

9-1-1992

Are Family Traditions Reliable?

Erik Wikén

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wikén, Erik (1992) "Are Family Traditions Reliable?," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 12 : No. 3 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol12/iss3/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

Are Family Traditions Reliable?

Erik Wikén*

The Augustana annual calendar, *Korsbaneret*, published in Rock Island, IL 1922, contains an obituary of Mrs. Maria Sofia Chilgren (1844-1920), née Stark (pages 273-275). It was written by her son-in-law, J.A. Krantz, Doctor of Theology. He refers to her genealogy in the following manner:

“Mrs. Chilgren was born in Stockholm, Sweden 14 March 1844. Her father was Carl Gustaf Stark, a member of the (Swedish) nobility, and his father, in turn, was a clergyman in the Swedish State Church, who had arrived in Sweden from Russia. The mother, Marie Bernice, née Hallström, was the daughter of a medical doctor in Stockholm named Hallström”.

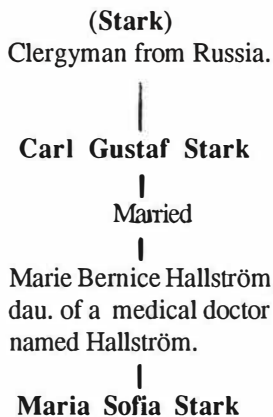
Research has shown that not much of this information is correct. It is true that Maria Sofia Stark was born 14 March 1844, but not in a Stockholm parish, but in Huddinge, located just south of the capital city. The father's name was correctly enough Carl Gustaf Stark, but he was not a member of the noble family Starck. The statement that the grandfather was a clergyman is also a myth. The father, Carl Gustaf Stark, was born in Huddinge 12 April 1813, the son of a former grocer, who had become an innkeeper, named Gustaf Stark, and his barely 18 year-old wife, Christina Charlotta Dahlberg. At the time of Maria Sofia's birth, the father was renting the Länna Inn in Huddinge. According to the Huddinge household examination rolls, the grandfather, Gustaf Stark, was born in the province of Västergötland 6 September 1773 (so far I have been unable to determine which parish).

The information concerning Maria Sofia's mother also proves to be pure fantasy. Her real name was Maria Bernhardina Hafström, born in the Nicolai Parish in Stockholm 19 March 1814, the daughter of Gustaf Hafström, an ornamental sculptor, and his first wife, Brita Christina Broman.¹

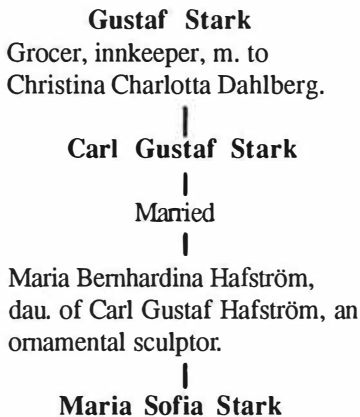
Maria Sofia's genealogy is given here below, first according to her obituary in *Korsbaneret*, and then according to the parish records:²

*Dr. Erik Wikén, a member of SAG's editorial board, resides in Uppsala, Sweden.

Korsbaneret story



Archival sources



The moral of the story is quite clear - never depend on family tradition without checking the original sources.

The information in the obituary states that Carl Gustaf Stark's family, consisting of the couple, three sons and daughter Maria Sofia, emigrated to the U.S. in 1847. This is quite correct. The family received passports from the county office of Stockholm *län* 10 April 1847, i.e. the county in which Huddinge Parish is located.³

The three sons were all born in Huddinge - Gustaf August, 26 May 1840, Carl Philip, 23 April 1842 and Hugo Ludvig, 29 November 1845.

Carl Gustaf Stark's sister, Maria Gustafva Stark, was married to Johan Fredrik Stålhand of Stockholm. His great great grandson, Johan Christoffer Stålhand, also of Stockholm, publishes below a series of four letter from Wisconsin to Sweden, three from Carl Gustaf Stark, himself, of which two are addressed to his sister, Maria Gustafva Stålhand, one to her eldest son, Gustaf Fredrik Stålhand, and the fourth letter being one from Ludvig Theodolf Stålhand, Maria's youngest son, who also emigrated to the U.S., unknown when. The last letter mentions that his maternal aunt Stark (= Maria Bernhardina Stark, née Hafström) died in St. Peter, MN 1 Feb. 1875. This letter also mentions three additional Stark children - Herman, Thilda and Inez, all doubtless born in the U.S.

¹ For further information concerning the life of Carl Gustaf Hafström, see *Svenskt konstnärlexikon*, I-V (Malmö 1952-1967), II, p. 350.

² Parish records in the District Archives of Uppsala and the City Archives in Stockholm.

³ Passport journals of Stockholm *län* (county) in the District Archives of Uppsala.