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Gustaf Schröder's Unknown Son

Kåa Wennberg* and James E. Erickson

Editor's Note: Gustaf Schröder, the legendary Swedish woodsman, hunter and author, was born in Edsvalla Bruk, Nor Parish (Värml.) 6 June 1824, the son of Johan Reinhold Schröder (1791-1835) and Brita Christina Hjelm (1800-1884). In 1869 he married Alma Ericson, who was born 18 May 1849, the daughter of Carl Henrik Ericson (1811-1896) and Johanna Maria Novander (1819-1872). They had six children.

For forty-five years (1842-1887), Gustaf worked for companies in the forests of Värmland and Dalarna. He was variously employed as an ironworks accountant, a lumber mill inspector, a lumber buyer and representative, and a forest manager. He was passionate about hunting and, during his lifetime, killed sixty bears. Schröder began his writing career at the age of sixty-four. By the time of his death in Stockholm 2 August 1912, he had authored twenty-eight books. His literary works included hunting adventures, descriptions of factory life in Värmland, memories of his work in forestry and his life in the outdoors, descriptions of the lives of Swede-Finns in Värmland, and handbooks on hunting and fishing.¹ Readers who would like more information should contact Gustaf Schröder-Sällskapet, Box 133, 671 23 Arvika, Sweden.

In a recently published biography, *Gustaf Schröder* (Bohuslänningens Boktryckeri AB, 1993), author Kåa Wennberg revealed that Gustaf Schröder had an illegitimate son who immigrated to North Dakota. Kåa has kindly given *Swedish American Genealogist* permission to publish an English translation of one chapter, "Schröders okände son," from *Gustaf Schröder*. All of the footnotes, whose intended purpose is to inform, augment and corroborate, have been provided by me.

oOo

Gustaf Schröder worked and was active in western Värmland during most of the 1850s. He returned there in 1862 to participate in a hunting and fishing expedition all the way up to Lake Galten in eastern Norway.² He has told about this adventure in the chapter "Fjällfärd 1862" ["Mountain Journey 1862"] in the book *Minnen från skogarna* [*Memories from the Woods*]. There he writes in part of

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¹ *Svenska män och kvinnor: Biografisk uppslagsbok*, vol. 6, P-Sheldon (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1949), 576.

² Lake Galten (Galtsjöen) is in Hedmark Fylke, Norway.

the chapter: "I was going to show up in Dalby, where the lieutenant lived, on 28 June to continue immediately to Tryssild and Galten."³ A number of other people were also expected to take part "and quite unexpectedly the lieutenant's servant, a young girl, was told to follow in order to take care of the housekeeping during the time we were to stay at the base camp." The girl's name was Lena Andersdotter, born 28 December 1840. She was the daughter of Anders Andersson from Höljes and Karin Eskilsdotter from Gunneby.⁴ Schröder then writes a part of the tale: "The following day, or the 8th, those expected arrived. They had traveled from Tryssild. The same way as we and at approximately the same time. The arrival was celebrated with dinner and this was for sure not a bad one. Lena was better gifted than I had expected." A bit further on Schröder writes: "The lieutenant and Svea made a long trip to Istern, so that Lena and I were left alone at Galten." Towards the end of the chapter can be read: "From Höljes we traveled, with the interruption by boat, to Vingäng in Dalby, where the main road goes to the Finnwoods."⁵ At the lieutenant's home, we went ashore, leaving Lena behind and picking up my wagon."

But the paths of Lena Andersdotter and Gustaf Schröder later came radiantly together....On her own birthday, i.e., 28 December 1866, Lena Andersdotter gave birth to a son, who two days later was christened Emil. From Dalby's *Års-Födelse- och Dopbok* [Annual Birth and Christening Book] can be read: "the mother maid Lena Andersdotter from N[orra] Transtrand—the father said to be G. Schröder [from] Siknäs."⁶ The wording *uppgavs vara* [said to be] means that Gustaf Schröder was the father of the child, but he was most likely not in person with the priest [at the time of the Christening], but instead Lena Andersdotter had a paper signed by Schröder confirming him to be the father. There is no evidence that Schröder later had contact with his son.

Lena Andersdotter gave birth to two additional children, one son named Per, born 1873, and one daughter, Christina Carolina, born 1880, both with different fathers.⁷

³ Dalby Parish (Värm.) is located around the Klar River (Klarälven). Trysil and Galten are villages in Hedmark Fylke, Norway.

⁴ Anders Andersson was b. 17 May 1805 in Höljes, a village in Norra Finnskoga Parish (Värm.). Karin Eskilsdotter was b. 30 March 1808 in Gunneby, a village in Dalby Parish (Värm.). Höljes and Gunneby are both located on the Klar River. Anders and Karin were married in Dalby Parish 9 Nov. 1828 and had the following children (all b. in Norra Transtrand, a village in Dalby Parish): Ingegard, b. 10 Jan. 1833; Ingeborg, b. 9 Nov. 1837; Lena, b. 28 Dec. 1840; Eskil, b. 13 Feb. 1844; and Halvard, b. 25 Oct. 1846. - Dalby Parish (Värm.), Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*). AI:24, 336; Dalby Parish (Värm.), Birth Record (*Födde*), C:6, 51, 28 Dec. 1840.

⁵ Vingäng, a village in Dalby Parish (Värm.), is located on the Klar River.

⁶ Siknäs is a village in Kopparberg County (*län*).

⁷ Lena's illegitimate (*utomäktenskaplig*) son, Per Olsson, was b. in Norra Transtrand 1 Nov. 1873. The Household Examination Roll contains the following note: *Fadr. uppgifv. vara Brads. Olof Persson i Backa* (The father was said to be the farmer Olof Persson from Backa.). Lena's illegitimate

Emil, whose father was named Gustaf, now took the surname Gustafson. As for so many other Swedes at this time, that great land in the west loomed, and Emil decided to immigrate to America. This occurred on 4 May 1888.⁸ His first objective upon arrival was to find a job, which he also did. At first he worked on a farm and there, one can imagine, he made good use of his knowledge from Sweden. Later Emil met a young woman from Örebro, Beda Blomqvist, and they married 4 December 1895.⁹ In all they had eight children. They lived in Drayton, North Dakota.¹⁰ Here Emil worked in transportation of goods from the railway to be forwarded to various destinations.¹¹ At this time, Emil's brother also lived in the United States. He had arrived in 1892 and later also took the name Gustafson.¹²

But the years passed and at the age of fifty-two, on 9 February 1919, Emil Gustafson died. He was buried in the Teien Covenant Church cemetery in Minnesota.¹³ Drayton is located in North Dakota close to the border of Minnesota.

Many years have passed since Gustaf Schröder died, but I believe that he is very pleased to look down from his present hunting ground and, amongst many descendants in the United States, see his great-grandchildren, Scott and James Pearson, out hunting—both dedicated bear hunters!¹⁴

daughter, Christina Carolina Olddotter, was b. in Norra Transtrand 12 March 1880. - Dalby Parish (Värm.), Household Examination Rolls (*Husförhörslängder*), AI:25, 332; AI:26, 349; and AI:27, 378.

⁸ Emil Gustafsson left Dalby Parish for North America 4 May 1888. - Dalby Parish (Värm.), Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), AI:28, 469.

⁹ Beda Carolina Blomquist was b. in Sweden 18 Dec. 1876, the dau. of Gustaf and Mathilda Blomquist. She emigr. from Sweden with her parents in 1880. The family first settled in Chicago, but had moved to Teien Township, Kittson Co., MN by 1885. Beda married Emil Gustafson at Teien Mission (now Covenant) Church. They lived and farmed in Teien Twp. ca. 1895-1909. - 1885 MN Census, Kittson Co., Teien Twp., 225; 1895 MN Census, Kittson Co., Teien Twp., 162; 1900 U.S. Census, MN, Kittson Co., Teien Twp., ED 94, 276B, 277A; 1905 MN Census, Kittson Co., Teien Twp., ED 19, 251.

¹⁰ By April of 1910, the Gustafson family had moved to Drayton, ND, which is just across the Red River from Teien Twp., MN. In the 1910 Census, the family is listed as follows: Gustafson, Emil, head, age 43; Beda C., wife, 33; Myrta, dau., 11; Elmer, son, 9; Willard, son, 7; Gilbert, son, 4; Ester, dau., 1 6/12. In the 1920 Census, the family is listed as follows: Gustafson, Beda, head, age 43; Myrtle, dau. 21; Willard, son, 16; Esther, dau., 10; Harold, son, 8; Doris, dau., 5; Milton, son, 3. - 1910 U.S. Census, ND, Pembina Co., Drayton, ED 143, 212; 1920 U.S. Census, ND, Pembina Co., Drayton, ED 82, 79.

¹¹ Emil worked as a drayman, hauling railroad shipments to local merchants.

¹² Per Olsson left Norra Transtrand for North America 27 Feb. 1892. He is probably identical to the Peter Gustafson who lived in Teien Twp., Kittson Co., MN. - Dalby Parish (Värm.), Household Examination Roll (*Husförhörslängd*), AI:29, 391; 1900 U.S. Census, MN, Kittson Co., Teien Twp., ED 94, 278B; 1905 MN Census, Kittson Co., Teien Twp., ED 19, 260; 1910 U.S. Census, MN, Kittson Co., Teien Twp., ED 79, 40A.

¹³ Emil and Beda are both buried in the church cemetery. Beda died 3 July 1975 at Unity Hospital in Grafton, Walsh Co., ND. She was 96. - Rev. Richard Klawitter, pastor Teien Covenant Church, letter to author, 14 April 1998; *Drayton Express*, 10 July 1975, 16.

¹⁴ Scott and James Pearson are the sons of Donald and Marian Pearson. Marian's mother, Myrtle, was the daughter of Emil Gustafson—the unknown son of Gustaf Schröder.