My Swedish and Danish Great-Great Grandparents

by Lars Peter Hansen (prepared with the assistance of Grace Tsiang)¹

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In late August, while travelling to give academic lectures in Copenhagen and Odense, I explored places where my great-great grandparents lived before immigrating to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. This was possible due to the wonderful assistance of Timothy R. Tangherlini of UCLA, Mogens Kragsg Jensen of Southern Danish University Library (SDUB), and Mats Pettersson of Kristianstad in Sweden. With their help, using Danish and Swedish archives of census and church records, we found addresses of relatives who came from villages near Kristianstad in Skane, Sweden, as well as from villages north of the Danish city of Odense on the island of Fyn. Thanks to all their help and the excellent record keeping, we found the parish churches and villages where my great-great grandparents were born, worked, or were married. My wife Grace and my mother-in-law Hsitsin Tsiang joined me as we explored some of these locations.

I start with some quick history. My sixteen great-great grandparents all spent time as adults in Cache Valley, Utah, where both of my parents were born. Of the sixteen, seven were born in Denmark and two in the southern portion of Sweden, a region that has had strong historical ties to Denmark. Four of the nine come from my mother’s side of the family and five from my father’s side. During my time in Denmark and Sweden I visited locations where four of the nine resided.

Part I. Roots in Skane, the south of Sweden

Mats Pettersson, now retired from work in public economics and education, has a hobby of studying genealogy and local history in the territory of Skane in southern Sweden. Being born and raised in this area, he provided us with both a substantial Toolson/Tulson family history and a personal guided tour of places with family ties. Mats Pettersson showed us places important to the grandparents of Syble Toolson, my paternal grandmother.

I was lucky enough to know my grandmother, particularly after my family moved to Utah when I was about to turn 16. My grandmother had an important indirect influence on me as she was very supportive of my father’s pursuit of an academic career. My first name Lars came from her father and her grandfather. Mats informed us that the original name was Tulson, not Toolson. The latter took hold only after my ancestors immigrated to America.

We visited the former home of Per Tulson (born in Gammalstorp, Farstorp Parish in 1783) and his wife Nilla Wollermarsdotter (born in Qviinge in 1797) in Pusatorpet. The house, now called the Pusehuset, has some of the original structure including an interior wall dating from the 19th century. This was named after a famous Danish sympathizer: Pus-Else. Appendix A provides information about Pus-Else, translated for me by Mats Pettersson.

¹ Amelia Snoblin provided valuable feedback and superb editorial assistance in preparing this document.
Lars Tulson, my great-great grandfather, was the son of Per and he lived in this house as a young boy. The house was owned by the occupants of the Wanas estate, and Per leased it in exchange for work on the manor. Per was a crofter, a tenant farmer who worked for the estate, and in exchange he lived in the house and had a small parcel of land that he could till. With Mats’s help we learned about people earlier in the family tree. Per Tulson was the son of Tulson Hakansson (born in 1747) and Karna Persdotter (born in 1757).

Tulson Hakansson had some unfortunate notoriety. He and his family were very poor and accumulated debt. In 1787, money disappeared from the Farstorp church coffer. Per Tulson was six at the time. His father initially denied but subsequently admitted to robbing the Farstorp church. At the time this was a very severe crime, punishable by death. Per's father was shown leniency, but suffered both lashings and prison time. Mats was kind enough to translate an article prepared by Sigurd Svensson entitled the “Church Theft in Farstorp 1787,” which gives more detail about the crime and the aftermath (see Appendix B). It is quite probable that Per, when he grew to adulthood, may have moved away from Farstorp to the Wanas estate partly as a result of his father's bad behavior in the Farstorp parish.

In studying the family tree, Mats discovered a prominent judge (in Swedish: Tingsfogde) of the Goinge district named Hans Mattisson. He was born around 1610 and died in the same community of Farstorp in 1668. This forbearer is apparently eight generations prior to that of Per Tulson.

Per Tulson and his family converted to Mormonism, joined a congregation in Copenhagen, and sailed to New York via Liverpool. Per and Nilla's son Lars kept Tulson as a family name instead of the earlier convention of adding “son” or “dotter” to the end of a father's or mother's first name. At some later time in America, this became spelled as Toolson. Young Lars was in his twenties at the time of emigrating. His father Per Tulson died on the overseas voyage and never made it to New York. From New York, the family went to Cache Valley, Utah.

Lars Tulson and Ingra Tufwesdotter (Johnsson) (born in Simontorp in 1836), two of my great-great grandparents, were married after both had immigrated to Cache Valley. Apparently, Lars Tulson met his future wife Ingria just after she arrived with her sister in Utah. Ingria's parents were Tufve Johnsson (born in Ekerod in 1804) and Pernilla Pehrsdotter (born in Brunkelstrop in 1800). Tufve Johnsson was a blacksmith, a metal worker who made scythes and other tools for local farmers.
From the parish records, we suspect that he was likely an alcoholic, which might have motivated Ingra’s interest in Mormonism with its practice of abstinence. Ingra chose to convert to Mormonism with her sister but apparently not her parents, who stayed in Sweden. She also went to Copenhagen as the starting point for her voyage to New York and subsequently to Utah.

We visited the location of Ingra’s childhood home, Skotta Tufwes, in a remote valley near Simontorp in Osby parish. There is no structure, but remnants of a foundation. Interestingly, there is a big rock nearby that was split by lightning. Legend has it that you can see a figure of Christ in the split in this rock. This huge rock was split well before the time when Ingria was growing up.

To follow this branch of the family tree in America, it is easiest to summarize the life of Syble Toolson Hansen, my grandmother. Syble is the granddaughter of Lars Tulson and Ingria Johnsson who emigrated from Copenhagen. Syble’s parents were their son, Lars Lorenzo Toolson, and his wife, Alice Susanne Harper.

Syble married Willard Hansen, one of the older sons of Peter Hansen and Ida Louisa Gamet. It was my great fortune to get to know my grandfather Willard, as well as do actual farm work with him. He and I did many things together. It is his father Peter Hansen’s line that we explored next, by visiting Odense.

**Part II. Roots in Denmark**

Three of the seven Danish great-great grandparents were born in Fyn. Like many of my other ancestors, all converted to Mormonism in the old country and eventually immigrated to Cache Valley, Utah. We visited areas in which two lived and where one of my great grandparents was born. While we did not locate any specific places of residence, we visited churches that served as important milestones in their lives.

Peter Hansen, my great grandfather, was the source of my middle name. He was born in Alleso, just outside of Odense. His parents were Ole Hansen and Marie Nielsen. Ole was the son of a crofter, Hans Henriksen and Maren Olesdatter. It does not take much imagination to guess that Ole was named after his maternal grandfather. Ole was born in Vester Lunde in 1825 and was baptized in the Lunde church.
While we were unable to pinpoint Ole's boyhood homes, we visited the beautiful church in Lunde. Most likely the family leased or rented a small cottage nearby. Starting with Ole, the son of Hans, the family kept the Hansen surname across generations. Ole’s family moved to Alleso, and there is documentation of his confirmation in 1840 in the Alleso church.

Marie Nielsen was born in 1831 in Hauge, Lumby Parish in the Stige area just outside Odense. She was the daughter of day laborer and sailor Hans Nielsen and his first wife Kristen Steensdatter.

Marie Nielsen was baptized in the Lumby Kirke (Lumby church) shown to the left. Inside this church, portions of which were built in the 13th century, there are beautiful frescos.

Marie’s mother died when she was young, and she had an awkward relationship with her stepmother, according to the posted story by Sandra Clegg Wallace on the familyhistory.org website.
There is a beautiful Lumby mill, built in 1820, fourteen years before Marie Nielsen was born. It was surely part of her world, where grain was ground for flour using huge millstones like the one leaning against the foundations in this photograph. There is also a canal in Hauge that had a small working ferry. That may well explain how her mother, a farm worker's daughter, met a sailor.

Although they lived in Alleso, Ole Hansen married Marie Nielsen in 1854 in a much larger town church: Odense's Sankt Hans Church located just across the main park in Odense from the Plaza Hotel, where we stayed for our visit. The records of parish priests on the wall of this church go back to the time of the Reformation of 1536 in Odense.

Their son Peter Hansen was born in Fredskov in the Alleso parish in 1864 along with his twin brother Erastus Hansen. Peter was baptized in the Alleso Church. Originally, the farms in this area were owned by the Dallund Estate.

Some farms were sold to tenants in 1852, in the continuation of the land reforms of the nineteenth century. Some tenant farmers could afford to buy. According to the posted story by Sandra Clegg Wallace on the familyhistory.org website, Ole and Marie purchased a small parcel of land. The couple constructed a small cottage on this land, and Ole did work for other farmers. Like many of my ancestors in Denmark and Sweden, they were likely quite poor. Ole and Marie were baptized Mormons in 1866, shortly after Peter was born, and were no doubt encouraged to go to Utah. Young Peter Hansen was five when he and his other siblings joined his mother in immigrating to Cache Valley Utah. His father Ole followed a year later.
We saw the local neighborhood where Peter was born. While little remains of the original structures, we were happy to see an example of a house with a thatched roof, first built in 1820, beautifully preserved in this neighborhood.

This is Ole Hansen and family around the time of the emigration. My guess is that Peter is one of the two twin boys on the far left or right. The children by order of birth were: Hans Henrik b. 1852 (not in the photo), Metta Maria (not in the photo), Rasmina b. 1859, Maren (Mary) Kirstine b. 1861, and Karen (Carrie) b. 1868.

My two-day trips and prior research were great fun for me. But it also reminded me that my ancestors were poor, with little evidence of land holdings. Learning more about their backgrounds makes it all the more clear why it would be attractive to explore new life opportunities in northern Utah as part of a vibrant Mormon community. Of course both the trek to and settlement in Utah had its own set of challenges and hardships that others have written about.
On this map of the island of Fyn, north of Odense, we visited Alleso, Lumby; the Lumby Mill (red circle #23); Lunde; and the Manor House of Dallund (red circle #16).

My great-great grandparents from the Skane region of southern Sweden:
Lars Tulson - born in Qvittinge Village, Gryt Parish in 1837 - FMFF
Ingra Tufwesdotter (Johnsson) - born in Simontorp in 1836 - FMFM

My great-great grandparents from the Odense region of Denmark:
Ole Hansen - born in Vester Lunde in 1825 - FFFF
Marie Nielsen - born in 1831 in Hauge, Lumby Parish - FFFM

My four great-great grandparents from other parts of Denmark:
Dorthe Christiansen – born 1827 in Viborg - MMMM
Hans Jorgensen - born 1795 in the Bederslev Parish, Skam - MMMF
Petrine Nellie Larsen – born 1823 in Hoelbaek - MMFM
Hans Jorn Munch – born 1831 in Bornholm - MMFF
Anne Sophia Sorensen - born April 9, 1843 in Hjorring - FFMM
During the 1600s, Swedes and Danes fought over the province of Skåne. It was a difficult time for those who lived in Skåne, especially in Göinge. The Swedish king and the army were eager to conquer Skåne. They burnt villages with Danish sympathies and killed everyone who lived there. Many were left homeless and forced to live as outlaws in the forests. They were called “snapphanar.” The Swedes threatened the population, and those who in any way helped a snapphane had to pay with their lives. Pus-Else was a kind old woman who lived in a small cottage (Pusahuset) in the neighborhood of Wanås. She helped snapphanar by occasionally giving them food. Somebody gossiped about this to the Swedish troops. They went to catch and kill Pus-Else. She saw the Swedes come, took a dagger and managed to flee into the ancient forest in Wanås, but the Swedes saw her when she ran away in her red apron. The Swedish troops surrounded the forest and searched for her. When they had searched the woods they found no trace of Pus-Else. The Swedes were puzzled. People were very superstitious in those days, and it was suspected that she was a witch who had bewitched herself to be able to get away. As they stood there, they saw a crow in a tree looking at them, and it croaked like a mocking laugh and then flew away. They believed that the crow was Pus-Else. The next few days people in the neighborhood could hear horrible screams and moaning from the forest, but no one dared to go there because it was believed that evil spirits in the forest caused the terrible sounds. Nobody ever saw Pus-Else again. This legend was told from generation to generation for 200 years. In the 1800s, foresters in the old forest sawed down trees. When they sawed down a large hollow oak tree, they got a surprise. In the oak they found a skeleton, a red cloth, and a dagger. It was Pus-Else, who had been hiding in a hollow oak and then had not managed to get out. The dagger and apron are said to be found in the Regional Museum of Kristianstad collections.
Tulson Håkansson (1747-1817) was born in Tviggasjö on March 3rd in 1747 as the eldest son of the farmer Håkan Dansson (1722-1789) at a “double farm” in the center of the village. Tulson married in year 1780 with Karna Persdotter (1756-1801) daughter of farmer Per Nilsson (1711-1774) and Karina Persdotter (1717-1774) in Skeröd. Tulson was at that time 33 years old and Karna was 24 years old. Their son Dan was born that autumn in Gammalstorp house. Three years later their son Per Tulson (1783-1857) was born in the same house. (The Croft Bonahygge)

Gammalstorp house was - according to the register of population - the distant Gammalstorp-croft later called Bonahygge in northern outfield of the village. The Tulson Håkansson family seems to have founded the croft 1780 - but the register from 1788 shows another crofter living there.

Tulson Håkansson family seems to have moved to Röe village in Vankiva parish already in 1787, where he hired a farm belonging to the Vankiva estate. Tulson was poor and it was difficult to raise money to pay the owner. He then got an idea that came to bring severe misfortune for him and his family.

The night of February 18th 1787 a sum of 130 Daler disappeared from Farstorps church coffer. During the investigation in the district court in May 23rd the churchwardens told that the grid in one church windows was destroyed. A thief had crept in and cut holes in the coffer between its thick iron fittings, and the money had been coaxing out. Churchwardens thought that maybe Tulson Håkansson Röe, Vankiva could be able to provide some information in the case. The court instructed the sheriff Ljunggren to call Tulson to appear on May 26th. On that date Ljunggren told the court that he had not "been able to bring Tulson Håkansson Röe to show up to give information" about the church theft. So the interrogation was postponed until the next session of the district court. But the court suspicions against Tulson had grown increased strong.

In the autumn session on the 3rd of October Tulson appeared at court. He told hat he had been in Farstorp on a Sunday to meet Reverend Frost and ask for a "prästesedel" (moving certificate) to Vankiva parish. He came too late to attend the divine sevice in church and went instead to his parents in Tviggasjö, "where he led a cow, which was in the pledge of 16 Daler silver debt." Some witnesses told the court that they had seen Tulson in the porch that day and that he also met the priest.

The Court suspects that Tulson Håkansson “tells a lies". He is “of long height and is strong built, 41 years old, rather darkfaced and with black hair, but more light eyebrows." Suspicions increased so Tulson was asked
to appear at the coming winter court session. In winter 1788 the sheriff requires more time to gather further evidence. The case is therefore postponed to an extraordinary session in March.

At the extraordinary session on 28th-29th March 1788 Tulson is confronted and asked to confess the church theft. He continues to refuse, though sometimes "confused with faltering response and delayed in answers." Several witnesses were heard. Tufve Lasson in Hörröd had gone to Vankiva one day after the church theft and he knew that Tulson had paid 73 Daler rent for his Röe-farm, mostly with loose copper money. Even people from Vankiva had the same information. Tulson was said to have carried a "big lump" of money.

Per Jönsson in Kälkarp recalled having seen Tulson on the Sunday "standing next to the church and carefully and long looking at the window which was broken up when the church theft was made." While others had seen Tulson go "to and fro" in the cemetery after the service. He had evidently arrived to Farstorp before the service, but not been inside the church. The burglary was not discovered until the next Tuesday. Tulson was in custody the first court session day and then transferred to Kristianstad castle prison, until the second session day.

In the summer court session on May 10th, 1788 Tulson continued to deny. He had different explanations about where he got the money from. The court hesitated, but the prosecutor got hold of new witnesses after a few days. At the court session in May 14th Tulson was forced to give up. Some witnesses told the court that they had heard Tulsons wife Karna say that her husband had committed the church theft, and that she wished that he might confess - "so he could avoid the lengthy jail." Then Tulson Håkansson finally confessed the theft and told in detail how he did it. After the visit in Tviggasjö - leaving the cow there - he had on Monday evening gone to Farstorps church. He broke the grille in the window with a wooden stake and climbed through. Then he cut a hole in the church coffer with a knife and pulled out the money with a "long iron stick which he had brought with him." He took as much money as he could carry and used it to pay his debts. He had since been evicted from his homestead in Röe. He was impoverished and not able to replace the church with the stolen 130 "riksdaler" or 25 Daler 32 skilling specie.

The verdict was as expected very harsh. Tulson Håkansson was convicted and punished with 40 pairs of rod, three strokes of the couple, "then he had to undergo Absolution in the Farstorp Church a Sunday and later

halt on a working sentence at Carlsten Fortress (in Marstrand) for the rest of his life (lifetime imprisonment)."

The decision of the District Court was dated 17th of May 1788. A judgment of that kind had to be tried by the Court of Appeal. And in the meantime Tulson was imprisoned at Kristianstad fortress until the Court of Appeal judgment fell.

The judgement from the Court of Appeal came on June 12th the same year. The rod sentence and church punishments were approved, but the lifetime sentence of "work imprisonment" at Carlsten Fortress (Marstrand) was eased to three years of work at Landskrona fortress. In addition Tulson "had to with his property to the Farstorp church repay what he stole or with his own work compensate it." (Göta Court of Appeals archives, Jönköping)

It is no doubt that Tulson was imprisoned to do hard labor at Landskrona fortress for three years before he was released, but no direct data are known about it.

However, according to registry from Farstorp parish 1793, the Tulson Håkansson family returned from Vankiva Parish. That year their daughter Nilla was born at the Tviggasjö farm in Farstorp parish and five years later the son Håkan was born there. It is likely that Tulsons brother Per Håkansson, who became farmer of their parental home, took care of the Tulson family in any way.

In 1801 April 3rd the wife of Tulson Håkansson Karna Persdotter deceased in Tviggasjö. She died of tuberculosis 45 years old according to the death book. Tulson lived until 1817 when he died in Tviggasjö of "old age", 70 years old. The vicar added "poor" in the margin of the book.

When the church theft occurred the church of Farstorp had no extension to the north. The windows were at that time fewer and smaller than the current one. The old northern wing had no windows at all.

Today the Church owns a beautiful church coffer with abundant iron fittings, and there is an even older church coffer at Kulturen museum in Lund reported to originate from Farstorp. It is uncertain which of them was used in the church when the church theft occurred 1787.

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**Per Tulson - who died 1857 on board the emigrant ship Tuscarora - was eight years old when his father Tulson Håkansson was released from his hard work sentence.**
Bonahygge = area 1

Tviggasjö village in the upper left corner. Bonahygge homestead lies to the right of Grepakull.