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Where Was She Born?

Ted Rosvall*

In certain parts of Sweden, e.g. in the provinces of Skåne, Västergötland, Östergötland and Gotland, there is an abundance of very small parishes, small in population as well as in geographical terms. They are so small that they have, almost from the start in the 11th and 12th century, been forced to operate in groups of two, three, four or even more parishes in so called *pastorat*, where there would be one main parish (*moderförsamling*) and one or more sub-parishes (*dotterförsamling* or *annexförsamling*), sharing a minister and perhaps an organist between them.

For genealogists it is somewhat of a bother that they also from time to time shared the church records, so that you will find entries from all parishes mixed in one volume where it is not always possible to determine to which of the parishes the ancestors actually belonged. Another problem is that the main parish in a *pastorat* is very often shown as the place of birth of an individual, even though that person was actually born in one of the sub-parishes. This problem is of vital importance to anyone searching his or her roots in these parts of Sweden, including Americans, who for obvious reasons do not have the same understanding of geographical and clerical subtleties in a foreign country. The following example, even though a bit on the extreme side, serves to illustrate the point.

The object was to find the family and background of one Mrs. Christina Anderson in Chicago, Illinois. Christina was a member of the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Chicago, and in its membership roll (Film No. 153, p 67), the following information is found:

Mrs. Christina Anderson, born 2 September 1825 in Slöta (Skaraborg); died 10 May 1893 in Chicago; arrived 1889 from Hångsdala (Skaraborg). Husband: Johannes Anderson, born 24 February 1825 in Östra Gerum (Skaraborg).

A search of the birth records of Slöta Parish near Falköping yielded nothing. Considering the above-mentioned problem with sub-parishes, an attempt at finding her birth entry in Slöta's sub-parish Karleby was made, but she was not there either.

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Since the family came from Hångsdala Parish in 1889, the next step was to try and find them in the migration roll for that parish, but they were not listed there. Hångsdala does have two sub-parishes though—Östra Gerum and Skörstorp—and it was eventually possible to locate the family in the household examination roll (*husförhörlängd*) of Östra Gerum Parish (1881-1889, p. 134) as residing at Kvarnlyckan. Apart from Christina and her husband, there were two sons listed, as well as his daughter from a previous marriage. There was no information in the household examination roll as to where Christina came from or when, but in the migration roll for Hångsdala Parish in 1860, the following data is provided:

Arrived 21 October 1860; the maid Christina Svensdotter; born Slöta 2 September 1825; from Dimbo Parish; unmarried.

So, off to Dimbo Parish, where we find her working as a maid at Klostergården, with information that she came from Slöta Parish in 1858. Working our way backwards, using migration rolls and household examination rolls alternatively, we find her at Stenbrottet in Slöta (where she is said to have been born in Karleby Parish; something that we had already checked with negative result) coming from Backgården in Karleby Parish in 1856. The information there is that she came from Yllestad Parish in 1852, where she is, of course, not to be found. Yllestad does have two sub-parishes though—Vistorp and Näs—and we do eventually find her at Spakgården in Näs Parish, having arrived there in 1851 from Dimbo Parish. So it is back to Dimbo again, where she is listed at a farm called Stora Holmen. Again, there is no information in the household examination roll as to when and from where she arrived at this place; and, thus, it is only the migration rolls that can help us. Arriving at Dimbo in 1847 from Hångsdala Parish we find the following:

The maid Stina (Christina and Stina are different versions of the same name) Svensdotter; to Klostergården, Dimbo (where "our" Christina had been before).

Checking the household examination roll we do find her there, but with information that she was born 22 March 1829 in Acklinga Parish. So, this was not the right person after all, and we have definitely come to a halt in our search.

What we do know is that she arrived at Dimbo sometime before 1851, and since we know the general area in which she moved, we simply have to check the (exit) migration rolls for all surrounding parishes and see if we can pick up an earlier trace of her. This time-consuming and rather tedious operation eventually pays off. In the migration roll of Hångsdala Parish we find that a maid Christina Nilsson (!) born 3 September 1825 left Starkegården in 1846 headed for Yllestad Parish. It does say "Nilsson" rather than "Svensdotter,"

but the information is close enough for us to want to check the household examination roll.

At Starkegården in Hångsdala Parish we find the maid Christina Svensdotter (so it was a misspelling in the migration roll) who was born 3 September 1825 at Åsaka Parish (!) and had arrived from Åsaka in 1844.

So, here we have a new suggestion as to where she was in fact born. There are five different Åsaka Parishes to choose from, but the only reasonable one is the nearby Vartofta-Åsaka Parish. We check the birth records of that parish, and find the following:

Born 3 September 1825, Christina; daughter of the soldier Sven Ström and Maria Larsdotter at Öjerna.

With this we have finally arrived at the answer to the question in the heading. But we had to travel a long and roundabout way in order to get there, and we had to be on our watch constantly for sub-parishes and the special genealogical problems connected with them.



Falköping and its environs, with special reference to parish boundaries. (Courtesy of the author.)