

STENBROGÅRDEN (Stone bridge estate)

A vicorage in Nyköping

Stenbrogården, a very old estate, is situated in the Allhelgona parish in Nyköping. The history of the estate goes far back in time. According to old documents one has assumed that it was a stone bridge over the nearby river that gave the estate the name Stenbrogården. In historical documents the name Stone Bridge is mentioned for the first time about 1150, when there was a battle.

The information about the Allhelgona church in Nyköping and its priests is, just as the information from the nearby Sankt Nikolai church, very few, although two interesting facts about the Allhelgona church may be mentioned: In 1559 the king Gustav Vasa decided not to use this church and the vicar was moved to Svärta church.

Stenbrogården around 1900. Click to get a bigger view.



This cohered to the king's decision to ad smaller churches to bigger units. In this way he also could lay his hands on the church silver, all because of the economic state in the country at that time. But the Allhelgona church never was destroyed; instead it was reopened in 1561 by the King Erik XVI. In 1562 Stenbro, an estate of the crown became the parsonage of the Allhelgona church vicar.

The estate was beautifully situated just a few miles outside Nyköping and experienced a lot of attention by both church people and citizens.

Nyköping, one of our oldest towns with many historical memories, was already a busy commercial town in the 14th century and grew rapidly to a town full of craftsmen. A tower of defence was built to protect the mouth of the harbour. Prominent members of the Folkunga dynasty found the city very important and started to strengthen and expand the tower with thick stone walls around the area. This became the castle Nyköpingshus, and in its area Erik XIV built a magnificent renaissance palace, which unfortunately was set on fire in 1665. Some parts of the palace have been restored and now contain a museum.

The castle of Nyköping in 1660.



In the 13th century two churches were built, the Sankt Nikolai and Alla Helgona church, as well as a fransiscanius monastery. The priesthood got a big influence in the town and of its inhabitants. Among these priests, court chaplain and ordinary chaplains there were a lot of efficient men, who developed the spiritual life but also had a practical gift when it came down to the material part of the whole church life. They encouraged the architects to embellish not only the town itself but also the parsonages.

Stenbrogården was used as a parsonage up to the early 20th century. The first vicar to stay there was Lars Andersson (Laurentius Andrae) who lived there between 1562 and 1595. He was succeeded by Nils Jacobson (Bothniensis) who descended from Västerbotten. He became the curt chaplain of Duke Karl and was a very educated man who advanced to be the vicar in Örebro in 1620. Stenbrogården was at this time constructed as the directions of the Södermanna law from the 14th century pointed out. The law dictated that a parsonage had to consist of a cottage, a house for cooking, a barn, a granary, a larder, a dormitory and a byre.

Of all the priests that have had their residence at Stenbrogården there are some who made a difference and gave big contributions, not only to the history of Stenbrogården but also to the history of the town. One of them was Jakob Serenius (1700 - 1776). He was a enterprising man, a many-sided man, that beside his responsible work as a priest also was a



member of parliament. He also participated in the urgency of the town with strength. Furthermore he published an English – Swedish dictionary printed in his own printing office in Haag.

Jakob Serenius, vicar in Alla Helgona parish in the 18th century.

Even though he had a wide spread work he never forgot the Stenbro parsonage. Instead he showed a great interest in making the estate economically fruitful. He also improved the appearance of the main building and embellished the surrounding with new plantation, all by himself. His succeder Andreas Flodman made a completely new main building.

Another vicar at Stenbrogården, Nils Grandelius, who served during 1770 – 1834, was as Serenius a very qualified man. He was a Member of Parliament and a teacher. He also was a great lover of the nature and he cared for the Stenbrogården estate in a deserving way. He turned the neighbouring enclosures into an ornamental park and constructed stairs of stone in the small surrounding mountain. It became the Garden of Eden, where he spent his days, full of work, until he built a house in Nyköping, near his church.

In the beginning of the 20th century the Stenbrogården parsonage was sold and has been in private possession ever since. For example have the Saab-Ana company used the building as a directors residence. The last 45 years the building has been used as a restaurant and has become a place for excursion, very liked by tourists and nearby living people.

The development of Stenbrogården is very interesting and the estate and its traditions has fortunately been taken care of by the new owners and keepers. You can hear the wings of history in the top of the trees and in the soil the precious ancient objects is resting.

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