death and my *mormor* only spoke Swedish, so I did not communicate with her.

Having done most of the genealogy on the families in Sweden via the microfilms from a local Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I decided to search the records for the City of Stockholm as well as for Hedvig Eleonora Church, because my family were members there. So, I ordered FHL film number 1553037, "Deaths, City of Stockholm, Hedvig Eleonora Church, 1912."

It was easy to find the date and the page. Here I found that my *morfar* had died on 10 December 1912, the two-hundred-ninety-third person to die in the parish that year (see figure 2). He was the caretaker (*portvakt*) of the apartment building at 20 Karlavägen. There were several short notes, in very small handwriting under the sub-heading *Läkares anteckn[ingar]* (doctor's notes), which read as follows: *Krosskad å hufvud* (bruise or contusion of the head); *Polis rapport* (police report); and *Sannol[ik] olycka* (likely an accident).

I immediately thought I should be able to get a copy of the police report, so I wrote to my genealogist friend, Göran Lindahl of Linköping, who in turn contacted genealogist Inga Lindberger of Stockholm. She went to the police station and obtained a copy of the original twelve-page report on the death of Gustaf Teodor Berglind (see figure 3). It was case number 3405, dated 12 December 1912. Here, for the first time in some eighty-three years, I learned that Gustaf Berglind died of an epileptic seizure and stroke. The attending doctor refused to sign a death certificate because of his conversations and questioning of my grandmother! A notation in the "Conclusion Drawn" column, dated 14 December, indicates that "no obstacle has been found why the body could not be buried." What follows is a translation of the original police report.¹

oOo

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¹ Translated to the English by Margareta Benser, RD, CSP, LD, Clinical Dietitian to the Departments of Gastroenterology and Liver Transplant at Childrens Medical Center, Dallas, Texas.

The wife, Anna Lisa Berglind, who lives at Karlavägen 20, came into the Police District Station and announced that her husband, the property caretaker Gustaf Teodor Berglind, on that same day at 9:30 a.m. had passed away at his residence and Dr. Henrik Wetterdahl, who had been called in, had declared that he was not able to sign the death certificate for the deceased.

Police Sgt. Eric Liljeberg and Constable No. 386, Anders Johan Starck, set off immediately to the residence of the Berglinds and had since filed a report that they had found the deceased lying in the bed that had been made up, dressed only in a shirt. The deceased had on the back of his head a small injury the size of a five öre coin and the skin on his back and his thighs had a dark blue color.

The wife Berglind, who has been questioned, has since told us the following:

Her husband Berglind had one day about fifteen years ago, when he had found himself at Riddarholmen, had an epileptic seizure, at which time he had fallen down onto the street and he had been seriously injured and he had so severely injured his head that he had had to be cared for at Serafimer Hospital for a whole month thereafter. Since that time, the man had been suffering from epilepsy. His attacks at times had been more frequent and at other times they had occurred with less frequency. After having these epileptic seizures, the man evidently had the impression that another person had violated him, because after each attack he would say that he had been attacked.

On Saturday the 7th of December in the p.m., the man had been at his residence till about 9:00 in the evening, when he had left to go down to the cellar to fetch wood, and at that time nothing unusual had been noted about him. He came back up from the cellar about 9:30 but did not bring any wood with him, but he did bring back the lantern and the keys to the cellar. Once inside the residence he had said that he had been attacked. The wife Berglind did not pay much attention to this statement, because she said she thought that the man must have had an epileptic seizure while down in the cellar and that as has been mentioned before would say somebody had attacked him. At the same time, however, the man had been complaining about a headache and he said that there was a pain at the back of his head. The wife then discovered the man had a minor scrape at the back of the head and that some blood flowed from it and so the wife Berglind had cleaned it out with mercuric chloride. The man had thereafter felt well and he seemed as happy as he normally would and had later played cards with a couple of persons who had come to visit. Hereafter they jointly had eaten supper. Once the visitors had left, about 12:30 that night, the man had set himself down in the rocker and shortly fallen asleep. About 1:00 o'clock that same night, the man had fallen from the chair onto the floor. The wife Berglind had then tried to wake him up but did not succeed in doing so. Since she was not able to lift the man up onto the bed, either, she had put a pillow under his head and had let him lie down on the floor through the night.

The following day, in the morning, Mrs. Berglind had, with the help of another person, undressed the man and put him on a sofa that made up into a bed. The wife Berglind, by 7:00 p.m. Sunday evening, still had not been able to wake up the man. She had called Dr. Wetterdahl who, after an examination, had declared that the man probably had suffered a stroke and had recommended that ice be applied to his head. Dr. Wetterdahl had then visited the man the following day also and he was still found unconscious. Tuesday, the man had, as reported earlier, died without ever having regained consciousness. The wife Berglind believed the man, who during all of the past summer had been sickly and complained about pains in his chest and his stomach while coming up from the cellar, probably had suffered an epileptic attack, since she found the sack with wood lying about on the cellar steps and the man had fallen down and scraped the back of his head at that time. As far as the wife Berglind knew, there was no reason to suspect that another person would have been there to attack Berglind.

Aside from the above mentioned persons, they have been heard and have reported as follows:

The carpenter, Per August Holm, who lives at Jungfrugatan 12: Holm had for several years been acquainted with and often been together with Berglind, whom he knew suffered from epilepsy. On Saturday the 7th of this month between 7:00 and 8:00 in the evening, Holm had gone to Berglind's residence and the two had sat and talked together until about 9:00 p.m. When Holm returned to the second floor of the same building, where Anna Elizabeth Wancke lived, Berglind had left at the same time and said he was going down to the cellar to fetch some wood. By 9:30 that evening Holm had returned to the Berglind residence and at that time Berglind had returned from the cellar and he found him sitting on a sofa in the room when Holm entered. Berglind had said that he had hurt himself in the cellar and it hurt in his head and, as he was saying so, he had touched the back of his head with his hand. Holm had then noted that Berglind did have a wound at the back of his head and that a small amount of blood was coming out of it. The wound had been very dirty and so Holm had asked Mrs. Berglind to wash it out with mercuric chloride and she had done so. Berglind had then seemed happy and they talked as usual. Holm and Berglind and his wife and Miss Wancke, who also at this time had arrived at the Berglind residence, thereafter played cards until about 11:30 that evening, whereafter they had eaten supper together.

During this time nothing unusual had been noted, except that Berglind had said at one time that he did have a headache. By 12:30 that night Miss Wancke and Holm had left the Berglind residence. When Holm left, Berglind sat himself down in a rocker that was in the room. On Sunday the 8th at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, Holm had returned to the Berglind residence and found Berglind on the floor with a pillow under his head and had been seemingly alive. The wife Berglind at the same time told him that Berglind on Saturday night, shortly after Holm had left their residence, had fallen asleep in the rocker and had fallen down onto the floor and that he had spent

the whole night on the floor because she had been unable to wake him and also been unable to lift him up onto his bed. Holm too had tried to wake Berglind up but had not succeeded. Holm thereafter helped the wife Berglind to undress Berglind and together they put him on the sofa in the room. Holm had, that same day at 8:00 in the evening, returned to the Berglind's and at that time found Berglind still lying seemingly unconscious, otherwise Mrs. Berglind had then told him that Dr. Wetterdahl had been there earlier and had recommended that ice be applied to Berglind's head.

The above Miss Wancke: Miss Wancke had been visiting the Berglind family on Saturday evening and at that time the carpenter Holm had also been there. She had at that time seen how Mrs. Berglind washed the back of Berglind's head with mercuric chloride. She had heard in what manner Mr. Berglind had been injured, but she did hear that it was to have happened in the cellar. She had also heard Berglind at one time complain that his head was hurting, but she had not noticed anything unusual with him. Whether Berglind had suffered from epilepsy Miss Wancke, who had only known the Berglinds for a short while, could not say.

Miss Hulda and Miss Augusta Forsén, living at Karlavägen 20, across the back yard on the ground floor both declare: They had, on Saturday the 7th of December at about 9:30 in the evening, heard a person singing and shutting the door to the cellar, which is situated next to their kitchen window; and they had gotten the impression that it was the caretaker Berglind who had been down in the cellar, since he had the habit of walking around and singing quietly to himself. When they later, about 10:15 that evening, had gone to the cellar themselves and opened the cellar door, which had been locked, they had found a sack lying on the stairs. The two Misses Forsén had then pulled the sack, which had been on about the fifth step counting from the bottom, down into the cellar. They had not noticed anybody about in the cellar. In addition to this, Miss Augusta Forsén stated that, when she had been outside in the yard for a moment that same evening about 9:00 p.m., she had seen the cellar doors standing open and the lantern standing at the top of the cellar steps. But Miss Forsén hadn't paid any particular attention to it, but had gone back again into her residence.

It is very likely that at that moment Berglind had sensed that he was about to suffer an epileptic seizure, had put the lantern on the stairs and, at that moment, had probably fallen down on the stairs.

Mrs. Ida Pettersson, living at Brunnsgränd 4, the sister of the deceased Berglind, and widow Emma Charlotta Tillgren, living at Grevgatan 4, who was the half sister of Berglind, had, along with the wife Berglind, given the information that the deceased Berglind had been suffering from epilepsy for fifteen years and that he had had repeated attacks and was in the habit of declaring that he had been attacked when he had suffered a seizure. The two had been informed by the wife Berglind on Tuesday the 10th of this month over the telephone that Berglind, who they seldom visited, was dying. They had then hurried and set off for the Berglind residence. Shortly after arriving there, Berglind had died without first gaining consciousness.

Dr. Wetterdahl's address: Brahegatan 25. Dr. Wetterdahl had, on Sunday the 8th of this month in the evening, been asked by the wife Berglind to visit her husband who probably was sick, since the previous night he had not been able to wake him up. On arrival at the Berglind residence, Dr. Wetterdahl had found Berglind lying unconscious on the sofa. After examining him, Dr. Wetterdahl had come to the conclusion that Berglind had suffered a stroke and he had recommended that ice be applied to his head.

Dr. Wetterdahl had visited Berglind again on Monday morning and found him still unconscious, and had found the muscles of his arms and legs to be fairly limp. By Tuesday morning Dr. Wetterdahl had been informed by Mrs. Berglind that the man had died and at that time Dr. Wetterdahl had taken off for the Berglind residence.

Once Dr. Wetterdahl confirmed that the man was dead, he had the intention of issuing the death certificate for Berglind, but since Mrs. Berglind had given information that the man had stated that he had been attacked in the cellar on Saturday night, Dr. Wetterdahl had become suspicious that maybe another circumstance that he had not been told about might have contributed to Berglind's death. So he, therefore, had said that he would not sign a death certificate and had advised Mrs. Berglind to report the death to the police station.

According to the birth certificate submitted, Berglind was born on 6 November 1857 in Huddinge Parish (Södm.), he was married, and he was a member of the Hedvig Eleonora Parish in Stockholm.

The wife Mrs. Berglind has stated she will take care of the burial. The deceased is being kept in the city's mortuary.

Witnesses: Dr. Henrik Wetterdahl
Carpenter, Per August Holm
Miss Wancke
Miss Hulda Forsén
Miss Augusta Forsén
Mrs. Ida Pettersson (sister)
Widow Emma Charlotta Tillgren (half sister)

Infl. Nr. 5/488
 12/11/13
 * Ameriska
 10/12/1919
 Flyttningsbetyg
 (för äkte, makar.)
 1. Parfrakten Gustaf Theodor Berglind
 och hans hustru Anna Lisa Andersdotter (f. Lundgren)
 2. blefvo i äktenskap förbundet genom väpnel
 den 16 November 1880 (active)

GÄLLER EJ UTOM
 STOCKHOLM

Mannen	Hustrun
3. är född den <u>6 Nov. 1858</u> <u>fjärting</u>	är född den <u>16 Apr. 1846</u> <u>fjärting</u>
4. i <u>Huddinge</u> församling	i <u>Gestads</u> församling
i <u>Stockholms</u> län,	i <u>Björbo</u> län,
5. är <u>—</u> vaccinerad	är <u>—</u> vaccinerad
6. är <u>—</u> döpt,	är <u>—</u> döpt,
7. har inom svenska kyrkan konfirmerats och eger <u>fjärvärdig</u> kristendoms-kunskap,	har inom svenska kyrkan konfirmerats och eger <u>fjärvärdig</u> kristendoms-kunskap,
8. har inom svenska kyrkan begått H. Nattvard,	har inom svenska kyrkan begått H. Nattvard,
9. är till Nattvardens begående afbördad	är till Nattvardens begående afbördad

11. ätnjuter — medborgarligt förtroende
 12.
 13. Mannen är såsom värdpliktig, enligt nedanstående anteckning af rotoman,
 14. Dessa makar flytta till i andra sidan angifna församling;
 17. betygur Hedvig Eleonora församling i Stockholm
 18. den 27 juli år 1899

PASTORSBETYG I HEDVIG ELEONORA
 STOCKHOLM

A. S. Rehn
 kyrkostyrelse-ordf. pastor

Fig. 1. Flyttningsbetyg (exit permit) for Gustaf Theodor Berglind and Anna Lisa Andersdotter.

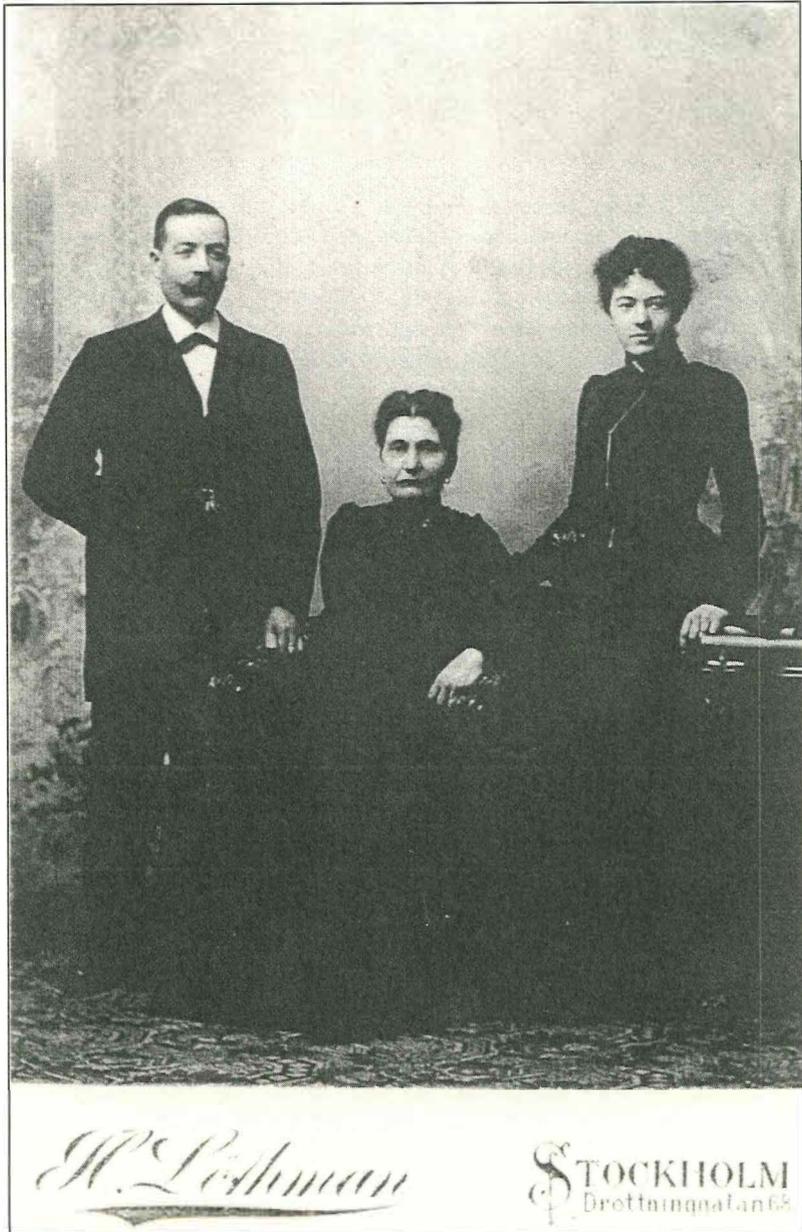


Fig. 4. The Berglind Family ca. 1901 (L-R): Gustaf Teodor, Anna Lisa, and Hildur. Studio mark: H. Lötman, Stockholm, Drottninggatan 68.