

Old Stories and Recollections from Norra Solberga

One of the most revealing pieces of information to shed light on what life was like in Norra Solberga Parish during the time of the High family's ancestors comes from the written recollections of Gustav Karlsson, one of the most brilliant men in the parish's long history. Gustav Karlsson was born at the farm of Ranglaryd in Norra Solberga on July 12, 1890. His parents were Gustaf Valfrid Andersson and Kristina Sofia Gustafsdotter. Karlsson was considered to be "a genius like no other,"¹ and spent his life inventing a number of clever devices at Ranglaryd, pioneering in early 20th Century technology such as batteries and hydroelectricity. Gustav Karlsson died on March 1, 1976, living to the ripe age of 85.



Gustav Karlsson - 1970

Karlsson played an integral part in preserving the fabric of Norra Solberga's past by writing down some of his memories from the parish, as well as stories that had been passed down to him from his parents, grandparents, and people throughout the parish. These stories were compiled together on August 7, 1963 under the title "A Solberga Farmer's Look Back." Although Karlsson lived three generations after the time that the High family's ancestors lived in Norra Solberga, his stories still evoke a clear and vibrant image of what their lives in the parish were like. Some of his stories are even from the time of Sven Hög's youth in the early 19th Century. In these stories, Karlsson often describes some of the Norra Solberga's more colorful parishioners, whom Anders Andersson and Maria Svensdotter would have actually known, such as Nils Ahlstrand, the church sexton, Peter Häge, the parish tailor and prankster, and Jonas Olofsson, a superstitious hunter and veterinarian, who was born only six years before Sven Hög. Certain details of Anders Andersson and Maria Svensdotter's life are richly conveyed in Karlsson's writings, such as what crofter life was like in Norra Solberga in the 19th Century, stories of how soldiers trained in the parish, as well as a detailed description of attending church services at Old Norra Solberga Church.

"A Solberga Farmer's Look Back" relates a diverse assortment of fascinating stories from Norra Solberga's past, such as pranks played on unpopular vicars, mishaps of some of the parishioners who enjoyed to drink a little too much, the tragic drowning of an ice skater at Lake Flisbysjön, and a beautiful description of the town of Eksjö on Christmas Eve, 1863.

¹ Quote from journalist Martin Karlgren in the December 28, 1932 issue of *The Småland-Gazette*

“A Solberga Farmer's Look Back” by Gustav Karlsson²

- The stories are dated August 7, 1963

Some Stories about the Church and Church People in Earlier Times



Old bell tower

“The bells of Solberga Church rang every weekday at 6 A.M. and 6 P.M during the summer. Nils Ahlstrand was the sexton at this time, and in return he had the right to strike and salvage the hay in the cemetery, which he called his ‘meadow’. He had tied a long rope to the bell in the bell tower. The rope stretched down to the ground. He went to the bell tower and pulled the rope ten times, and it was ringing.”

“During the 1860s, church services usually began at. 9 A.M. During Lent, services began at 8 A.M. The sermon of the morning service always lasted two hours. During that time, the churchwarden sat in the "church-worthy chair", which stood to the left of the altar in front of the cathedral and the organ loft. To the right of the altar was the number board. At Christmas and Epiphany, the churchwarden would snuff out the candles on the altar and pulpit when they began to burn down, at least twice during that time. If one was missed so that a light burnt out, it became the entire parish’s topic of conversation after one came home from church.”



Old Norra Solberga Church – 19th Century

² Courtesy of Norra Solberga Hembygdsförening (Local Historical Society)

“During a Christmas Service in the 1860s, it was a little messier than usual in the church. The young and inquisitive churchwarden in Packarp didn’t think he received any benefit from the sermon. It would have been too much to wrestle with. He therefore built up the courage to ask the priest if he could borrow the written sermon and read it at home.

‘Well, by all means, by all means!,’ the priest happily replied. But reading the sermon for the churchwarden was easier said than done. The sermon was not so well written, and there was an abundance of abbreviations. Should the priest, for example, want to say “cross” it was written as a +, “star” was a star symbol, the sky was shown as an arc, “heart” was shown as a heart symbol, along with many other acronyms of the tricky nature, which were difficult to decipher. He didn’t like it.”

“In the old days, the church had its special chairs, as they were called, [where each parishioner was assigned]. These were changed every year. You could then skip two chairs and sit in the third. This arrangement was that severe. Foreigners had no place in the church³. The parish gentry had the top two chairs in the cathedral and the *fattigstugukyrkan* “church’s poor section” (named for its location by the *fattigstuguhället* “the poor house”), reserved for themselves. They never changed places. The owners of Hamnaryd and Grimsberg sat at the front of the cathedral. All of the regular farms were divided through banking law. Branteberg, Packarp and two farms in Kulla belonged to one. The inhabitants of Elmeshult and Marietorp sat in the bench in front. Whoever sat behind the priest in the cathedral, the *fattigstugukyrkan*, and the stands, didn’t have assigned seats. People had to sit anywhere in those seats, since they frequently changed. The crofters had their places under the organ loft⁴, and the soldiers theirs farthest in the stone church where the choir is now located. They never had to change seats. Anyone who wanted to sit during the service had to wait for an open bench, which were usually occupied by the older people.”



Interior of Old Norra Solberga Church

“When we remember the crowded pews, worship, and the length of winter, unheated church, you must understand that it required a mountain health from the people just to attend Sunday services. The priest also didn’t have it so easy during the cold winter Sundays. It was stipulated that his hands would be bare when on the pulpit and at the altar. He had a difficult time preparing his fingers with brandy and fat.⁵”

³ A “foreigner” was considered anyone from outside of the parish.

⁴ This is where the family of Anders Andersson and Maria Svensdotter sat in the early 19th Century.

⁵ The priest drank the brandy to make himself feel warm, while he used the fat to insulate his fingers from the cold.

“The peasants had it better; they could dress more for the season. When the old farmer from Blankefall went to church, he always took clothes, furs, shoes and furry leg and shoe coverings in on Saturday evening and put them in front of the fire so they would be properly warmed up for Sunday.”

“The congregation was never in more of a hurry to get home from church than on Christmas morning. It was important to get prepared early so they went racing home to the villages. It has been told about a farmer in Kär, who went to mass in Solberga, and had to hurry home, running. When he was came into the house, all hot and sweaty, his wife: asked him, ‘But father dear, where's the horse?’”

‘I forgot it!’ cried the peasant, and so he had to go back to church.”

(Father and Mother talked about it on May 29, 1919)

The "Earth Fairy" Phenomenon

“‘Earth Fairy’ was a phenomenon the old people talked about, implying that it was a little difficult to locate. On some well-known places, it could be heard very clearly, if you put your ear to the ground and listened. We were told that if you put your ear on the threshold between the porch (in the north) and a large church in Solberga Church, the water could be heard beneath the earth, so it was quite certain that the earth was above a river there.”

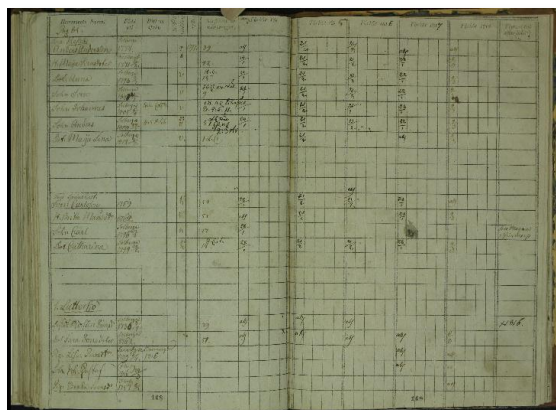
“The same situation prevailed in ‘Älmeshults’ knapp’, located to the southern farm paddock at the highest point of the oldest road between Berglunda and Älmeshult. Here, you could put your ear directly on the road and listen. The noise of rippling water could be heard clearly, and it was thought to be quite certain that the earth was above a river underneath.



Solberga Manor

“The old folks have said that the ‘earth fairies’ once went up to the deep well in Stora Hagersryd. The fairies had tried to stop the flow of water by inserting a bull and a feather bed - the only thing that was good enough to work - in the hole and thus had the stream back to normal.” There are deep water veins in and around Solberga Church. The wells are deep. It has been indicated, that long ago was about a very deep well was about to be dug east of the barn at Solberga Manor and the whole thing collapsed. One worker, who was down on the ground, was buried alive. It was no use to try to save him. The priest went there and read a little, and so have the veil of forgetfulness drawn tight over the incident.”

Memories of the Household Examinations



Household Examination Record from
Hessebo, Stumperyd, Norra Solberga
Parish: 1814-1818

“From yearly examinations are told a great deal. Hearings were held in turn among the peasants, who owned or leased in mantal (measurements of land), and how small farms were then. It was a duty which was burdensome for many. Even if they couldn’t feed their own families, they were still obliged to hold a big party for the whole rote. The examinations began with the poor, who had to prepare well in advance and beg for the food necessary for the feast, then borrow tableware, chairs, tables and much more for the big day. The day of examination was in turn determined by the earlier year’s household examinations. It was called *läsförhör*.”

“On the appointed day, the priest and the sacristan arrived, and the farm people brought in food and drink. The minister began with prayer, and the clerk led the singing, usually went through the parish catechetical meeting, where the priest took notes on various conditions. So would everyone, young and old, read from the Bible. Then it was the youth's turn to come together and stand in front of the table and be interrogated on his Christian knowledge. The hearing was generally feared. Pastor Waldner could go on for two hours, and both the priest and the youth were sweating in the often hot, stuffy and stale air. The older ones had to sit silently around and observe their offspring and servants. Some did well, for others, it was worse. The priest gave nothing after.”

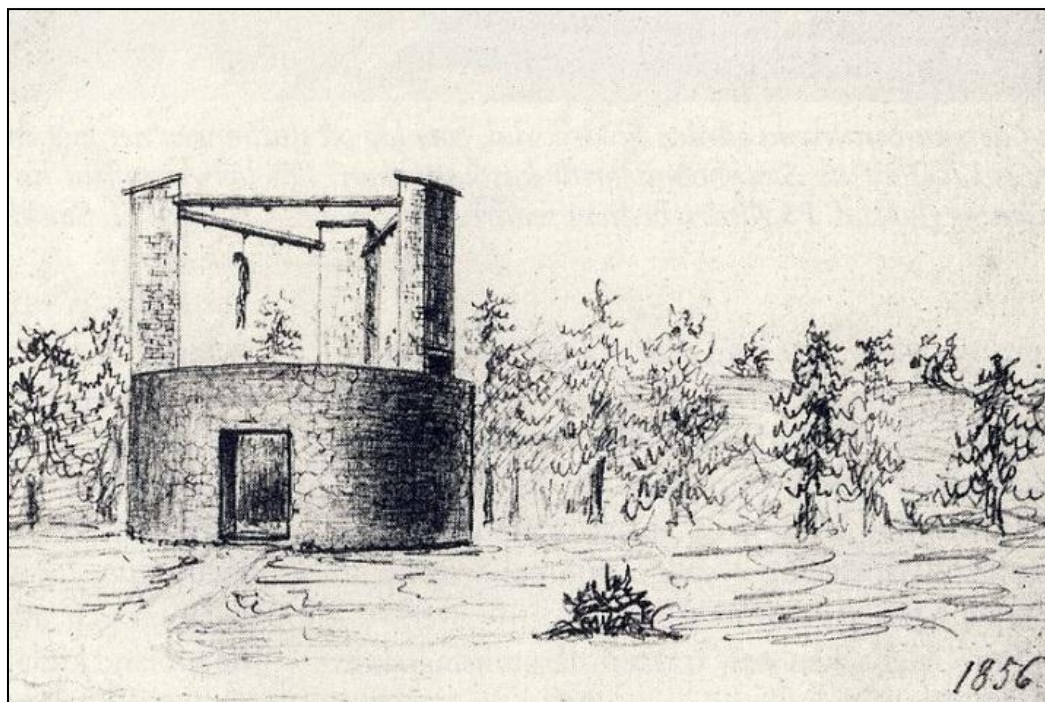
“After that, the party started for the elderly. Lots of food, much drinking and much liquor were provided, for it would be the honorable thing to do. But young people were only given a firkin of bread with cheese and drink, and had to go home, while the party continued until late. Several of the family’s relatives were invited, and arrived in the evening. Once in Ranglaryd, the relatives came while the hearing was going on, and there was a long wait. The interview never wanted to come to an end. The interviewee probably had poor religious knowledge. In some places, the priest and the sacristan stayed overnight until the following day, when they went to the next catechetical.”

“It is said that in Bollebo they slept in a room upstairs until the following day. Ahlstrand woke up first. He was astonished. The priest's bed was a pair of bare feet on the pillow. He hurried down to the farmer and said: ‘Much have I seen in my day, but never an Anna turns a priest!’ The parishioners also got to see and hear some.”

(Axel Gustafsson in Elmshult, Father and Mother talked about it in 1919).

Gallows Hill – The Execution Site of South Vedbo

“Gallows Hill, South Vedbo District’s execution site, was located on the west side of Stockholm Road, about midway between Priarp and Klockarp. The execution block was still there but was overgrown with moss in the early 1870s.”



1856 sketch of an execution site – Hamarby

“Sven Magnusson of Berget (born 1831), witnessed the last execution to occur at the site when he was a child⁶, and described the event to his son, Erik Svensson in Nyholm. There were two killers who were executed. The date and time of the execution was known by most in the area. Many spectators came as a joke. They had to stand outside a fence. The two who were executed were brought inside the fence. One of them was very bold and fierce. He was also angry at the audience.”

“Chop my head, and I’ll take someone else’s head and be on my way!’ he said. He asked for and received a quart of brandy, which he drank, after which he threw the bottle into the people with great force so as to harm someone. He fell, however, at the first blow, and his head rolled outward. According to the old story, after the first and second blow at the gallows only a blue welt was seen, but then the master swung the ax first between his own legs and then up into the air and struck. Upon the blow, the man’s head separated from the body. At the time, it was believed that some criminals were so well in favor with the wicked, that his neck was so stiff that no ax could cut through it. It is said to have been the rule that unless the head fell to three strokes, the prisoner became free. And then it could become risky for the executioner.”

⁶ The last execution at the gallows was in 1842.

“There were many spectators, who stood around. Not everyone could see, and there were many who climbed trees to see better. When the axe fell, many of them fainted and tumbled down. After the execution, Sven’s sister saw several old women ran up and drink the blood with teaspoons. The purpose was probably a superstition. After the execution, the bodies were hung up in the gallows to serve as a warning to others. The farmers in the neighborhood thought it was terrible to go past there. They hired an old man by the name of Stången to go and cut down the bodies. Then they got policeman who buried them at the site.”

(From Z. C. December 16, 1934)

A Soldier’s Story from the Great Northern War



Swedish Cavalry in the Great Northern War

“Long after the Great Northern War, prisoners came home from time to time, even to Solberga. An old man living in Solberga’s poorhouse told the parishioners about his adventures during the captivity of ‘Dog the Turks’, including following:”

“There were two Swedes who ended up on the same farm, himself and a comrade. The two were there treated especially well; they got plenty of rest and received delicious food, including sweet milk and kernels. For a while, the two couldn’t understand why they were so pampered. One evening, however, a woman on the farm said to them: ‘And ye shall flee away immediately, for tomorrow they will kill you. That’s why you got so much good food at this place. I will help you, so you can get out of here.’”

“And she did. The two ran to the woods and traveled continuously, until they came to a large river, where they huddled under a bridge and lay quietly on the following day. They heard the pursuers cross the bridge and search for them. Luckily, they didn’t look under the bridge. After a long time, the Swedes crept away from the hiding place and wandered through the endless forests. After many hardships and sufferings, they managed to eventually take to the community. When the old soldier became infirm, he found a refuge in the workhouse.”

(One of Karl Johansson in Wässelda’s ancestors, he himself living in Solberga, told this story to Ernst Rosén and he told it to me, October 22, 1939).

The Sharpshooter Guard's Training in Northern Solberga

“The Sharpshooter Guard in Solberga attracted great interest in the 1860s and 1870s. The reason was because it was dangerous times then. Denmark was attacked by Germany in 1864, and the great Franco-Prussian War was in 1870-1871. In Solberga as elsewhere, they did what they could to promote voluntarily practice among the youth in shooting and drill. At that time, the shooters bore uniforms and drilled on the field and glen near Solberga Church. Corporal Nyman was the instructor, and he put the clamp on the drill. They practiced on Sunday right after the service. Sometimes it could happen that Eksjö and Flisby corps met in Solberga, and one had joint exercises. Then there was music and games, and the joy was universal among shooters and spectators, who on such occasions were numerous assembled. Solberga Corps would have amounted to 100 men. In everyday life, there was only one Carlsson in Sandstorp who blew hunting horns, and an old man, who beat the drum, to the music. In Eksjö the sharpshooters had their own band. One time there was great exercise over by Mörtviken Creek by the slopes. Here, they shot the targets. The Solberga shooters had their own shooting range in Älmeshult southern farm enclosure, in the woods west of the lake in the middle of Packarp.⁷”

“Even school boys in school at the church were sought to practice. A number of painted wooden imitations, representing lesser guns, belonged to the school's teaching materials. When schoolteacher Berg put on the military cap, it was time for the drill and rifle practice, or marching. One time we headed toward Grimsberg, and he did not follow. That time there were unpleasant consequences after we returned. Berg was a talented teacher in school, but the spirit took him.”



Grimsberg

(Builder Axel Gustafsson and father talked about it on July 8 -9, 1918).

⁷ Karlsson's description of soldiers training in Norra Solberga in the 1860s probably also conveys the atmosphere of the parish some fifty years before during The Finnish War (1808-1809). At this time, Anders Andersson and Maria Svendsdotter's lived in Norra Solberga, and would've witnessed similar things.

Memories of Ice Skating in Norra Solberga



Lake Flisbyjön

“Often during the winter in my father's childhood, the youth gathered at the lake for ice skating on Sunday after church services, when the ice was safe. Most vividly, it was on Lake Flisbysjön⁸, which many yards surround. Farmhands skated and went after the girls with birch twigs, and joy ‘was boundless.’ But one time, when everyone separated, went home, and ate, one of the men who was still skating broke through the ice and drowned.”

“Most of the youth from Älmeshults skated on Lake Älmeshultssjön. Children from Packarp, who were then too small, did not get to go, just watch. Once at the lake, my grandmother admonished them on the dangers of ice skating, and then nailed a pair of skates outside of a coffin at the foot of the lake. The children thought it was terrible, and were therefore very careful on the lake.”

(My father talked about it January 11, 1927).



19th Century pair of ice skates that had been used at Lake Flisbyjön

A Very Unpopular Lecturer from Flisby Church

“It happened very long ago, there came a lecturer at Flisby⁹, whom did not feel comfortable with the religious state of the church as it was then. He began to clean up the jungle of drunkenness and unseen. The vicar or rector was old and had relaxed the zeal and activity. The new pastor's activities were however, offensive to some of the Congregation, and there was a hatred of the priest, as they attempted to clear him out of the way. On a dark autumn evening, they put their terrible plan into action. The lecturer's office was in a room in a smaller building, situated in the garden slightly away from a big house. The priest sat at the table beside the window of his room and read or wrote with a candle for lighting. Quite unexpectedly, a wagon hitch was thrown through the window at him with great force. He was hit and injured, but nothing life threatening, so their intentions were for nothing. The perpetrators were never discovered.”

⁸ Anders Andersson and Maria Svensdotter lived very close to Lake Flisbyjön when they lived at the farm of Havsvik from 1797-1809. They likely skated there as well in the winter.

⁹ Alleged to have been Pastor Lundin, who was pastor in the 1900s.

The Elderly Peasants and Birthdays

“The old did not worry in any way for their birthdays. If you asked Britta in Hillersbo how old she was, she always answered: ‘Only God and the Smithy know.’ Likewise, if you asked old Jonas in Karstorp, how old he was, he replied: ‘Only God and the chapel knows that.’ When Jonas turned 100 years old, Pastor Lundin was present at his birthday. Old Jonas was so senile that he couldn’t understand who Lundin was. Then they tied a towel around his neck so that there were two large points on his chest. ‘The chapel, indeed,’ said Jonas. Then he understood.”¹⁰

Stories of Drunkenness from Norra Solberga

“Peasant women often had a lot of trouble with their gentlemen (and men in general), whenever they came home from town drunk. Such incidents were largely gossiped about. Once, a peasant named Gusten returned to his home in Stora Fåglehult with a man named Burman, carrying a flask of vodka. As their loud and drunken words rang on, Burman’s wife Stafwa became angry and threw the vodka flask out in the yard. Then she kicked Gusten out of the house and he had to take himself home as best he could.”

“Another time they came home, drunk as usual. It appeared as though the two had a falling out, and they started to fight. Then Stafwa came between them. She shoved Burman in the stable and locked the door shut. Then she chased Gusten off the farm. Her husband crawled out of the manure with it covered all over his back, as she had not thought to bolt him in. In this way, he received his freedom much earlier than would otherwise have been the case.”



Old barn at Hyltan

“Once at Hyltan, Anders was at home. Old men were sitting in the south of the room, drinking out of copper jugs. It getting late, but the men continued to stay. Stafwa finally became angry and told Anders to go home. ‘No hag barks at me!’ replied Anders.

‘I’ll show you!’ yelled Stafwa, and she grabbed the arm of Anders and shoved him headlong down the stairs and out of the house. Then he went home the best he could in the dark.

‘You were brave, mother,’ said Burman afterwards, since they were alone and thanked her for her sense of order. Stafwa was not upset by them at that time.”

(Aunt Stafwa Burman spoke about this while she was alive).

¹⁰ The anecdote above probably also describes Maria Svensdotter in her later years, as she lived to be 96.

Memories of Hamnaryd

“In the days of the Stiernspetz family, the agricultural system at Hamnaryd was considered to be superior. Above all, its rye cultivation was very famous. They had a very good sort ‘gray rye’, which was richly rewarding. It has been said that some years, up to 200 barrels of rye were harvested. But it wasn’t just anyone who could grow rye in Hamnaryd. It was a confidence to do. The foreman was not always trusted. As long as an old farmer in Kulla lived, he would sow the rye every year. However, Karl Johansson of Hyltan was skilled himself, when he moved to Hyltan he still went to Hamnaryd every autumn to sow the rye.”



Old house at Hamnaryd

“It was common for farmers from Solberga and adjacent parishes to go to Hamnaryd and to buy the seed for their rye. So it was during the Prosecuting Officer, and then his son-in-law, Major von Heland’s, time. But so went the old aristocratic estate into other hands. The forest became dominant. As long as the lime burning process was started, the past owners probably did not save any lime in their own farm. The limestone quarry, located next to the road, has probably in some way belonged to Slåthult, where they also had lime kiln, but the quarry was in Hamnaryd.”

(My father talked about it on April 13, 1919).

“Gustaf of Karinholm¹¹ served as a farmhand in Hamnaryd for Prosecutor Stiernspetz for four years (1860-64). at that time, the workers would follow the sun in summer. The tenant farmers had it the worst, as they had a long way to go. Farmhands couldn’t go to sleep until the crofters did. The food in the early hours was arranged so that each servant was given some loaves of bread and a piece of cheese, which they had to have at the servants hall and conserve it at will. Each allotment would last three weeks. If you wanted something to drink, you had to drink water. Breakfast, dinner and supper had to be cooked in the kitchen. The breaks were 1 ½ hours at breakfast at 8 A.M., and two hours at dinner. They had a rough life, but were healthy and strong. There was never any murmur or complaint. Something as modern as strikes or unemployment didn’t exist in those days.”

(Gustaf in Katrineholm talked about as he walked through the bushes on August 25, 1921).

¹¹ Gustaf died January 2, 1931, at the age of 90.

Crofter Life in Packarp in 1868



Farmhouse at Packarp

“Victor in Mantorp had in 1868 a daily wage of 50 cents, a loaf of bread, and food, when he had a mowing job in Packarp. When the week was over, he received three dollars and six biscuits to take home. At home, he had a wife and six children to support. The same man chopped wood in Packarp in 1873 for 50 cents a ‘famn’ (unit of measurement). He ‘lumped’, i.e. chopped, logs. Wood saws weren’t advanced. He could cut more than one famn per day. The forest was good. At the same time, they received 25 cents, a loaf of bread and food for raking. They were happy with this. It was satisfactory. Far in advance workers were booked to work on the farms.”

(My father and aunt talked about it on July 26, 1923).

The Drought of 1868

“In 1868 it rained on ‘Emma Day’ on July 23rd. There was very strong thunderstorm. It rained so hard that it was pouring down, and the ground was completely soaked. Gustav in Katrineholm was then a farmer in Hyltan. He drove and released the steer loose into the pasture. The water came pouring down the slopes from the direction of Blomqvistahället.”

(Gustav talked about it on July 26, 1921).

1867 – A Rainy Year and a Poor Harvest

“1867 was a very rainy year. Therefore, the harvest was poor. In 1868, the soil dried unusually early. The dry earth was like ashes. In Packarp, all the seeds were buried with a plow to germinate. There was short time however, hardly to the point where it could be hit with a scythe. In the fall, however, side shoots grew up that could be used as a drying rack for the hay. Rye dried and premature. Ears were cleared away. It was said at the harvest, that there was nothing in them. 1869 was the hardest and the prices of bread were hurt the most. You had to go to Nässjö, where a business had started to sell milk in bags of 10 pounds (85 kg). They cost 30 riksdalers. In Packarp, flour was bought for at least 200 riksdalers that year.”

(My father talked about November 22, 1919).

Immigrants' Letters from America to Norra Solberga

“Our journey has been pretty good all the way, because we had such beautiful weather on the lake, so I have not felt sick at all, but there are many who were sick, and it has been so crowded on the boat. If you could see all of the people, you would turn giddy. We stepped on the boat at noon on the 7th and we came to Hull at 1:00. on the 9th. We had to be on the boat until 8 of the second day. I have not experienced such a Sunday in Sweden. Then we got to board the train at 2 and arrived at 8 in the evening. I cannot tell you what I've seen, because there is so much, because I hadn't written in 8 days...”

A Horse Theft during Christmas Mass, 1862

“Dean Schmidt spent the early mass Christmas morning in Solberga Church, explaining with zeal and passion the significance of the feast day's gratifying purposes. Meanwhile, as he was distracted, a horse was stolen from a wagon outside the church and was used, after what could be ascertained, for a ride, taking the road to Flisby. The creature was found loose in the morning at the pastor's home in Flisby. It has been shown that the offender had to pay 15 Riksdaler for retribution. The notification to this effect is stated in the nearest government office, or with the owner of P.O. Burman in Ranglaryd, Solberga Parish.”

(From the magazine *Hvad Nytt* - January 23, 1863.)

Peter Hägg - the Parish Tailor and Jokester

“In the early 1800s, the parish' tailor Peter (Jönsson) Hägg lived at Packarp. One of his daughters was born in Packarp in 1819. Peter Hägg was a great joker, but a poor tailor. He often sewed badly. Gustaf Carlsson once spoke to him about clothes. ‘If they are too small, they will stretch and if they are too big they can shrink together,’ said Peter Hägg.



Old barn at Packarp

‘Smooth as ice,’ said Peter Hägg as he stroked it even with his hand.”

(Axemia Ingesson talked about it on July 4, 1920).

Long Days in the 1870's and 1880's



Cavalryman's house at Älmeshult

“In the 1870's and 80's, work in the fields and meadows was completed only at sunset. I waited all day long for that moment. In Älmeshult the sun went down towards the market. The village was seen far away in the northwest. Often when workers began to get tired, they saw the setting sun, and said: ‘The farmers didn't take the sun down today. If only they would to take the sun down soon! Today, the farmers forgot to take down the sun!’ There were sighs, both audible and silent, playful and serious. They did what they could make jokes to help them get through the workday.”

(My mother told.)

Captain Hjalmar von Heland

“The Captain (later Major) Hjalmar von Heland was the son-in-law of the auditor G.A. Stiernspetz in Hamnaryd and became the proprietor of the estate for many years. He was interested in parish affairs greatly. He was also agent for the county's fire companies and took up the fire insurance fee. At a meeting in the parish hall, he ran his opinion pretty hard. The old men at the meeting had a dissenting opinion. Among them was Kullberg in Knapparp, who was a son-in-law of the captain. When the bickering lasted a few rounds, Anders Ingesson from Solberga manor said to Kullberg, ‘Send home the women and you will avoid the circumstances.’ This was overheard by several farmers. Anders Inge was wealthy and had girls too.”

(Ernst Rosen told.)

Farmer Jonas Olofson¹²

“Farmer Jonas Olofson in Brantebergs Norrgård was a very wise and sensible man, who was married to Anna Britta. In younger days, he was a stiff shot and taught his nephew Gustav Carlsson Stora Fåglehult many tricks, which were invaluable for good hunting luck. They shot a lot of venison and almost never missed. Once, Jonas was home from the hunt with a fox he shot, which he threw on the floor before the fire in the fireplace, while he got a little food and rest. After the fox has been lifeless for a while, it revived and took a sharp leap to the big mirror that stood on the dresser to the wall. There, Jonas killed the cunning fox for the second time, who probably thought the mirror as a hole to freedom.”

¹² Jonas Olofsson was born July 2, 1794 and died February 7, 1854 of a stroke. In the 1830s, the churchwarden of Norra Solberga described him as a “man [who] understood the veterinary art, practicing - and superstition.”

“Like other farmers at the time, Jonas also ran wood into town past Stora Fåglehult and Ranglaryd. Once on a trip home, he was invited to a party in Stora Fåglehult. Perhaps he was with Samuel Ericsson. He left the oxen in the road and went inside. It was winter, and was cold and snowy. He was inside a long time. There was probably food and drink in abundance. When he was left, the oxen had grown tired and gone home. The old man tottered after, but came off the road on top of the field, because it was dark. Finally, after his futile attempts to come creeping up the road, he fell down and he ran up against some object. On closer examination, he believed it to be one of his oxen. As he crawled, his hand entered a hole. He believed this was the ox’s anus and since it felt cold, he thought, that the ox was dead.

“Jonas then sobered up. He followed the road back to Fåglehult, where he was crying talking about the accident, how he had found one of his oxen dead on top of the field. The people from Fåglehult came back with Jonas, carrying lanterns and a knife to strip the ox and save what could be saved. One can only imagine their astonishment, when they came to the scene. Where Jonas had fallen and crawled about was a sawn down hollow tree, which lay beside the road. Everyone was amused, because no harm was done. The oxen were safe and sound in Branteberg.”



Stora Fåglehult

(Told by Axel Gustafsson in Elmeshult on July 9, 1918.)

The Smallpox Outbreak of 1871

“In the spring of 1871, the former tailor, John Ek in Hyltan, became seriously ill with smallpox. He was very bad at the time and no one thought he would survive, but he did, and lived over 30 years. He had large wounds on his face, which looked like they might ‘foam’ out. Locals were afraid to go past Hyltan while he was sick. No one other than Anders Holm in Åsen dared go to Hyltan and help Ek. He helped him with farming and decisive recovery, until he was not sick. No one else did. We later received the vaccination and everyone was vaccinated. Grandfather brought home some vaccinations and vaccinated all the children. It caused big blisters on my arms, and hurt, but they eventually healed. An epidemic did not happen.”

Soldier Life at Ranneslatt

“Ranneslatt used to be very different from the current practice site. It was much more hilly and uneven than in our day. In the beginning of the 1860’s, major landscaping was carried out to field more evenly and flat. Rice farmers had worked, at least in part, on contract. Some years afterwards, it was used as an arable field. They sowed rye, next planted with grass seed, and the following year harvested rye. The auction was for cured rye, and anyone could buy. Among other things you could buy a load of rye for Packarp. Many cottages, apartments and shacks were situated all around the plains. These all disappeared when Eksjö city bought the land as the training ground for Småland’s Cavalry Regiment. During the early years of the 1900s, many people moved their houses closer to town.”

“Way back when the Småland Cavalry camped at Ränneslätt only a short time in the summer every year, there were no houses or buildings. Officers and men were lying in tents and field life was very simple and primitive. They all had the necessary equipment with them. An armed household stored the contents of the armor chest between meetings which were held in the armory, which again could be a shed, room, or attic. Here, the soldier would make sure everything was in order. Later, some officers had built small huts made of wood, which they occupied during the meetings. This was the start of camp huts, barracks which costs a million crowns to build.



Ränneslätt – early 20th Century

“Huts lay scattered in the forest edges around the plain. The owners were gone the vast majority of the year, and were only around a few short weeks in the summer. The huts were anything but empty. Between meetings, the huts were inhabited by the idle people, the elderly poor, homeless old women, and perhaps soldiers’ widows whose husbands were killed in the war of 1808-1809. When the meetings began, the widows, priests, and local people went to Hamnaryd forest, where year after year they went to their caves, crevices, or fallen trees that could provide protection.”

“They lived off of berries, fish, and what they could get hold of. When the regimental meeting ended, the huts were occupied again. Close to town, they could feed themselves by begging and the like. A high level of poverty prevailed in the early 1800's. Old Eva in Risan was a child at that time, she was born in Ranglaryd in 1804 and died in Risan 1896. She told me about smelting and the old women, while she was alive.”

(My father talked about it some day in the fall of 1917).

Kari in Karlstorp, a Soldier's Widow

“Kari in Karlstorp, ‘Krafshult,’ ‘Blarrebo’ which that place was also called, was a poor widow. On Saturdays, she stood in the square, and sold bread at a bakery. When the men of war came to the plains, she bought milk at the farms, carried it to the camp, and sold it. At that time, that Crown didn't have any milk for the porridge in the evening, and the soldiers thought it was pretty dry.”



Hult

“That is why they bought bread from their corporals, which also turned the old women into refugees. Anna-Stina Svärd in Änkarp brought milk all the way from Stora Fåglehult to the plain. After the meals, they brought them and the poor, who took what was left and was given to them and to contribute to their family's meager subsistence. Later there became a contractor, who wasted food, while the area's poor got nothing.”

(My father talked about it on June 13, 1932).

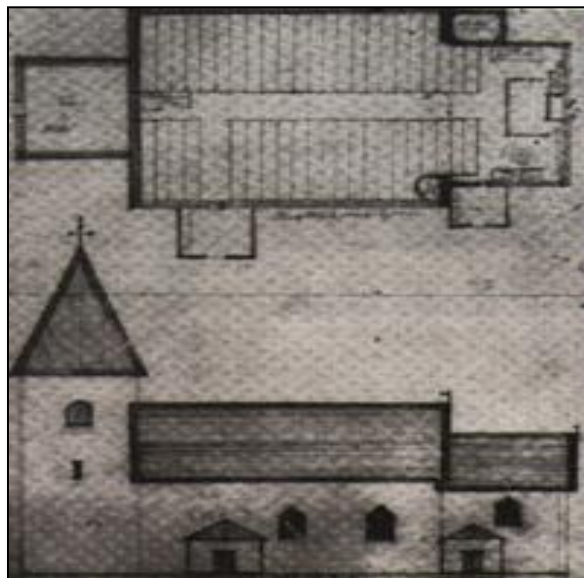
Rangla – A Soldier's Widow from the late 17th Century

“Another soldier's widow has also been described. She probably lived in the late 1600's and was called Rangla¹³. It's unknown if the man of the house was called Rangel is unknown, but likely. She built herself a cottage or hut, which only had three knots of "fallen timber". The name Ranglaryd derived from this woman, whose settlement was located about 100 meters south of the farm. To this day, it's marked by a European Crabapple tree.

¹³ Rangla lived in Norra Solberga the same time as Olof Jonsson and Ingjård Håkansdotter.

The Construction of Flisby Church

“When the new Flisby Church was built between 1850-1855,¹⁴ small farm owners did as much parish work as they did, which was great, because at that time it was decided that everyone contribute to building the new church. Therefore, they would carry as much work. Even cottagers and squatters got to do as much, but each day they were given as they were given a loaf of bread and a herring help with food up for their help. So it was the custom. The congregation bought the herring on the whole from the feast marked, which was distributed each day by the foreman. The work began early in the day.”



Drawings of Old Flisby Church



Flisby Church – Late 19th Century

“Anders in Vitarp went every evening before the working day. Then he and the others that had a long way to go were gone for 2-3 days at a time. Staying at home thus became equally as long as building. Whoever owned only a $\frac{1}{12}$ mantal farm had to help work as many days as the peasant in Torrsjö. Everyone was assigned to the type of work he was the best with. Anders was a carpenter. The lime was run from Hamnaryd and burned outside the church.

“The only fatal accident at the church building occurred during the lime burning. A man fell through the arch of the kiln and was burned to death. Stretchers along the walls were used during the building of the church, with four men on each stretcher. These stretchers levied the largest and strongest men, especially soldiers. You had to build long bridges to get up on the walls. It was a terrible thrall of church buildings. Then, everything was carried by the people, such as the stone, mortar, and beams.”

(Aunt Burman was then married to Anders in Vitarp, and she has talked about this while she was alive).

¹⁴ During this time, Maria Svensdotter attended Flisby church and would have witnessed this construction.

The Drowning of Two Oxen

“In Branteberg, a two pair of large oxen once drowned, which belonged to the residents of the farm. It was in the spring when the ice started to become dangerous. It was the winter and much firewood and timber was driven from Branteberg above the frozen lake, as usual, during winter time. Then one day in the spring, the oxen were released outside to exercise. They sat in the sunshine the same way that they were always used to. Their journey in the sunshine was their last, because the ice broke, and all perished.”



Branteberg

(My father talked about March 31, 1929).

The Prisoner from Packarp

“When my father was a child and was going to his first catechism, he had come to the town to buy himself a soda. Grandfather came with a bookbinder named Holst. He encountered a very large, maybe 80-year old man with glasses pushed up on his forehead. He was very talkative, and when he heard that they were from Packarp, he asked if they had seen ‘jail’ in town, which they had not. Then he told of Jacob in Packarp¹⁵ and his horse-trading. Once in a market, Jacob agreed to sell a gentleman two beautiful horses. Although he had no money to pay with, the man said he was the owner of the Hillersbo Manor and the rusthåll of Packarp in Solberga Parish. Thus, he was obviously trusted and was given the horses. When no payment arrived, he went to see the gentleman to see how things were. While the man indeed lived at Hillersbo and Packarp, he didn’t have any money, and the horses were sold. It was a swindle, he said, and had Jacob arrested. After a while, Jacob visited the man in prison to see how he was.

‘Well thank you, sir, here I feel good. Here I have bread, I did not before.’

‘Really,’ thought Jacob, ‘in that case, it is best that I let you out, otherwise it will be too expensive for me.’ Then Jacob returned home to his rusthåll in Packarp. It was said before, that those who had arrested a person had to pay for the care of the prisoner during his detention.”

(My father talked about February 10, 1918).

¹⁵ Crofter Jakob Jakobsson died March 5, 1785 in Hillersbo of tuberculosis

Christmas Eve in Eksjö, 1863

“On Christmas Eve in 1863 or 1864, my father went from the rusthåll in Blankefall with his family to Kongseryd in Hult Parish to celebrate Christmas with his wife's parents. They arrived at Eksjö, where the town's brass band met on a street every Christmas Eve at 1 o'clock. One went through the city and blew in 'the Christmas peace'. It was solemn. Before the music went handsome young men, carrying their lighted lantern was hanging from a pole. There were no street lights in town then. Everyone had to shine his or her own light. When the gentry had been out to a party, theater and other events at night, they had their servants meet them at the gate with a 'pole lamp' and go ahead of them home. So it was in the 1880s, when my aunt served Master Wahlström. It could happen that a whole group of girls gathered outside with their lanterns to 'shine' home their master and mistress at night.”

(Mother and Father talked about December 25, 1917).



The Main Square of Eksjö in the 1850's