

A Walkabout at Fjäderholmarna, also called “Stockholm's Closest Fringe of Skerries”.

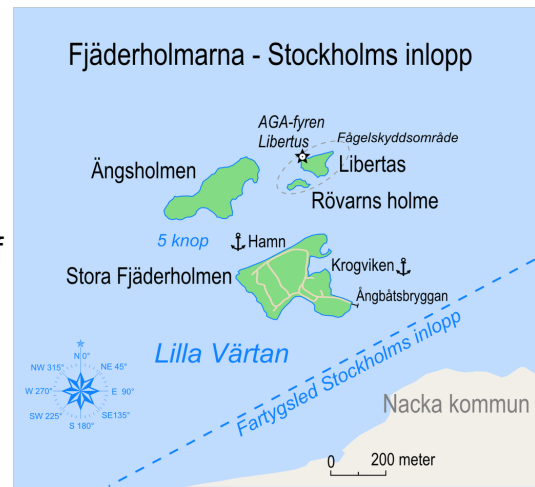
Large Feather island (Stora Fjäderholmen) on a map from 1811, where we have the next walkabout, is part of an islet group 30 minutes from Old Town of Stockholm.

In 1849 Stockholm city bought the Feather Islets to use the islands for the disposal of solid waste that was placed at Ängsholmen. Steamboat Passengers who passed the islands and also Lidingö dwellers complained, however, the stench, and sewage disposal ceased in the 1880s. According to the 1862 population register for Lidingö, 30 people lived on Feather Islands, most probably on the Large Feather Island. Among these were a cooper, a carpenter, a journeyman and four laborers.

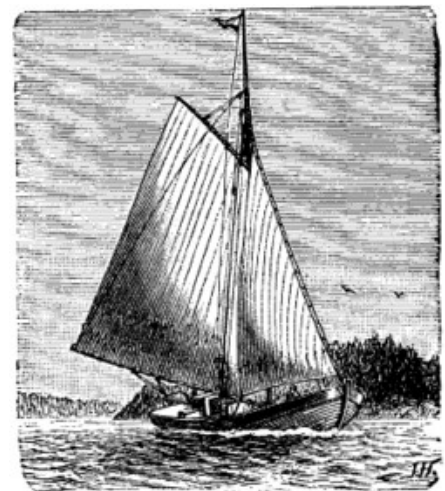
The first house was built ca1700 on the large island, and the people living on the islands could be included in the group called “Rospigg”. A Rospigg is a special kind of spirited person from Roslagen archipelago . The name originates from the old Swedish word "rosbyggjar" inhabitant in Roden (historical coastal area in Uppland). The word has thus nothing to do with the word "pigg" which is the Swedish word for a spirited person.

A characteristic about cleanliness for a rospigg according to the Swedish author Albert Engström: “In each house there should be a female person, keeping dirt out, or else we men would sink into a misery of uncleanness. A Rospigg in the archipelago do not wash himself, he becomes temporarily clean when he by an accident occasionally fall into the water, or if an angry fizzling wife turns a span with ice-cold well water over him, when he is sleeping his intoxication off. Yes, it is a misery”. (as interpreted by this author) Rospigg is also an alternative name for the boat type "Roslagsskuta", a very reliable ship used for many tasks required on the islets.

At Large Feather Island’s southern tip was in the late 1800's an observation tower, which later was converted into a restaurant and was named "Grand Restaurant Bellevue". The restaurant was demolished when the Navy took over the entire island group in 1918, and built a facility for final assembly and storage of ammunition. They then also blew out a number of caverns on the island.



Rospiggar



Roslagsskuta for Firewood Transportation

One famous feature of Feather island's history is the so-called "vodka war". This happened in Stockholm in the 1870s between the new spirit monopoly in Stockholm, the so-called trade company, and the "Vodka King" L O Smith, with his "ten-fold purified spirit" who had the right to trade in liquor on the Feather islands in that it was outside the city limits. A fee was paid to the Stockholm harbor: one penny for every sold pot (2.6 liters) of liquor that was brought in to Stockholm. Buyers of brandy were given free transportation to and from the island. Steamboats arrived twice per hour from Stockholm year round. After extensive renovation work, Large Feather Island could again open with restaurants, cafes, artisans, museums, marina and more.



L O Smith, the Vodka King

Now we have learned the history about these "Stockholm's Closest Fringe of Skerries", only 30 minutes from down town Stockholm. To visit today, there are two places where we are able to buy a ferry ticket to the island: Stockholm's Ström by Old Town, and Nybroviken, both with excellent connection to bus and subway. The price for a return ticket is ca SEK 130, or about \$ 20, and the trip will take about 30 minutes.

In this walkabout we will take the ferry boat from Nybroviken, Kajplats #12.



Ferry boat from Stockholm Ström kajen



Ferry boat from Nybrokajen, Kajplats #12

During the trip to the Feather Islands we are passing by many interesting places, like the Wasa Ship Museum, the Stockholm skyline with Katarina Kyrka, and The Rainbow Lord by the sculptor Carl Milles at Nacka Strand halfway to the island.



We are arriving at the Large Feather Island harbor and see several advertisements about craftsmen and their shops, museum activities, restaurants and much more that will satisfy our expectations for a day of fun. The first shop we see is a sign for *Mackmyra Svensk Whisky*, who has an archipelago warehouse for their whiskey in some of the old navy caverns on the island.



Large Feather Island harbor

We continue our walk following the small roads towards the “The Smokehouse and Restaurant” where we had a wonderful lunch with fresh fish from the area combined with a stunning view of the opening between the islands.



Mackmyra Swedish Whiskey Archipelago Warehouse



A stunning view from the restaurant into the traffic in the opening between the islands

After lunch

we con-

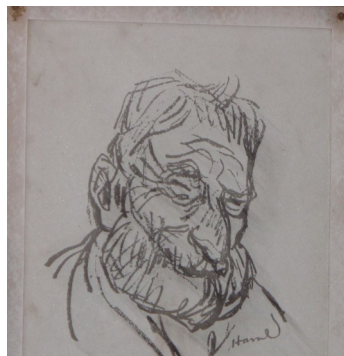
tinue to walk along the small road and soon we are at the Feather island Inn which is a beautiful Inn by the water. We take a short tour around the Inn and then continue forward to the Feather Island Museum where they have “Allmoge båtar”, a very special kind of boats used by the people in the archipelago. There is also a very nice Gallery with drawings by the artist Harald Lindberg picturing people and boats.



Feather Island Inn



Allmogeboat



Rospigg



Rospiggar working on their boat

Many interesting, and funny, stories about these people, “Rospiggjar”, living in the Roslagen archipelago are told by the locals.

The most funny one is told by the author Albert Engström, in his book *Sandöhistorier (Adel, präster, smugglare, bönder)*

"Rospiggen had sailed two tubs out and two tubs in, but he beached anyway"

Tubs?

Well, in the older days peasant skippers never had a log or hourglass. They used wooden tubs filled with a defined quantity of water and with an outlet through a quill. They didn't have any watches, and sailed by one or two or three tubs, as they called it, and then estimated time and distance using this primitive method."

One should be aware that the Baltic archipelago is filled with small skerries. Many of them you don't see, so beaching oneself is not that uncommon. While we are laughing and talking about the "tubs" I feel we are closely observed and stared at from a seagull nearby, and I wonder whether he understands what it is that we have so much fun about.

A little bit further down the way we are approaching the craftsmen shops on the island, with small artisans shops and more. The glass blowers' shop and the smithy shop are well worth a visit.

We continue to the eastern side of the island and you see several people swimming even though I think the water is on the cold side. We also see many sunbathers on the cliffs capturing the summer-sun. We are soon reaching the northern part of the island and we see the restaurant "Röda Villan", or the Red Cottage, which is offering us a variety of sandwiches and more.

After another five minutes of walking we are back to the beginning of our Feather Island walkabout, and we are ready to take the ferry boat back to Nybrokajen in Stockholm City. We have had a very nice, and sunny walkabout at "Stockholm's Closest Fringe of Skerries"



Allmogebåt tacking at Feather Island



What are you looking at?



Red Cottage (Röda Villan) restaurant



Ferryboat back to Stockholm City

Written by Leif Rosqvist, editor of the Newsletters of New Sweden Cultural Heritage Society and SRIO in Portland, Oregon.

More information for the interested:

- Go to Google and type in Fjäderholmarna to get information in English
- Go to Google and type in Fjäderholmarna-Marinen for Marine history
- Go to Google and type in Stockholm-Fjäderholmarna at youtube.com (very good, but in Swedish)
- Albert Engström: *Sandöhistorier (Adel, präster, smugglare, bönder), Läsebok för svenska folket.* (in Swedish)



My absolute favorite people  
"Rospiggar"