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The Mysteries of Anders Klöfverstedt

Thomas Houle*

Although the records documenting Anders Klöfverstedt's early life are scarce, various Swedish parish records indicate that he was born 20 January 1823 in Helsingfors (now Helsinki), Finland. When the *Barn bok* (Children book) that lists births in Helsingfors Parish for the years 1822-1824 was examined, the Klöfverstedt name was not present.¹ Nevertheless, all Swedish parish records for last forty years of his life are consistent in stating the date of Anders Klöfverstedt's birth as 20 January 1823 and the location of his birth as Helsingfors, Finland. At that time, Helsingfors was a small community, not the cosmopolitan metropolis of today.

A family story suggests that Anders Klöfverstedt was the illegitimate son of a Swedish prince, Josef Frans Oscar (I) (Bernadotte), the future King Oscar I, and a maid in the royal household. I have not located any records or information about Anders's mother except to retell the family story that she became pregnant by Prince Oscar and was sent to Finland prior to Anders's birth.

This story about Anders's parents was told by his widow, Anna, and their children to their American grandchildren, after they emigrated to America following Anders's death in 1900. Anna and Anders Klöfverstedt's children were Gustaf Adolf (G. A.) Raymond, Anna Brita Swing and Emma Kristina Holmbeck. The story was also told to a Swedish family relative, Dagny Krantz, before she visited America in 1922, by Maivor Vetonen, a resident of Hassela who teaches school in Älgered and is active in the Bergsjö Historical Society. This family story includes an additional component—that members of the royal family attended Anders's funeral in Hassela in February 1900. This has not been confirmed.

Readers of *SAG* know that stories of royal parentage were frequent among Swedish immigrants to America. This is not to deny the possibility of such a beginning for Anders, but the frequency of these stories and the lack of firm evidence confirming Anders's parentage raise questions about its plausibility. This is the first of the mysteries we encounter today in trying to reconstruct his life.

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¹ The following Finnish microfilms were examined: 1) Finland, lasten Kiriat, 1800-1835, vvsimaa-Helsingin Maalaiskunta (microfilm 0064205); 2) Complete printout of births or christenings 1811-1851 (microfilm 1149094). See also microfilm 0065076 for additional information on births.

Regardless of his origins, we know that Anders somehow obtained a fine education as a young man. Higher education was not universally available in Sweden at the time of his youth, and an educated person was rare among the rural villages. The exception was the parish priest. Parish records that document Anders's adult life use the title of teacher and lecturer—activities that required training and education. Records have not yet been located that indicate where he lived as a child, who raised him, the schools he attended or any other facts about his childhood and early adulthood. Where and how he obtained this formal education is, thus, another mystery about his life.

In trying to reconstruct Anders's adult life, I relied primarily on parish records to trace his movements in Sweden. Starting with the parish record of his death and last residence and working backwards, I traced Anders's movements during the last thirty-two years of his life. Fortunately, Swedish parish records often contain other information that can give additional knowledge of a person.

The earliest reference to Anders Klöfverstedt that I have found—a note in a Household Examination Roll from Karlskoga Parish (Värm.)—indicates that he had been a resident of Lyrestad Parish during the early 1850s. Lyrestad is a small village in the province of Västergötland located near the eastern shore of Lake Vänern. He would have been thirty years of age in 1853. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate Anders in any records from Lyrestad Parish during the early 1850s.

Anders arrived in Karlskoga, presumably from Lyrestad, on 4 November 1858.² Karlskoga is located about 75 km north of Lyrestad. The Household Examination Roll from Karlskoga Parish provides several pieces of information. First, it states that Anders came from Lyrestad. Second, it indicates that Anders lived in Södra Lerångs Rote in 1858 and Bregårdstorps Rote in 1859. Third, it identifies Anders as “*f.d. [före detta] Klockaren och Barnalär[are] A. G. Klöfverstedt*” (i.e., the former parish clerk and teacher of small children). Finally it affirms that Anders was knowledgeable of the Lutheran catechism and proficient in reading and writing.³

Although Anders is listed as leaving Karlskoga for North America on 20 October 1860,⁴ later parish records suggest that he did not make the trip. Consequently, I do not know where he lived or what he did from the time he left Karlskoga Parish in October 1860 until he reappears in Söderbärke Parish (Dala.) in November 1862.

Anders Klöfverstedt is next found in Söderbärke, a small parish in a region noted for its copper mines, that is approximately 100 km northeast of Karlskoga. The Moving In Record (*Inflyttningslängd*) for November 1862 lists him as “*f.d. Klockaren A. G. Klöfverstedt.*”⁵ The exact date of his arrival is not given; there is a question mark in that space. The Household Examination Roll

² Moving In Record (*Inflyttningslängd*), Karlskoga Parish (Värm.), 4 November 1858.

³ Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Karlskoga Parish (Värm.), A1:19c, 1856-1860.

⁴ Moving Out Record (*Utflyttningslängd*), Karlskoga Parish (Värm.), 20 October 1860.

⁵ Moving In Record (*Inflyttningslängd*), Söderbärke Parish (Dala.), November 1862.

(*Husförhörslängd*) lists him as “f.d. Klockaren & Barnalär[are] A. G. Klöfverstedt.” and confirms his birth date, birthplace, movement into the parish in 1862, previous residence as Karlskoga, familiarity with the Lutheran catechism, reading and writing proficiency.⁶ It also includes several miscellaneous comments. The Regional Archives (*Landsarkivet*) in Uppsala sent me the following translation of these comments:

According to the moving records for Söderbärke Parish (B:2, 1834-1874), Anders Klöfverstedt moved into Söderbärke Parish in 1862 from Karlskoga Parish. According to the household examination rolls for Söderbärke Parish (A1:23, 32) he lived in Sörbo. In the same household examination rolls, you can read as follows: “He had in Karlskoga parish, on 29 October 1860, received a paper for emigration to America, but he didn’t use it. He arrived during a travel to this parish, and stayed here as a teacher. In the year 1864 he moved to Denmark.

For many years it was not necessary to obtain a passport in Sweden for travel to foreign countries. What was necessary was an official exit permit (*flyttningsbetyg*) from the local parish priest. This is what Anders had obtained in Karlskoga but, according to the records in Söderbärke, had not used.

Anders’s whereabouts between the years 1864 and 1866 is another of the mysteries of his life. I know from the Söderbärke Moving Out Record that he left that community in 1864, ostensibly to go to Denmark.⁷ So far it has been impossible to verify if he made that trip, his activities during those years, or his place of residence. He next turns up in Bjuråker, Sweden, in 1866, two years after leaving Söderbärke Parish.

On 19 January 1866, Anders Klöfverstedt moved to Bjuråker in the province of Hälsingland, a small parish 200 km north of Söderbärke and close to the city of Hudiksvall. The parish records of Bjuråker list Anders as “*Skollärare* Anders Gustaf Klöfverstedt,” coming from Söderbärke Parish.⁸ His birth date, birthplace, etc., are all noted, but several words written by the parish priest in the remarks section have been impossible to read and translate.

Before Anders officially registered at the Bjuråker Parish on 28 January 1866, he married Anna Wedmark on 5 January 1866. Anna and her family were longtime residents of Bjuråker Parish. Anna was twenty-seven years old at the time of the marriage. She was born 2 July 1839. Anders was sixteen years her senior and forty-three years of age when they married. I found no evidence that either had been previously married.

⁶ Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Söderbärke Parish (Dala.), AI:16, 1857-1865.

⁷ Moving Out Record (*Utflyttningslängd*), Söderbärke Parish (Dala.), 7 May 1864.

⁸ Moving In Record (*Inflyttningslängd*), Bjuråker Parish (Häls.), 19 January 1866; Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), Bjuråker Parish (Häls.), 1862-1869.

Anna's family, the Wedmarks, had lived in Furuberg in Bjuråker Parish for many generations. Their family history dates back to the year 1590.⁹ Anna was the fifth child of Jonas Wedmark, a farmer and charcoal burner, and his wife Brita Eriksdotter-Rolin. Anna, their only daughter, had four older brothers and one younger. The eldest brother, Johan, died at the age of ten. The second oldest, Per, grew to adulthood in the home, married, and raised a large family in Sweden. Many of Per's descendants still live in the Bergsjö area and have been in contact with American relatives. Erik, the third oldest, immigrated to the United States in 1858, farmed in Iowa, and fought with the Minnesota 4th Regiment in the American Civil War. I have a number of letters he wrote to his brother and parents during his early years in America.¹⁰ Erik remained in America, never married, and annually visited Anna after she immigrated to America in 1900. The fourth eldest, Jonas, apparently stayed in Sweden and the youngest brother, Johannes, died five days after his birth in 1842.

Several children were born to Anna and Anders Klöfverstedt during the years they lived in Bjuråker. The first child, Gustaf Adolf, was born on 22 June 1866. The second child, James Erik, died one week after his birth in 1869, and the third child, Anna Birgitta, died just before her second birthday in 1871. The fourth child was born on 5 May 1872 only a month after her sister's death. She was also named Anna Birgitta (although she was known throughout her life as Anna Brita). Giving a new baby the same name as a deceased sibling was a common practice at that time. Two other children born to the Klöfverstedts in Bjuråker also died in childhood: Pehr Johan, born in 1875, died in 1880, and Emma Kristina, born in 1877, died in 1881. Their last child, named Emma Kristina after her deceased older sister, was born after they moved to their next and final home in Haddungsnäs in Bergsjö Parish. Anders Klöfverstedt was then fifty-eight years old and Anna was forty-two.¹¹

Bergsjö Parish (Häls.) is located about twenty miles northeast of Bjuråker. The family moved to Bergsjö from Bjuråker in 1881 and located in the village of Haddungsnäs, which is located several kilometers outside Bergsjö and actually closer to the village of Hassela. Here their last child, Emma Kristina, was born on 24 March 1881.¹² The Klöfverstedt family now included the father, Anders; his wife, Anna; son, Gustaf Adolf; and daughters Anna Birgitta and Emma Kristina. In Haddungsnäs, Anders raised his family, taught school for young

⁹ Sten Wahlund, *Sveriges släktregister Bjuråker och Norrbro socknar*. Huvudrekaktör (Uppsala, 1949) and *Sverige släktregister: Släkthistorisk samling från Bergsjö (x3) och Hassela (x15) parishes in Gävleborgs län* (Uppsala, 1965).

¹⁰ Thomas Houle, ed. *The Letters of Erik (Wedmark) Young*, 1992 and *Additional Letters of Erik (Wedmark) Young*, 1993. Published privately by the editor.

¹¹ Sten Wahlund, *Sveriges släktregister Bjuråker och Norrbro socknar*: Huvudrekaktör (Uppsala, 1949) and *Sverige släktregister: Släkthistorisk samling från Bergsjö (x3) och Hassela (x15) parishes in Gävleborgs län* (Uppsala, 1965).

¹² Moving Out Record (*Utflyttningslängd*), Bjuråker Parish (Häls.), 18 January 1881; Moving In Record (*Inflyttningslängd*), Bergsjö Parish (Häls.), 20 January 1881.

children, and lectured for the International Order of Good Templars (IOGT), a national temperance organization.¹³



Fig. 1. Photograph of Anders Klöfverstedt given by his wife, Anna, to their grandchildren in the U.S. The date and location of the photograph are unknown. Unfortunately, the bottom half of the studio name was cut off on the original.

¹³ *Bergsjö-Bygden 1950*. Bergsjö Hembygdskommitte. Bergsjö, Sweden.

An elderly resident of Haddungsnäs, Jonas Ejnar Hallberg, now residing in Bergsjö and a descendent of Anna Wedmark's brother Per, has stated that the Baptist church movement was very strong in Haddungsnäs and Anders was asked to teach in the school there. The school building where Anders taught still stands today. Although the building was vacant for many years, its owners have now converted it to a home.

Anna's family, the Wedmarks, were devout Baptists and church records and anecdotal stories indicate that Anders and Anna Klöfverstedt were also active in the Free Church movement that developed in Sweden as a reaction to the Swedish Lutheran Church. For example, a portion of the minutes of the Haddungsnäs Baptist Church for 3 March 1886 (item 4) reads: "on inquiry by the chairman if those present wanted to form their own congregation was answered with unanimous "yes"; those present were the farmer Anders Berglof and housewife Christina; the farmer Jon Persson and housewife Golin; the farmer's housewife Maria Jonsson, born Kamel; [and the] schoolteacher's wife Anna Klöfverstedt, born Vedmark."¹⁴

Similarly, minutes of the Haddungsnäs Baptist Church from a meeting held 3 February 1889 (item 3) include the following: "...was lacking a decision that Sister Anna Klöfverstedt should visit the housewife Karen Ostlin from Ede and speak with her about her relationship with God and the circumstances in the home and the spiritual domain."

Anders's death on 28 January 1900, when he was seventy-seven years of age, is listed in the Bergsjö church records as caused by an inflammation of the bladder (*blåskatarr*).¹⁵ A previous pastor of the church in Hassela, Rev. Karl Akerblom, stated that his records show that Anders died of old age. I know that Anders was buried in Hassela Cemetery on 7 February 1900, but I could not find the burial plot. Why he was buried in Hassela and not Bergsjö is another mystery.

The oldest Klöfverstedt child, Gustaf Adolf, had immigrated to America in 1890 with his wife, Kristine Andersdotter, and daughter, ten years before his father died. Here he adopted a new surname—Raymond. Bergsjö Parish records also show his sister, Anna Brita, and her daughter, Jenny Lydia, first moving to Hassela parish in 1891 and later immigrating to America in 1894, six years prior to her father's death.¹⁶ In the Haddungsnäs Baptist Church roll of members for 1888-1893 is recorded the following: "Anna Brita Klöfverstedt, maid [in] Haddungsnäs, Bergsjö; born 5 March 1872 [in] Bjuråker; baptized 27 August 1894; excommunicated 28 July 1900."¹⁷ In the United States, she married Louis

¹⁴ *Bergsjö-Bygden 1950*. Bergsjö Hembygdskommitte. Bergsjö, Sweden.

¹⁵ *Församlingsbok*, Bergsjö Parish (Häls.); Death Record (*Dödsbok*), Bergsjö Parish (Häls.), 28 January 1900.

¹⁶ Household Examination Rolls (*Husförhörslängder*), Bergsjö Parish (Häls.), A1:17, 1887-1893 and A1:18, 1893-1899.

¹⁷ Folk Archive in Gävleborg, Sweden, letter to author, 3 February 1992.

Swing, also from Sweden. Several children were born to the Raymond and Swing families, who now lived near each other in the Aitkin, Minnesota, area.

Six months after Anders's death, his widow, Anna, and youngest daughter, Emma Kristina, immigrated to America in July 1900. They apparently came at the urging of Gustaf Adolf and Anna Birgitta. In the Haddungsnäs Baptist Church roll of members for 1888-1893 is recorded the following: "Anna Klöfverstedt, school teacher's housewife; born 2 July 1839 [in] Bjuråker; baptized 1857; moved into parish 3 March 1888; moved to America 14 July 1900."¹⁸

After the widow Anna and daughter Emma Kristina arrived in Aitkin, Anna lived with her children the remainder of her life. She never learned the English language or obtained American citizenship. She was an accomplished seamstress who made clothes for her many grandchildren, using her spinning wheel to form the threads to knit and sew clothes for her growing number of grandchildren. She never lived apart from her own children or worked outside of their homes. Anna died in 1937, at age ninety-eight, loved by everyone who knew her. In 1904 Emma, the youngest daughter, who had immigrated to America with her mother, married another immigrant, Jacob Erik Holmbeck (Holmbäck), from Östersund, Sweden. They eventually raised a large family in Aitkin. Emma and Erik are my grandparents and Anders Klöfverstedt is my great-grandfather.

The mysteries of Anders Klöfverstedt's life are many. We still know nothing of his parentage, his education and his early years. Perhaps these and other mysteries may never be solved, but our current knowledge provides a glimpse into an interesting Swedish person. In the past eight years we have opened some doors to understanding Anders Klöfverstedt's past and perhaps the future will find more answers to this interesting man.

Appendix

An article about Anders G. Klöfverstedt was written in 1950 by Linus Bydell of Bergsjö and published in the *Bergsjö-Bygden*, a community historical society newsletter.¹⁹ The complete article, translated by Birgit Brokenleg, then of Sioux Falls (now living in Norway), reads as follows:

A too-well read, unpractical person, the object of contempt and ridicule of all rational, practical and self-serving people, that is what he was, Klöfverstedt. He was a back seat person, school teacher, teetotaler, idealist and writer and this kind of thing that normal people in his surroundings were not, and did not consider sensible and necessary to be.

¹⁸ Folk Archive in Gävleborg, Sweden, letter to author, 3 February 1992.

¹⁹ *Bergsjö-Bygden 1950*. Bergsjö Hembygdskommitte. Bergsjö, Sweden.

It is not an easy task to describe a person of whom one does not know much more than what has been told through hearsay. And even so, these are so interesting, it seems to me, that I cannot but try.

He lived with his family in a little house on a bay in Haddungsnäs. It still exists there today. I should first write down what is said about him by individuals who remember him: He was totally void of any practical talent and fairly lacking in a sense of proportions in such matters. He did not know any of the things that people around him knew regarding administering and caring for himself and his family in those things that, then - as we know now, were part of the lot of someone who lived in a remote place like Bergsjö, and yet, it was his destiny to battle with these things. His house was built for him by his wife's closest relatives so that the family could have a roof over their heads, and they probably had to see to other matters too, as there from time to time was little food to feed the mouths. When there was firewood to be hauled, and Klöfverstedt had hired a horse, there was always a great risk that something wrong would happen. Often he would get stuck in rocks or trunks of trees, and his clumsiness would be apparent, as at other times, in all its ridiculousness.

This is how he was, incapable, untrustworthy. If someone had been put to a cumbersome place in life, it was for certain, Klöfverstedt.

This he also demonstrated in his efforts to get out of his position as a small farmer and all the difficulties connected with it. Whether he had attended a teachers' college or had any kind of similar preparation for teaching is unknown to me. In all probability, he was self-taught, but the fact is, that he did teach school different places. And it is remarkable, that it is being said, that in this respect Klöfverstedt was quite another man. They say that the children in his school caught a new interest in what was being taught, and that they got from him an education that, at the time, was not part of the curriculum. The children got to learn to write certain formulas, yes, he actually tried to teach his pupils some of the foundation of local politics, et al.

Other kinds of refuge from the dreary practicalities were his travels. He went about giving temperance speeches. Whether, in this respect, he did it on his own or was hired by someone, I have not been able to find out. But we know that he stuck to the principles of IOGT [International Order of Good Templars], he was, namely, a Good Templar. The now almost eighty-year-old source of Per August Ostlin, Ede, has told me that when he joined the lodge in Ede Ström, Klöfverstedt was a well-respected official there. How he performed as a speaker I do not know; he might not have been eloquent. But one thing is for sure: He performed far better than he did trying to take care of the small farm (*torp*) at Haddungsnäs.

He died before the turn of the century. We know that by and by there was an auction at the little farm. Among the items sold were a bundle of journals and writings by Klöfverstedt. He is described as a quick and ardent

writer who had a “hard-to-read” style. He wrote a diary and probably a great deal of reflections. Had these writings existed, maybe a richer picture of this special man might have been drawn.

We are told that the bundled writings landed in the hands of some small boys who had fun tearing them apart and letting the parts sail in the nearby bay.

In our day and age the question of the individual's adjusting to life is a topical one. For sure this is not a new problem. In all probability, many a special individual has, in earlier generations, been oppressed by the pressure of maladjustment. Such an original type was, possibly, impersonated in the shape of my unknown friend, Klöfverstedt.

Additional Sources

Several documents were examined in the Swedish regional archives at Ramsele, Stockholm, and Göteborg. A family relative in Sweden provided the family histories of Bjuråker and Bergsjö. The microfilms of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were made available from Salt Lake City through the Family History Center, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Anecdotal information about Anders Klöfverstedt included accounts from six of his grandchildren: Leila (Holmbeck) Andersen, Marguerite (Holmbeck) Houle, David Holmbeck, Adah (Swing) Johnson, Ruth Raymond, and Esther (Raymond) Adams. These grandchildren remembered stories told by their parents, and from their grandmother, Anders's widow, Anna Wedmark Klöfverstedt. Other information was obtained from statements made by relatives and people with historical interests in Bergsjö, Sweden.