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A Canadian soldier from Värmland

His military career was very short, but his background was interesting

BY ELISABETH THORSELL

Sometime ago I was trying to find information on Canadian records. I stumbled on a database of soldiers of the First World War. I decided to find out if any Swedish-born men had enlisted, and found this young man.

According to the document on the next page, Helmer Gustav Berglund was born in Sweden on 2 March 1895 at Exceral(?).

He had his medical examination in Yorkton, Saskatchewan (northeast of Regina), on 2 January 1918. He was 5 foot 9 inches tall, with a fair complexion, and blue eyes, and brown hair – a typical Swede.

On 28 May 1918 he was enlisted in the 1st Depot Battalion of the Saskatchewan Regiment. He is then listed as being a farmer, single, and living in the Maloneck area, north of Yorkton. He belonged to the Swedish Mission Church.

His closest relative in Canada was his mother Sophia Berglund, who lived at Norquay, also in Saskatchewan.

Helmer Berglund seems to have been discharged already on 7 June 1918, after about a week of military life.

In the Canadian census of 1921 Helmer lives with brothers Manuel and Victor at a place called Livingstone, also in Saskatchewan, and they are all single and recorded as farmers.¹

The story from the Swedish records

The search for Helmer Gustav's Swedish background started with a look into *Emibas*, the database that contains the majority of the Swedish immigrants. The combination of the names Helmer and Gustaf is a bit unusual, and a boy with those names was found as *Gustav Helmer Håkansson*, b. 2 March 1895 in the parish of Ekshärad in Värmland. *Ekshärad* is probably heard by an English-speaking clerk as *Exceral*, so that was the solution to that mysterious name.

In the Ekshärad birth records² Gustav Helmer is recorded as being the son of the soldier Håkan Snör and his wife Sofia Bläckberg in Snöre village.

The Snör family lived in the Snöre village, not far from the Klarälven river. In the cl. survey³ they are listed like this:

Soldier #52 *Håkan Larsson Snör* (b. 10 Dec. 1868 in Ekshärad), as is the rest of the family,

Wife *Sophia Bläckberg* (b. 1 Dec. 1869), married on 17 Aug. 1890.

s. *Karl Viktor* (b. 29 May 1891).

s. *Lars Emanuel* (b. 2 Feb. 1893).

s. *Gustav Helmer* (b. 2 Mar. 1895).

Then tragedy struck the family. The father Håkan died 5 Mar. 1895 from consumption.⁴

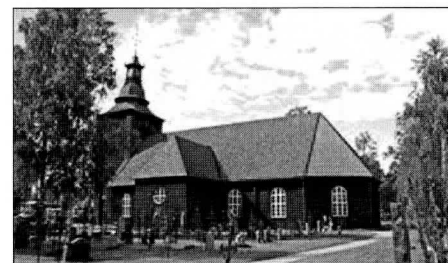
In the next cl. survey⁵ widow Sophia and her sons in 1896 moved to Halgå, also in Ekshärad, where her parents lived. On 17 April 1900 she and her sons left Halgå and travelled to America. They have not been found in the *Emihamn* database, so they may have travelled by the way of Norway, which was not uncommon for people from Värmland.

It was found⁶ that Sophia Blackberg and her sons arrived from Liverpool on the *S/S Corinthian* to Quebec on 3 June 1900, and continued their travels to her uncle (*farbror*) Carl Bleckberg and his family in West Valley, Marshall county, MN.

Sophia and her boys are not there in 1905, when there was a territorial census.⁷ This tallies with the information from the 1921 Canadian Census where it is recorded that Helmer and his brothers came to Canada in 1905.⁸ They probably came with their mother, who supposedly married a John Berglund at that time, which made the sons to change their last name from Blackberg to Berglund.

Endnotes:

- 1) 1921 Canadian Census, Livingstone Municipality, Mackenzie, Saskatchewan (Ancestry.com).
- 2) Ekshärad C:13 (1895-1905) img. 11 / p. 3.
- 3) Ekshärad AI:40 (1891-1895) img. 242 / p. 674.
- 4) Ekshärad F:6 (1895-1913) img. 10 / p. 2.
- 5) Ekshärad AI:42 (1896-1899) img. 253, 449 / p. 686, p. 886.
- 6) "Border crossings from Canada to the U.S. 1895 – 1956" [Ancestry.com].
- 7) Minnesota Territorial Census 1905 (Ancestry.com)
- 8) See note 1.



Ekshärad church, built in 1686.

12. M. D. 1st Depot Battalion Sask. Regiment
Regtl. No. 269552

PARTICULARS OF RECRUIT Co 6
DRAFTED UNDER MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1917

(Class One)

DUPLICATE

1. Surname Berglund
2. Christian name Helmer Gustav
3. Present address Malomeck P.O. Sask.
4. Military Service Act letter and number L.C. 410202
5. Date of birth March 2 1895
6. Place of birth Exceral Sweden
(town, township or county and country)
7. Married, widower or single single
8. Religion Swedish Mission Church
9. Trade or calling farmer
10. Name of next-of-kin Sofea Berglund
11. Relationship of next-of-kin Mother
12. Address of next-of-kin Norquay P.O. Sask.
13. Whether at present a member of the Active Militia No
14. Particulars of previous military or naval service, if any None
15. Medical Examination under Military Service Act:-
(a) Place Yorkton Sask. (b) Date Jan. 2 1918 (c) Category 1 2

DECLARATION OF RECRUIT

I, Helmer Gustav Berglund, do solemnly declare that the above particulars refer to me, and are true.

Helmer Gustav Berglund (Signature of Recruit)

DESCRIPTION ON CALLING UP

Apparent age	23	yrs.	3	mths.	Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous disease.
Height	5	ft.	9	ins.	
Chest measurement	fully expanded		34	ins.	
	range of expansion		2	ins.	
Complexion			fair		
Eyes			blue		
Hair			brown		

for Binnie Insp.
O. C. Depot Bdn.
Sask. Regt.

Place Regina Sask. Date May 28th 1918
M. F. W. 423.