

A Stockholm Walkabout Tour in the area of the old Navy Shipyards at Djurgården.

Please join me on a short walkabout in the wonderful area of the island of Djurgården where I would like to share some Swedish naval history with you, as part of my family roots. I start the walkabout at Slussen (The Locks) and slowly walk in the sunshine toward the ferry dock at Skeppsbron to take the ferry number 7 to the island of Djurgården. To the east of me I see the shimmering water in the Stockholm archipelago. No one could better describe this scenery than the Swedish troubadour Ever Taube in the lyrics of *“Så skimrande var aldrig havet”* which is steering up very strong emotions from my boyhood in Stockholm and memories of my father.

*“So shimmering was never the sea
and the beach never so liberating,
fields, meadows and trees, never so beautiful
and the flowers never as sweet-smelling
than when you walked by my side
into the sunset, the evening so enchanting,
when your curls hid me from the world,
while you drowned all my sorrows,
darling, in your first kiss.”*

*“Så skimrande var aldrig havet
och stranden aldrig så befriande,
fälten, ängarna och träden, aldrig så vackra
och blommorna aldrig så ljuvligt doftande
som när du gick vid min sida
mot solnedgången, aftonen den underbara,
då dina lockar dolde mig för världen,
medan du dränkte alla mina sorger,
älskling, i din första kyss.”*

Again a dawning day and a soft perfume of newly mowed grass, from some island in Stockholm archipelago, touches my face as I slowly walk towards the ferry station. Perhaps it could be a piece of our powerful Swedish naval history softly speaking to me about long gone glory times. We take ferry number 7 to the island Djurgården from Slussen, which is arriving to the west of the shipyard area at the amusement park Gröna Lund and east of the Vasa Ship Museum at Galärvarvet.



Ferry 7 to Djurgården
Photo: Stockholmskällan

The shipyard area is called *“Stockholms Sjögård”* covering the islands of Blasieholmen, Skeppsholmen, Kastellholmen, Beckholmen, Nya Djurgårdsvarvet, Galärvarvet and Strandvägen. Standing at the landing looking west I see Blasieholmen and Skeppsholmen.



Stockholm Sjögård
Photo: Maritime kultur

Blasieholmen is today a peninsula, but in the past it was an island parted from Norrmalm via a small area of water called *Nöckström*. Later it was filled in. The old navy shipyard, then located at the castle *“Tre Kronor”* across the bay to the south, was moved by king Gustav Vasa the 1550's, to this small island, that then got the name *“Skeppsholmen”* in 1565. In the early 1600, the naval shipyard at Blasieholmen/Skeppsholmen was Sweden's largest workplace. On this island, during the period 1626-1628, the navy built the Swedish Warship Vasa, with the help of Swedish and Dutch carpenters, with the intent to build the Great Swedish Naval Power on the European scene.



Regalskeppet Vasa, 1628
Photo: Filmtecknarna

This great naval history was pitifully short. On August 10, 1628, the 165 ft. three master, with a stern 50 ft. high, a sail area of 12,375 ft. and a displacement of 1,400 tons, the top heavy ship keeled over after sailing a few hundred yards on her maiden voyage from Skeppsgården shipyard. From there, *Vasa* went down with sails up and flags flying.

The ship was salvage in 1961, by the navy's heavy divers under the lead of Per Edvin Fälting, and was then presented to the public in the *Vasa* Museum at Galärvarvet in Djurgården.

Blasieholmen is today dominated by Banks, the National Art Museum, the Grand Hotel, and traditional charters such as Sällskapet, Frimurarorden among others. Only a couple of hundred people live there permanently.

To the north of the ferry landing there are some very nice areas with benches at the landing for small motor and sail boats. I sit here on a bench in the sun eating a sandwich, and I see Kastellholmen, across Ladugårdsviken. Kastellholmen is a small island in the center of Stockholm connected, via Kastellbron, to the adjacent Skeppsholmen. On the island there is a small castle, *Kastellet*. Kastellholmen has previously been known as *Notholmen*, *Lilla Beckholmen* and *Skansholmen* and is part of the national park system.

The first fortification, *Kastellet*, was built in 1667. It exploded in June 1845 and subsequently rebuilt in 1846-1848 to the design of architect Fredrik Blom.

It consists of a round tower with red brick wall and a 20 meter high stair tower. On the top the Military Ensign of Sweden is hoisted and lowered every day, indicating a nation in peace.

On May 17, 1996, the Norwegian Constitution Day, some Norwegian expats raised the Norwegian flag in the tower. Though such an action would historically have been as a declaration of war, a diplomatic crises could be avoided.

After digesting these breathtaking views, we continue our walk north along *Almänna Gränd* (Common Alley) adjacent to the Gröna Lund amusement park, and I see a very impressive building in front of us, the famous restaurant *Hasselbacken*, the center of Swedish culinary traditions, where you are able to eat the best "*Biff Special*" ([kock recept.nu](http://kock.recept.nu)) in Stockholm, but we are not going that far. We are turning onto *Lilla Allmänna Gänd* toward Djurgårds varvet.



Vasa is going down under, 1628

Photo: titanicnorden.org



Vasavarvet receiving the salvaged ship



Kastellet



Small Common Alley
Photo: Holger Ellgaard

Along *Lilla Allmänna Gränd* we are able to see some of the last original small red painted (Falu Rödfärg) wooden houses that are left in Djurgårds Staden .

Lilla Allmänna grand is the extension of *Falkenbergsgatan* through Gröna Lund amusement park toward Djurgårds staden. The name Allmänna Gränd is derived from the beginning of 1800's (Common Street 1806) and indicates that the street is open to the public.

Here I'm able to chose between the two main streets *Långa Gatan* (Lång Street) and *Breda Gatan* (Broad Street), with small red painted wooden houses surrounding the small and hilly streets of *Östra Varvsgatan* (East shipyard street) and *Sjömansgränd* (Sailor alley). About 200 people live in this area today.

In the year 1712, Johan Lampa an olderman in the building guild, created a shipyard business (early Djurgårdsvarvet) in the area where Gröna Lund is today. Over the next decades we saw several owners where the most well known was shipbuilder Fredrick af Chapman. In this shipyard several well know war ships was built; schooner Amphion, kungaslupen Vasaorden (Royal salsslup) among others. In 1862 the shipyard was closed and the land was sold to Stockholm Stad who used it as storage area for a variety of goods, especially herring (sill), which gives the area its nickname "Sillhovet" (Herring Court).

Years ago I was sitting at the old dry dock side with an image of making it into a enormous swimming pool were the beautiful people of the public could go and swim. And maybe, just maybe see something like the artist group "*The Diving Norins*" performing...just a mirage, but anyway.

Over the years when larger and larger ships were requested the Navy to build more repair and maintenance shops for the navy the Örlogsvarvet was established. Stockholms Örlogsvarv was the navy's shipyard. The shipyard had activities on Galärvarvet on Djurgården, and Skeppsholmen's east side on Beckholmen. The shipyard was a very large workplace with with over 1200 workers employed. The navy shipyard was closed 1969.



Järnvägs Huset (Railroad House), 1909



The Gravedigger's house
Photo: Holger Ellgaard



Skampådens torg (The pillory square)
Photo: Holger Ellgaard



Djurgårdsvarvet, 1928
Photo: Stockholmskällan

Several interesting ships were built at Örlogsvarvet in Stockholm with the intent to serve the naval cadet training program (Skeppsgossekåren), and providing the navy with skilled seaman resources.

They were: Schooner HMS *Gladan* (SO1), 1946

Schooner HMS *Falken* (SO2), 1947

The Schooner division is a education and recruitment units. The units comprise of the two schooner sailing ships, HMS *Gladan* and HMS *Falken*, where the education is focused on seamanship and navigation.

Here is the connection to the “pully-block” maker Gustav Andersson that lived on the south hills in Stockholm making pully-blocks to the navy’s sailing ships. (see Walkingabout back to my roots)

To have a functional navy you need more than shipyards to produce and maintaining navy vessels, you must develop and have competent navy officers and seamen. Navy cadet schools located on special training ships, have been present in the Swedish navy since 1796, with the HMS *Diana*. The following story has its beginning in the early 1900’s, and it is about “*Skeppsgossekåren*” (Naval Cadet Corps), education young boys in seamanship.

When a “skeppsgosse” graduated he was classified as “matros i örlogsflottan”. The education was concentrated to Stockholm and Karlskrona.

Two interesting people to the writer figured in the “Skeppsgosse Corps”:

Harry Martinsson: Swedish sailor, author and poet. He was recruited into the Skeppsgosse Corps, after the disintegration of his family. His mother immigrated to the USA, in 1911, and ended up in Portland, Oregon, where she had a small restaurant. In 1949 he was elected into the Swedish Academy. He was awarded the joint Nobel Prize in Literature in 1974 with fellow Swede Eyvind Johnson.

My father Lennart was recruited into Skeppsgosse Corps when he was 16 and graduated at 18. He became a professional typographer, and industrial photographer. His son, the author of this story, also immigrated to the USA and ended up in Portland, Oregon.

This is an almost improbably coincidence that one skeppsgosse’s mother and another’s son ended up in Portland, Oregon.



HMS *Gladan*



HMS *Falken*



Skeppsgosse (naval cadet)



Harry Martinsson



My father, 1935

After digesting everything I see, I'm slowly walking east in the sunlight in the direction of Waldemars Udde, the previous home of prince Eugene. One day a few years ago you could have seen the famous Swedish chef Tina Nordström cooking food here for her television program "New Scandinavian Cooking" (www.newscandinaviancooking.com) together with Public Broadcast Services (PBS). And most certainly it must have been Swedish meatballs with potatoes, brown sauce and lingonberry jam. I can't find anything more Swedish than that!

Or believe it or not, you could be out fishing for your own dinner. About 800,000 *Salmo trutta trutta* (havsöring), and Baltic Salmon (lax) have been planted since 1973 in the water around Stockholm. The water around Stockholm is very clean today after many years of effort to clean and control the water quality. Excellent fishing environment!

Due to the very clean water around Stockholm you could also go swimming at several dedicated areas around town.

Time is passing too fast and now it's time to return to my mother's place on Kungsholmen for dinner. I board the A25 veteran tram "Mustang" towards Norrmalms Torg for transfer to bus towards my final destination.

Written by Leif Rosqvist, editor for New Sweden Cultural Heritage society and Swedish Roots In Oregon newsletters. (www.newsweden.org, swedish-rootsinoregon.org)

For more information to the interested reader could be found at:

Stockholms Stads Museum, Stockholmskällan Wikipedia

The best source about anything Stockholm

Stockholms Sjöstad Wikipedia

Djurgårdsstaden Wikipedia

Vasa Museum Wikipedia

Stockholms Spårvägmuseum Wikipedia



TV Chef
Tina Nordström



Köttbullar, potatoes,
brown sauce and
lingonberry jam



Happy fishermen



A25 "Mustang" tram