

Historical Information on August Johnson and Lydia Helin and their families.

Part One: THEIR SWEDISH ROOTS

Introduction:

August Johnson and his two sisters Anna and Lydia immigrated to the USA and raised their families here. Their siblings Johannes, Ida and Maria stayed in Sweden and raised their families there. August and his sister Lydia both settled in Western Washington and raised their families there. The pages which follow give some historical information on the two families of August and Lydia.

August said to the family in Sweden as he was leaving, "Well, I don't know how long before I'll be back, but I might be able to stick it out 5 years in America."¹ But he never returned to Sweden. (Nor did his children. It waited for his grandchildren to make this trip.)

August's Family

August W. Johnson is the firstborn in a family of seven children.²

August's Parents and Grandparents:

August's father, Johan Johannesson, was born Sept 6, 1835 in Grevamåla, a village in Linneryd³ parish, in Småland, in Sweden.⁴

Johan's parents were Johannes Matteusson and Maria Håkansdotter. At the time Johan was born, they owned a small farm in the village of Grevamåla.

Johannes first married Martha Carlsdotter and had four children, Gustaf, Helena, Peter, and Maria. Martha died at age 26 in 1830 leaving Johannes with the four children, aged 8 months to 6 years.

In 1834, he married Maria. Johannes was 33 years old and Maria was 30 when Johan was born in 1835.

In 1837 a brother, August was born. The parish records indicate that Johan's older siblings knew how to read and write. In 1840 the family moved to the village of Bro in the same parish. In 1844, the brother August died at 7 years of age. Over the next few years as was common in those days, the older siblings moved away from home to work on neighboring farms.

In 1846 something serious happens and Johan (age 11) and his parents move. Their move is forced for economic reasons. They are destitute and move to a "torp" in the village of Rolsmo, also in Linneryd parish. Johan told his children many years later that the creditor had mistreated his parents.⁵

A torp is a very small farm, usually a small house with a patch of cultivated ground around it. ⁶ Today this site still has only a small cleared area. And in the cleared area is a huge rock sticking above the ground. Nearby are huge piles of stones no doubt removed from this clearing through the years with back breaking labor. They had four cows here, but compared to today, they would have given very little milk each. They had no horses, so would use the cows to pull a cart, etc.⁷

Aug 26, 1860 Johan, age 25, married Helena Petersdotter, age 26. She is the daughter of Peter Magnusson and Maria Carlsdotter and as a girl lived in Skällholmsryd, Hovmantorp parish. She moved to Johan's home in Rolsmo and they took over there from his parents and cared for them. Their place in Rolsmo was called Jemnshög⁸ in the church records at that time.

August's early years in Sweden:

August Wilhelm Johansson was born Feb 18, 1861.

His sister Ida Charlotta was born March 21, 1863. His sister Lydia was born Nov 12, 1865. When August was 7, his grandfather Johanes Matteusson died, 66 years old of "chest-influenza". A few months later his sister Maria Elisabeth was born, July 8, 1868.

In 1868 there was a famine in Sweden. It was a very dry year. The leaves fell from trees in the middle of summer, instead of waiting till the Fall.

His sister Anna was born May 1, 1871. His brother Johannes was born Jan 29, 1874.

In 1876 at the age of 15, August was confirmed in Linneryd parish. (He was the only child in the family confirmed in this church since they moved.)

That same year, he and his family moved to a different village in this same parish, the village of Heddamåla.⁹ Here his father Johan leased a farm at first, and then later purchased it. The amount of cleared land on this farm today is a lot more than on the one in Rolsmo.

The village of Heddamåla is near the Eastern border of the parish of Linneryd and is much closer to the parish church of Ljuder than to the parish church of Linneryd. Church records show that his siblings attended confirmation classes in Ljuder even though the records were recorded in Linneryd. From now on, the family worshipped in the Ljuder parish church rather than Linneryd whenever they were able to go to the parish church.¹⁰ (We were told when we visited the Ljuder church that in the old days there was a special group of stalls for the horses of worshippers from the village of Heddamåla. These were needed to protect the animals from the cold, etc, during the service.)

His brother Carl Albin was born Dec 26, 1876. But only 4 months later he died.

His sister Ida was confirmed in 1878 at the age of 15. His sister Lydia was confirmed May 14, 1881 at the age of 15.

In 1882 two events are recorded. August was now 21 years of age. His grandmother Maria died May 12, 1882 at the age of 77. She had been living with the family. August was drafted for military service of probably one month. He was drafted again the following year for another month.

In 1883 his sister Maria was confirmed at the age of 15. Two years later in 1885 she moved to work temporarily on a farm in another village. She returned in 1886. That same year his sister Anna was confirmed at the age of 15.

"Maria¹¹ was able to get education for employment in the agricultural industry. She became a dairy-manageress and was employed in a bigger estate owned by a nobleman in Skåne, the province south of Småland. During that time she was in a stage of awakening to become a true Christian and lived in spiritual unrest. As the young people around her urged her to join them in feasts and dancing in the mansion, she answered them, 'I won't join you. I will stay in my room, weep and pray.'

"After some time, when she returned home, a revival was going on particularly among young people, and Maria came to a living Christian faith that never left her."

In 1887 August got a certificate of change of domicile to move to Tjurkö in the small archipelago outside the town of Karlskrona, about 50 miles Southeast. This was probably intended for a job. But he changed his mind and didn't move.

In 1889 his brother Johannes was confirmed at age 15. That same year his sister Ida moved to the neighboring parish of Ljuder.

Ivan told us that during this time, August worked some times for a Glass factory in the area, cutting and hauling wood for their operation.

Maria met among the awakened young people a young man, Karl Augustsson. Karl and Maria married in 1890. They were blessed with a long and happy marriage and raised a big family. The house they moved to in Åkerby was previously owned by one of the itinerant preachers who helped in the revival in that area.

Karl's sister Emma Augustsdotter married August's brother Johannes some years later.

April 17, 1891, August left for the USA.

Annie's Family¹²

Her father, Johan Gustaf Johannisson, was born in Ljuder parish June 14th, 1830. Her mother, Ingrid Katrina Davidsdotter, was born in Ekeberga parish Feb 18th, 1836. Their firstborn, Johannes, was born on their farm in Vide in Ljuder parish, June 24th, 1855. They were married the following year. Additional children were born: Frans August - April 16th, 1857, Karl Aron Dec 5th, 1859, and Helena - Nov 7th, 1862.

When Annie was born Jan 24th, 1866, they were still on the farm in the village of Vide in Ljuder parish. She was named Johanna at birth.¹³ In March of that year, her mother was ill and was treated at the hospital.

Annie's grandfather, David Pettersson (her mother's father) lived with the family. When Annie was 6 months old, he remarried. His second wife was 13 years younger than he was.

Nov 17th, 1868 her brother Alfred was born. Her sister Amanda Charlotta was born Feb 18th, 1871. (Same birthday as her mother.)

When Annie was 10 years old, her grandfather died at the age of 71. (May 24, 1876) (Many years later, in 1905, she named her third son, my father, David. I assume she named him after her grandfather. And when I was born I was also named David, after my father.) Later that year, the last member of the family was born: a sister, Hulda Mathilda. (Nov 12th, 1876)

Two years later, in 1878, when Annie was 12 and her oldest brother, Johannes was 23, he moved (in March) to the neighboring parish of Linneryd. In June of that same year, her brother Karl, at the age of 18 left from Gothenburg for the USA. His destination was Stillwater Minnesota. Though he was the first of the family to go to the United States his departure began a trend in this family. 3 years later, her brother Frans left for the USA in April of 1881.

Also in 1881, Annie was confirmed in the Ljuder parish church. Though we did not find records for two of her siblings, we believe that each member of the family was confirmed. ¹⁴(At this time in Sweden, it was nearly compulsory for each child to be confirmed. This usually took place at the age of 15 or 16.)

Nov 23rd, 1885, when Annie was 19, she moved to the parish of Hovmantorp to work. She worked as a housekeeper on the farm of Nils O.M. Tegner. She stayed there about a year before returning home. The following March her sister Helena left for the USA also. Two years later, in April of 1888, her brother Alfred also went to the USA. A year later, in April of 1889, her sister Amanda died at the age of 18. By this time, only Annie and her youngest sister Hulda were still at home on the farm with their parents.

In December of 1889, her brother Frans returned from North America and a couple months later he married and took over his father's farm in Vide. In Sept of 1890, Annie, her 14 year old sister Hulda, and her parents moved to Vide Lillegard, another place in the same village.

A few months later, April 17th, 1891 Annie left for the USA, going to Stillwater Minnesota where the other members of her family had settled in the States. On the same ship was August, with a destination of Tacoma Washington. Annie is now 25 years of age.

Revival in the area of Sweden where August lived:

For many years home meetings were required to have a permit from the parish church officials. In 1858 a new law was passed declaring such meetings legal. Prior to this change, some people left Sweden to go to the USA or other places motivated by a search for religious freedom.

Johannes, August's brother who stayed in Sweden, spoke of his own conversion on a tape which still exists.¹⁵ He spoke of preachers who moved from home to home, holding home meetings. It was in such a meeting that he came to true Faith. He speaks of these meetings having been held in the 1880s when

August would still have been home. He describes it as people being "awakened" spiritually. It was characterized by prayer and good singing also. (Johannes played the accordion.) Lydia had two (words only) song books which were used in these meetings, which she brought with her to this country.¹⁶

The revival in that area of Småland began a group known as EFS which established "Prayer Chapels" around the parish. The English name of EFS is "The Swedish Evangelical Mission". These EFS groups continued to use these prayer chapels for a number of years and remained on a friendly basis with the Lutheran State Church, supplementing the services of the State parish church with Bible Studies, Prayer meetings, and Youth Activities in these Prayer Chapels. The EFS groups also sent missionaries to Africa and India. Family members in Sweden, recall that Maria and her husband Karl, and Johannes and his wife Emma and their families were very active in the EFS groups after August left. Some of their descendants are still active in EFS today.¹⁷

Since Maria's conversion was in about 1886 when she was 17 and August (25) was still in Sweden, it is logical that the same revival meetings which had an impact on Maria, would have a similar impact on August. He certainly had a true "living faith" later in life, and I conclude that this was it's source.

The Swedish Hymn writer, Lina Sandell Berg, whom many call the Swedish Fanny Crosby, was a member of EFS. Her two best known songs in the US (which were translated from the Swedish) are: "Day by Day and with each passing moment", and "Children of the Heavenly Father". She is from a little different area than our roots are found in. Many of her hymns are still used in the Swedish hymn book today.¹⁸

Where did August and Annie meet?

There isn't any church record, nor clear recollection by anyone which answers this question. The only fact in the records is that both August and Annie left Sweden on the same ship on April 17th, 1891. There were 100 others on this ship with them, and their two names appear adjacent to each other in the exit register.¹⁹

This clue suggests that they knew each other prior to this departure for the USA. It seems probable to me that they met at the Ljuder parish church, since they would both have worshipped in that same church, whenever they attended the parish church.²⁰

Written 7/95 Revised 9/97 by David S. Johnson
 Printed 9/23/97

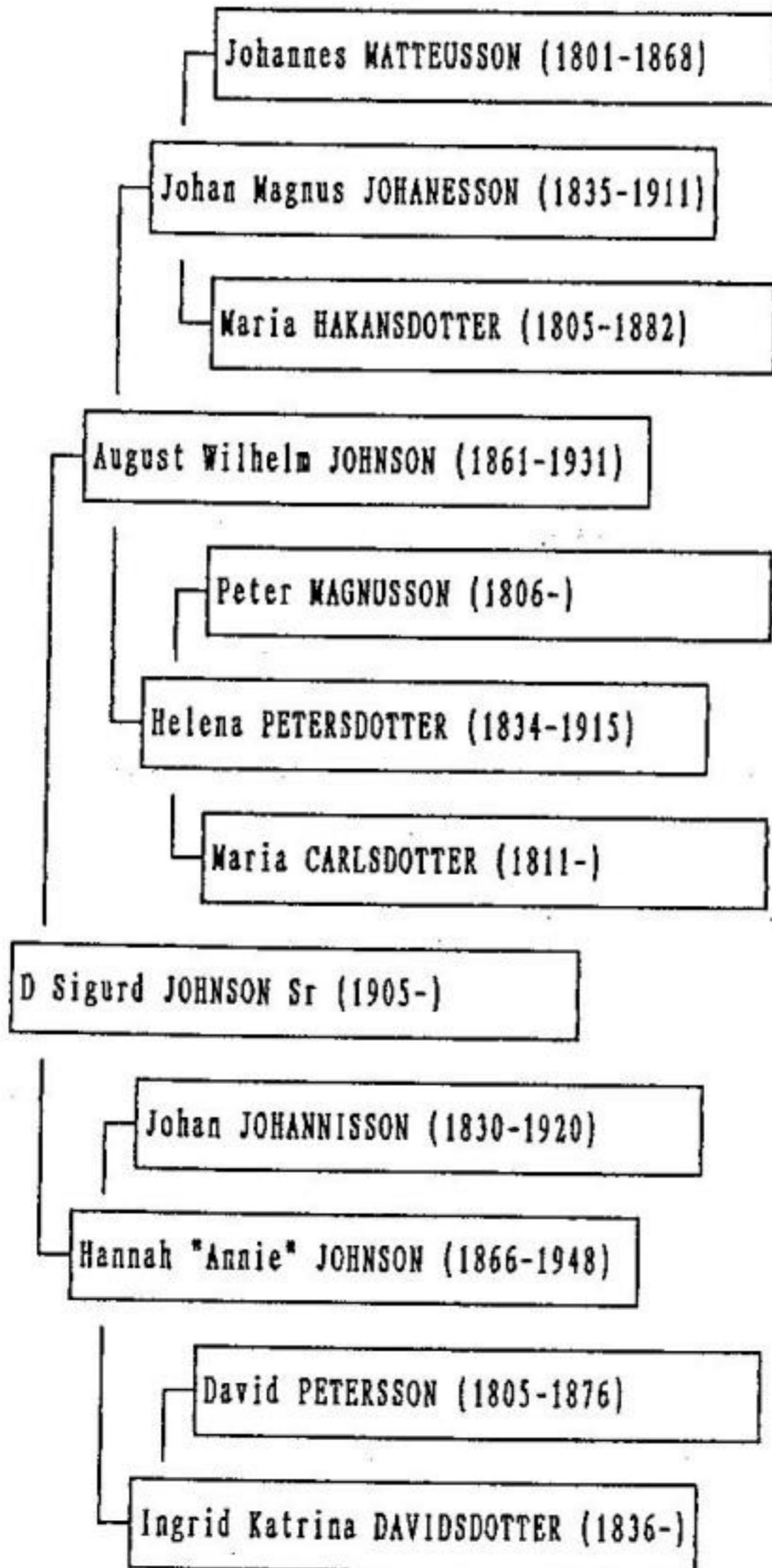
FOOTNOTES:

¹ Aunt Emily recalled that her father told them he had said this.

² This Section is like the "begats" in Mathew's Gospel. The chart below may clarify this a little. The top portion is a diagram of my father's ancestors on his father, August's, side and the bottom portion is a diagram of his ancestors on his mother, Annie's side.

Ancestors of D Sigurd JOHNSON Sr

18 Aug 1996



³ Definitions of the terms: village, parish, county, and province. (As used for divisions in the country of Sweden.)

Sweden uses two different **types** of divisions for their country. The name, "Småland" is from the first type of division. "Småland" is the name most commonly used for the area of Sweden where August's roots are found. This is a designation for the geographical area. Such an area is sometimes referred to as a "province" or "landskap". This is not a significant division for government or administrative purposes. It is simply a designation for an area which is similar to terms like "the Puget Sound area" used in Western Washington State.

The second type of division is for government or administrative purposes. These are called a "county" or "län". Småland includes three such "counties", including Kronoberg which is where all the places in this historical account are found.

Each county is divided into many parishes. The Lutheran Church is the State Church of Sweden. Each church parish includes a church and the area around it. The church in each parish has a house next door where the pastor lives, a cemetery adjacent to the church, etc. Each parish has many small villages in it. Each village is usually just a few houses. This account mentions locations in the two parishes of Linneryd and Ljuder which are adjacent to each other.

See the map in the Supplement which shows the relationship between the Swedish "provinces" and "counties".

⁴ Much of the information on August's and Annie's background in Sweden comes from the Church records in Sweden. Swedish law required that these church records be kept by clergymen in all Swedish parishes beginning in the last part of the seventeenth century. Although several records have been destroyed by fire, etc, most of them still exist. Today, these have all been microfilmed and are readily available in research centers in Sweden and the USA. Normally such records are very reliable on which persons actually live in a village, a city, etc. (They may not be as accurate on details of who owns the property or the spelling of names.)

The places mentioned in this account are villages, with only a few people living in each of them. The ancestors mentioned here moved several times. But all the places mentioned can be found within a circle with a radius of approximately 10 miles.

These church records were researched by Ivan Johansson (Grandson of Johannes, August's brother), and translated into English for me in 1994.

⁵ Ivan has a tape which includes this story which his grandfather Johannes, (youngest brother of August W. Johnson) is telling 100 years later to his son Lage, Ivan's father. Johannes was upset at how the creditor had mistreated his grandfather. No doubt Johannes had heard this story from his father, Johan, in his early years.

A few of the details in this account come from things Johannes tells Lage on this tape.

⁶ Molly and I visited this spot in April '94. None of the original buildings remain. Ivan chatted with the present owners who told him that the present house stands where the original house stood.

⁷ Lage, Ivan's father said that there was a problem in using cows to pull a cart. They had no brakes!! They couldn't stop. And he told of he and his brother having the yoke of cows with a cart loaded with potatoes. They didn't have permission to do this, and the cart got away from them and tipped over, scattering potatoes all over!!

⁸ Present spelling is Jämshöid. This means something like "the heights". It was called this by the family since it was on top of a little hill.

⁹ We also visited this spot in April '94. This farm no longer belongs to any of the descendants of Johan. None of the original farm buildings remain but the present owners were very cordial. They pointed out trees planted by the family and where the house had stood.

¹⁰ We attended Sunday morning worship service in this Ljuder parish church Easter Sunday morning in April, 1994. The church building that stands there today was built before August and Annie were born.

¹¹ These two paragraphs of detail come from Ingrid, the youngest daughter of Maria, in Sweden. David and Molly visited her and her husband in March 1994 and stayed overnight there two nights.

¹² These facts come from the Ljuder church records.

¹³ I call her "Annie" in this account, since that is what she was known as here in the States. But the church records all refer to her as "Johanna" in Sweden.

¹⁴ The church records show that her brother Johannes was confirmed in 1871, Carl-Aron in 1875, Helena in 1878, Alfred in 1883, and Hulda in 1891. Though we didn't find the exact date, Frans August and Amanda were no doubt confirmed also, probably at the age of 15.

¹⁵ Ivan Johansson has a tape of his father, Lage, interviewing, Johannes, (Ivan's grandfather), August's brother. The tape is the reel to reel type and is almost 40 years old now. It is about a 45 minute interview. I listened to a few minutes of it, but it's all Swedish, of course, so Ivan was translating for me.

¹⁶ These books were passed on to me by her son, Herbert, in 1996.

¹⁷ Ivan recalls that when he was a boy (1940's) he and his parents attended an EFS "prayer house" regularly and only got to the State Church occasionally. Once a year the pastor from the parish church