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Brodd-Jonas and Brodd-Märta: Two Bishop Hill Colonists Identified

Erik Wikén*

Brodd-Jonas and Brodd-Märta were two followers of Erik Jansson in Bishop Hill, IL, who so far have been unidentified. They are to be found in both Swedish and American sources and the results of this research are presented here.

Brodd-Jonas is said to have escorted Erik Jansson in the company with another person from Ovanåker Parish to the neighboring parish of Alfta (both of them in Gävleborg *län*), in order to elude pursuers.¹

In the United States we meet Brodd-Jonas first in a letter from Otto Stenberg, dated New York 23 May 1847². After having discussed the crossing aboard the vessel *New York*, Stenberg relates, how immediately after the arrival in New York in March 1847, two of Erik Jansson's apostles came on board in order to lead the incoming passengers to the quarters assigned to an earlier group of arrived Janssonists, who, because of the winter weather, had had to remain in New York. Here the two apostles carried on a reign of terror, according to Stenberg. The two were Anders Andersson³ from Torstuna Parish (Väst.) and a person whom Stenberg calls at times Brodd-Jonas, at other times Hansson.

Next we meet Brodd-Jonas in a letter written by Anders Larsson⁴, dated Chicago 1 Aug. 1850 and published in the newspaper *Aftonbladet* in Stockholm 2 Nov. 1850. Larsson relates that after the murder of Erik Jansson 13 May 1850, Fiskra-Anders⁵ and Brodd-Jonas in addition to the widow of the sect leader, Anna Sophia, had taken over the leadership of the colony. At the end of the letter Anders Larsson adds the news that Brodd-Jonas now was dead, one of the first victims of the cholera epidemic which had struck Bishop Hill.

* * *

Per Niclas Lundquist, clergyman of the chapel at Maråker Mill in Söderala Parish (Gävl.), and who had been quite critical of Erik Jansson's activities in Hälsingland, tells of an unmarried woman from the Brodd area in Bollnäs, who was an enthusiastic follower of Jansson, but he does not mention her name.⁶ Later writers refer to her as Brodd-Märta.⁷

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In the United States we first meet Brodd-Märta in Daniel Londberg's letter, dated Galesburg, IL 30 Oct. 1849.⁸ He writes here:

“Hedin is alive and is married to someone called Brodd-Martha from Bollnäs.”

In the Henry County Marriage Records we learn that Nils Hedin married Marta Hanson (according to American practice the *-son* of the patronymic was used instead of the *-dotter*) 16 July 1848.⁹ From the Bishop Hill Register we learn that Nils Hedin's wife Marta was b. 1817.¹⁰

* * *

The information concerning these two discussed persons is rather sketchy, but from it we can deduce the following facts:

Brodd-Jonas' patronymic was Hansson.

Brodd-Marta had Hansdotter as her patronymic and she hailed from Bollnäs and was b. 1817.

Brodd-Marta (Hansdotter from Bollnäs, b. 1817) cannot be anyone else but Margta, b. in Hamre, Bollnäs Parish (Gävl.) 18 May 1817, dau. Hans Jonsson and Kerstin Jansdotter. She received a passport in Gävle 27 June 1846 and is doubtless identical to Martha Ransdotter (sic!), 30 years old, who arr. in New York aboard the *Wilhelmina* 21 Sept. 1846.¹¹

The appellative Brodd- she shares with Brodd-Jonas (Hansson) and this fact would indicate that they were siblings. Brodd-Jonas is then Hans Jonsson's and Kerstin Jansdotter's oldest child, the s. Jonas, b. in Bollnäs 25 Aug. 1812, who emigr. from Ovanåker Parish 1846 where he had moved the year before and received a passport in Gävle 18 July 1846. He cannot with certainty be located on any of the extant passenger manifests, but he was present in New York, as mentioned above, when the vessel *New York* arr. in March 1847.

Brodd- is tied to the local name of Broddlägret in Bollnäs Parish, the name of an area which belonged to Hamre village, from which the siblings came. Broddlägret area had its name from a soldier by the name of Brodde.¹²

It should also be mentioned that in addition to the siblings Jonas and Marta, their mother, Kerstin Jansdotter, also emigrated with the permission of her husband, Hans Jonsson. She received a passport in Gävle 7 Oct. 1846 and arr. in New York in March 1847 aboard the vessel *New York*.¹³ When her husband, Hans Jonsson d. in Bollnäs 1856, it was recorded in the parish register that his wife in the United States probably was dead.

In 1847 Marta's married twin sister, Christina Hansdotter, together with two children, but without her husband, Mårten Olsson, emigrated. She received a passport in Gävle 16 June 1847. She was m. in Bishop Hill 1849 to Nils Gustaf Hållander (his second marriage).¹⁴ In 1847 another child of Hans Jonsson and Kerstin Jansdotter emigrated, namely the son Jon Hansson, b. 11 Nov. 1814. He, like his sister, Christina, received a passport in Gävle 16 June 1847.

Notes

- ¹Interview with an old member of the Bishop Hill Colony in *The Bishop Hill Colony Papers and Post Colony Papers 1843-1903*, microfilm in the Swedish Emigrant Institute, Växjö, roll No. 1.
- ²O.S. (=Otto Stenberg), *Erik-Jansismen i Nordamerika, eller beskrifning om Erik-Jansarnes tillstånd derstädes, samt resan dit med skeppet New York* (Söderhamn 1847). On Stenberg see Nils William Olsson, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820-1850* (Stockholm & Chicago 1967) (*SPANY*), p. 147, n. 14.
- ³*SPANY*, p. 81, n. 5.
- ⁴*SPANY*, p. 92-93, n. 69. See also reference to the same letter in my article on Erik Root in this issue (page 178).
- ⁵*SPANY*, p. 137, n. 55.
- ⁶P.N. Lundqvist, *Erik Jansismen i Helsingland*. Historisk och dogmatisk framställning jemte vederläggning af läran (Gefle 1845), p. 31.
- ⁷Emil Herlenius, *Erik Jansismens historia*. Ett bidrag till kännedomen om det svenska sektväsendet (Jönköping 1900), p. 22.
- ⁸Daniel Londberg, *Nytt bref från Amerika om Erik Jansarnes tillstånd derstädes* (Söderhamn 1850). Concerning Londberg see *SPANY*, p. 199, n. 46.
- ⁹*SPANY*, p. 105, n. 47.
- ¹⁰The Bishop Hill Register from the 1850s, p. 74 in *The Bishop Hill Colony Papers*, microfilm roll No. 2.
- ¹¹*SPANY*, p. 101, n. 13.
- ¹²J. E[rik] Blomberg, *Bollnäs 2*. Historia (Bollnäs 1961), pp. 19, 39, 47, 52, 54, 104; Paul H. Elmen, *Wheat Flour Messiah*. Erik Jansson of Bishop Hill (Carbondale & Edwardsville, IL 1976), *passim*, changes the *Brödd*- in the sources to *Bröd*- (which in Swedish means bread); he thus identifies his Bröd-Jonas with Jonas Malmgren (*SPANY*, p. 103, n. 27), whom he makes into a baker, when in fact he was a miller; Elmen calls Bröd-Mårta a dau. of Malmgren—but the latter never had dau. by that name.
- ¹³*SPANY*, p. 145, n. 5.
- ¹⁴*SPANY*, p. 111, n. 78; The Bishop Hill Register from the 1850s, p. 79.

Charles XII in America

In the fall of 1826 one of the earliest Swedish visitors to the United States, Carl August Gosselman, a Swedish naval officer, set out for Niagara Falls, in order to visit this famous natural wonder.¹ He journeyed from New York City to Albany via the Hudson River, then via the Erie Canal to Rochester, NY, and then by stage coach to Lewiston, NY, a short distance from the Falls.

In the morning he met his driver, a young brash American farmer, who in his newly-bought phaeton, was to take him to his final destination. In the course of the journey from Lewiston to Niagara Falls, the young American informed Gosselman that he had been chosen to play the lead role in a play about Charles XII of Sweden. When he learned that Gosselman was Swedish, his enthusiasm knew no bounds, and began querying his fare about Charles XII and how the Swedish warrior king was dressed. Gosselman, astounded to find a play about the Swedish king about to be performed in rural America, did his best to supply the young man with the pertinent information, including helping to shear his long locks, so that he would be more in character with the Swedish king, who wore his hair short, without the customary periwig.

Gosselman does not elaborate on the authorship of the play, which remains a mystery, since Planché's play, *Charles XII of Sweden*, was not written until 1828, two years later.²

¹Carl August Gosselman, *Resa i norra Amerika*. I-II (Nyköping 1835), I, pp. 175-180.

²James Robinson Planché, *Charles XII of Sweden* (London 1828).