

6-1-2018

## Murder in Småland in 1809

Elisabeth Thorsell

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

Thorsell, Elisabeth (2018) "Murder in Småland in 1809," *Swedish American Genealogist*. Vol. 38: No. 2, Article 12.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol38/iss2/12>

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](mailto:digitalcommons@augustana.edu).

# Murder in Småland in 1809

## A family tragedy

BY ELISABETH THORSELL

On 25 October 1809, the bailiff (*kronolänsman*) Carl Herlin arrested the farm hand *Andreas Jansson* from Romborna Skattegård in Annerstad (G) for having battered the farmer *Jonas Johansson* to death during the night between October 17 and 18. Andreas had confessed, in the presence of the vicar, the innkeeper, and the farmer Daniel Johansson to having done this. He had also said that Jonas's wife *Märta Andersdotter* had talked him into doing this.

### Testimonies of relatives

Upon hearing this, wife *Märta*, her mother *Sara Månsdotter*, *Märta's* half brothers *Måns* and *Andreas Persson*, and the mother of *Andreas Johansson*, *Catharina Persdotter*, all of them living in the same cottage, were called into court. They were all accused of having helped to hide this crime.

### The autopsy

The medical inspection of the body of *Jonas Johansson* showed that *Jonas* had died alone, but that there was a large contusion over the left eye, his face was blue, he had also received a blow to the mouth, two wounds on his forehead, and three holes in his head, one on top of the head and one on each side. There were many bruises on his body, his back was blue, and the legs blue or brown.

### The neighbors' testimonies

The people of the farm were asked if they had seen any vagrants about, but said no.

*Jonas* did not have an enemy, but he was not popular. The soldier *Patrull*, living nearby, had during the night heard somebody say "Please, dear brother, do not kill me," but had not dared to investigate.

The widow *Anna Israelsdotter*, living in a cottage nearby, had heard somebody say "Well, I hit him a little, but kicked him more." *Märta Andersdotter*, *Jonas's* widow, said that she had been away, trying

to collect money owed to the family, and the children had been with her mother, so her husband had been alone when this happened.

### The confessed murderer's story

*Andreas Johansson*, the confessed killer, a thin and weak-looking man, about 5 feet tall, dark hair and eyebrows, dark blue eyes, and a pointed nose, said that he was just 22 years old, was born in Ryssby parish, and had been farming on his own for two years since his father died. He also said that *Märta* had told him that she was going away and had asked him to beat up *Jonas* so he could not stand on his feet; her mother would leave the key to *Jonas's* house on a windowsill.

In the evening he took the key and went over to *Jonas's* house. On the road he met *Märta's* brother *Måns Persson* and asked him to join him, but *Måns* refused. *Andreas* then took a wooden flail and hit *Jonas*, who had gone to bed, several times. *Jonas* tried to defend himself, but *Andreas* hit him so he fell. *Andreas's* mother *Catharina Persdotter* came and tried to stop him, but did not succeed. At last *Jonas* fled out of the house, but *Andreas* followed and beat him again.

At last *Jonas* fainted, then *Sara Månsdotter* and her sons took him back into his house and put him on the floor and left him. In the morning he was dead, and they cleaned him and changed his clothes and put him to bed, and tried to make it look as if he had died naturally.

### Märta's tale

When *Märta* came home and found that her husband had died, she just said "that is not so bad, I can live with that." Her mother had said many times that she wished somebody would take care of *Jonas*, as he was a mean man and harsh with *Märta* and the children, and also known for pilfering. *Andreas* said that *Jonas* used to steal his

firewood and used bad language.

*Märta* absolutely denied having asked *Andreas* to beat up her husband, but *Andreas* said she had asked him several times to kill *Jonas*.

She had not promised a reward for doing this, but had said that if her husband died, she would marry *Andreas*.

On October 30 *Märta*, after many talks with the pastor *Lingh*, confessed to having enticed *Andreas*, having had intercourse with him, and she had often wished her husband dead.

### The sentences in the Häradsrätt

On 3 November 1809 *Andreas* was sentenced to losing his right hand and be beheaded.

*Märta* was sentenced to the same punishment.

Her mother *Sara Månsdotter* was fined 25 *dalers* and her sons 15 *dalers* for having helped to cover up the crime. If they could not pay, *Sara* was to be flogged by 13 pairs, and the sons would spend 12 days on water and bread in prison.

*Andreas's* mother *Catharina Persdotter* was released without punishment, as she could not be supposed to give evidence against her son. The death sentences were then sent to Göta Court of Appeal (*Göta Hovrätt*) for approval (those records were not searched).



Annerstad church, built in 1823.

## The victim

*Jonas Johansson*, born 2 Feb. 1750 in Läsaryd, Södra Ljunga (G), son of Johan Torkelsson and his wife Maria Jonsdotter.

Died 17 Oct. 1809 in Romborna Skattegård, Annerstad (G).

Married 1<sup>st</sup> 26 Dec. 1775 in Södra Ljunga to Karin Zachrisdotter, born 5 Dec. 1751 in Södra Ljunga, died 15 Nov. 1796 in Läsaryd, Södra Ljunga.

Married 2<sup>nd</sup> 4 Oct. 1797 in Södra Ljunga to *Märta Andersdotter*, born 2 Aug. 1779 in Bökhult in Pjätteryd (G), daughter of cavalry soldier Anders Björkman and his wife *Sara Månsdotter*. (Anders died in 1783 and Sara remarried in 1784 to saltpeter boiler (*salpetersjudare*) Per Björnlund, with whom she had sons *Anders Persson* and *Måns Persson*).

## Märta Andersdotter

She was arrested immediately after the murder of her husband, and sent to Växjö jail. On 3 Nov. 1809 she was sentenced to be executed, but as all death sentences had to be sent to the Göta Court of Appeal (*Hovrätt*) for review, she was pardoned and instead given the verdict of spending the rest of her life in prison. On 19 July 1810 she was transferred to Norrköping female prison where she was to stay for the rest of her life.

She is recorded in the church records of Norrköping female prison, and seems to have been a well-behaved prisoner, maybe a little too fond of hard liquor. In 1820 she is mentioned as going regularly to Holy Communion, and is even given a book of hymns for her good behaviour. She is later in charge of the kitchen in the prison and is also caring for sick women.

In 1839 she is suspected of stealing yarn and other small items, with the goal of selling them to other inmates, but nothing could be proved.

Every 10 years or so she sent in an application to the King to be released from the prison, but is denied this. However she gets a pardon 4 Nov. 1844, and a moving permit, but it does not say where she goes. She had a married daughter, Brita (born in 1798), in Södra Ljunga, and another one, Catharina (born in 1803), in Ryssby (G), and a married son, Johan Magnus Broberg (born in 1806) who had lived in Norrköping, but was now dead.

So there are more things to research about Märta.

## The murderer

*Andreas Jansson*, born 19 Sep. 1789 in Överåkra, Ryssby (G), the son of Jaen Haraldsson and his wife Catharina Pers-

dotter. In 1800 the family moved to Södra Ljunga, and then to Annerstad, where the rather bad household records do not seem to mention them.

According to Märta's prison records he was executed, probably in 1810, but not yet found in any death record.

To find his execution is a future project.

**Editor's note:** Dates about people are found in the church records, but here the Index of the Kronoberg Genealogical Society have been used, known as the *KGF Database*.

The court proceedings about the murder of Jonas Johansson has been found in the records of Sunnerbo District court (*Häradsrätt*), volume A1a:159.

The records for 1809 are not yet digitized, so the original record, kept in the Regional Archives at Vadstena, Sweden, have been used.

The prison records for Märta are found at *Kriminalvårdsanstalten i Norrköping* (E) DIIfd1:2 (1815-1823) Image 300 / Page 1; *Kriminalvårdsanstalten i Norrköping* (E) DIIfd1:2 (1815-1823) Image 300 / Page 1; *Kriminalvårdsanstalten i Norrköping* (E) DIIfd1:4 (1837-1846) Image 240.

N:1046	Anders Märta	26. Vexjö	Anders	delaktighet i sin mords mord.	2. 1810.	af.	ab.
Kriminalvårdsanstalten i Norrköping (E) DIIfd1:1 (1792-1818) Image 280 / Page 2 (Arkiv Digital)							

The first notice about Märta Andersdotter in the Norrköping prison records. From the left: her prison number, her name, from where she came (Vexjö), what härad she was born in (Sunnerbo), what parish she was born in [says Annerstad, should be Pjätteryd], what her crime was [delaktighet i sin makes mord] taking part in the murder of her husband, and her sentence: life in prison, and the date she came to the prison.

## The capital punishment in Sweden

The 1734 Law of Sweden stated the death penalty for many crimes, including treason, mutiny, having intercourse with animals, arson, murder, battering parents, infanticide, poisoning, breaking and entering, highway robbery, and rape.

All death penalties were sent to the Court of Appeal (*Hovrätt*) for review, and could be changed to milder punishment.

Capital punishment was abolished for all crimes committed in peacetime on 30 June 1921, and including those committed in time of war, on 1 January 1973.

## Republication

An article entitled "Disappearing Swedes, Case 1" was published in the December 2017 issue of the *Swedish American Genealogist*, with Dr. Martha J. Garrett, Certified Genealogist®, shown as the author.

Unfortunately, changes made to the original manuscript during the editorial process had accidentally introduced errors that significantly affected the quality of the work. We regret this, and have therefore decided to republish the article, in expanded form and with full references. It will appear in the September, 2018 issue of SAG. The remaining articles in Dr. Garrett's series about disappearing Swedes will also be published by SAG in that format.

On behalf of the SAG editor and the editorial committee  
*Dag Blanck, Director, Swenson Center and Publisher of SAG*