



1912. *Scandinavian workers' meeting at Nyhyttan, Sweden, in 1912 (1913?)*. Database on-line. Center for Adventist Research Image Database.

<http://centerforadventistresearch.org/photos> (accessed Jan 13, 2022).

## Nyhyttan Mission School (1898–1932)

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Situated in a remote and scenic site halfway between Stockholm and Oslo, Nyhyttan Mission School was an Adventist Swedish training institute and seminary from 1898–1932.<sup>1</sup>

## Reason for Establishing a Mission School

The Nyhyttan Mission School was established in 1898 as a replacement for John G. Matteson's colporteur courses that had operated in Stockholm during the 1880s.<sup>2</sup> Immigrants from the area had become Adventists in the United States and sent to their relatives in Sweden the magazine *Sanningens Härold* (Herald of Truth) and other Adventist literature in Swedish.<sup>3</sup> The region also had a strong nineteenth-century revival legacy on which the Advent faith could build. Dissenters from the Lutheran state church, mostly Baptists, also lived there. Thus, the first Adventist congregations, although small, began there with many members coming from a Baptist background.

## Early Days

Nyhyttan's first principal was Sven Jespersen (1898-1900) who had led health work in Basel, Switzerland. After two years at Nyhyttan he left to serve as a missionary in Jerusalem and later in Algeria. Blecko Jon Karlsson (1900-1905), the next principal, had been a student in Matteson's school in Stockholm during the late 1880s. He had previously taught at the Adventist school at Frydenstrand in Denmark. Karlsson had creative ideas about education that were grounded in the Adventist understanding of the three Hs: Head, Hand, and Heart. Initial problems of finance, lack of students, and a failed attempt to make Nyhyttan a Scandinavian Union institution made the future shaky.

In 1909, Karl Mattsson, one of the first 15 students from the school, returned as its principal. A certified engineer, he became a capable educational leader until 1921 when he received a request to lead the Swedish-American Broadview College outside Chicago.

Between 1921 and 1929 Pastor Carl-Oscar Carlstjerna and his wife Dagmar directed the school.<sup>4</sup> He had also been one of the first students to graduate from it.

## The Educational Program

The 1903 school prospectus outlined a program for the development of spiritual, moral, and physical abilities. Spiritual education first of all meant religious training, secondarily literary-esthetical. The intention was that the study of literature, art, and nature would awaken the student's mind to beauty and noble thinking. Thirdly, the spiritual education was to have a scientific base, which meant a solid foundation in language, history, and natural sciences.

The development of a moral character was also considered important. That should develop the students' independence and freedom, educating them to become authentic men and women, well-equipped to meet life's demands.<sup>5</sup> Finally, physical education sought to increase bodily strength through manual labor, sports, and outdoor exercises.

Nyhyttan Mission School was the first school in Sweden, all free (non-state) denominations included, that offered ministerial training on an equal basis for both men and women. It became a great asset in years to come when the Adventist Church grew into a recognized, established free church. The curriculum had three legs: the elementary part aiming at entrance examination into junior college, the mission department, and third, practical training such as crafts for women and bookkeeping. The school welcomed students from different Christian denominations. Only those who openly showed disrespect and disdain for the Word of God were not accepted as students.<sup>6</sup>

## In the Service of the Lord—Home and Abroad

The foremost need of the young Swedish Adventist Church<sup>7</sup> was for church workers. When it purchased Nyhyttan Bergsmansgård (Manor House), Adventists had 28 churches in Sweden with only six of them having more than 20 members.<sup>8</sup> Few of them are still active, which to a great extent resulted from the country's population migration to urban centers during the twentieth century. In 1898 more than 90 percent of the Swedish population still lived in the countryside where the small companies of Adventists existed. The little Adventist communities enrolled their sons and daughters in the fledging mission school. Their farming backgrounds proved to be a great asset to those who later decided to go to foreign missions.

The academic year was very short, starting late October and ending in April. At the end of each school year many students accepted baptism, even if the ice hardly had melted on the nearby river.<sup>9</sup> Another reason for the short school term was that some students had to assist at their family farms during harvest, others needed to earn school fees mostly through colporteur scholarships. By spreading Adventist publications, the students paved the way for later evangelistic campaigns and church planting.

Nyhyttan was a mission school. Most of the first foreign missionaries from Sweden had their educational and spiritual roots at Nyhyttan.<sup>10</sup> A number of them continued their training at the Skodsborg School of Physiotherapy, and thus well-equipped, they became the first generation of Scandinavians to accept calls to foreign fields. They included Hanna and Ruben Bergström (Northern Cameroon in 1930), Ester and Nils Dahlsten (Manchuria and China in 1925), Bror Färnström (Jerusalem in 1926), Lisa Johansson (Ethiopia in 1936), her brother Johannes Johansson (Burma in 1939), Alice Lind (Ethiopia in 1934), Erik Palm (Ethiopia in 1933), Julius Persson (Eritrea in 1907), and the Zerne family (Middle East in 1923).<sup>11</sup> All of them did pioneer work, often in unchartered places of Adventist mission or territories such as Northern Cameroon where no Christian mission had existed previously. It is of note that the membership in, for example, 1932 totaled only 2,103 in the two Swedish conferences.<sup>12</sup>

## Changes

A 1926 educational meeting of the European Division, held at Friedensau in Germany, proposed stricter guidelines for the denomination's schools in Europe. They were to have a general basic education of four years followed by two years of more in-depth theological study for ministry. Nyhyttan Mission School followed the proposals and introduced a fifth year in 1929, later followed by a sixth.<sup>13</sup>

In 1932 the school moved to Ekebyholm north of Stockholm. The debate about the school's location had been ongoing since the beginning of 1900s, because of Nyhyttan's difficult access from other parts of the country. Also, many wished for a larger farming area for students to work in, as well as grow food for the school family. With the move the name changed to Ekebyholmsskolan.<sup>14</sup>

## Legacy

Many years later, one of the young teachers who transferred with the school said, "We wished to bring with us the spiritual life of the Nyhyttan school to the new site."<sup>15</sup> Some did, although those children of the great revival also faced changing times. However, from the school's faculty there emerged in the 1930s and 1940s leadership of the church who exhibited deep devotion. These also had a healthy outlook on equality between the students and the growing possibilities for establishing an Adventist presence in the changing educational landscape. Foremost of those leaders were Gustaf Lindsay,<sup>16</sup> Carl Gidlund, and Ingrid Albiner,<sup>17</sup> to mention just a few.

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### SOURCES

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### NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, this article is written from the personal knowledge of the author who has been a student of Swedish Adventist history for many years.
2. William A Spicer, *Our Story of Missions* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1921), 112.
3. The Adventist literature in Swedish was printed in the United States for a long time for Swedish immigrants in the States. Many of the new Adventists sent it to relatives and friends in their home country.
4. Gösta Wiklander *I Herrens Tjänst*, (Stockholm: Adventistsamfundet, 2000), 22, 23, 47, 48; 75; see also Y. Johansson Öster, "Carlstjerna, Carl Oskar (188-1953)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=ACTA&highlight=Carlstjerna,|Carl|Oskar>.
5. Prospect:Nyhyttans Praktiska Skola, 1903, 3.
6. Ibid., 4.
7. The Swedish Adventist Church first organized in the 1880s.
8. Gösta Wiklander, *I Herrens Tjänst*, 134-137.
9. Maria Haglund, wife of Karl Mattsson insisted on baptism on New Year's Day. It was an outdoor baptism.
10. Y. Johansson Öster, *Till jordens yttersta gräns* (Stockholm: Skandinaviska Bokförlaget. 2018), 411-413
11. Several were married, only those who were former Nyhyttan students are mentioned here.
12. *Missionären*, September 1932, 107.
13. Prospect: *Nyhyttans Missionskola*, 1930-31, 5, 6.
14. Carl Gidlund, ed., *En skolas historia* (Ekebyholm, Sweden, 1950), 4-11.
15. Ingrid Albiner to Yvonne Johansson. 1962.
16. See Y. Johansson Öster, "Albiner, Ingrid Jenny Elisabeth (1908-1999)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=CCV0&highlight=Albiner,|Ingrid|Jenny|Elisabeth>.
17. Ibid.

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