

Inspector Gullbrand Bjelke, Asele was born the 1st of November, 1842, at Bjelker Nylenda, a farm in North-Odal, Norway. He was the next youngest of seven children. Oldest was another son Gullbrand, born 1824. He died however, in 1841. His brother, born the next year, inherited thus the name.

Father was Isak Olssen, born at Skjustad, Stourmen, South-Odal in 1792. He died in 1873.

Mother was Ragnhild Gullbrandsdotter, born at Bjelker in 1803. She died in 1859.

The farm Bjelker is said to have old ancestry, going back to the Viking age. In the book "Nord-Odal", pulished by the community in 1969 you can read a description of the farm and its owners through the times. Appendix 1

Bjelker Nylenda today is owned by Arne Bjelker. On the premises there still is an old house "where the old people used to live". Gullbrand most likely was born there. A photo of Arne Bjelker and the old house, taken by Sune and Majli Harding at a visit there in the summer of 1983 can be seen in Appendix 2.

The North-Odal book shows that Gullbrand Isaksson married Thore Andrea Gundersdotter from Svarverud 1868. Svarverud is a neighbouring house to Bjelker. A picture of the existing estate as well as the names of Thore Andrea's parents is found on page 193 in the book.

The record office at Hamar, Norway has very kindly contributed some further information about Gullbrand and Thore Andrea. Appendix 3

It is said that Gullbrand was a Sargeant in 1869. He was this year "nidorst" that means a lodger at Svarverud, married to Thore Andrea. They were married on the 4th of December, 1868. They had their son Gustaf Reinhard there on the 12th of April, 1869.

Sweden and Norway were a union at that time, so you can say that Gullbrand was N.C.O. in Oscar II:s army.

The possibilities to earn a good living for the Sargeant and his family in their native place seemed obviously not too good. They decided to look for their fortune some other place. In the North-Odal book says that Gullbrand and Thore Andrea went to Finland, while the record office at Hamar, that gathered information from the parish register of Nord-Odal, verify that the family left for Sweden in 1870.

Gullbrand and Thore Andrea's way to Asele

There exists a family bible, owned by Bjelke's where time and place of birth for all the children is documented:

"Our oldest daughter Clara Matilda was born into the world at Gardsjo the 8th day of May 1871."

"Second daughter Ingeborg was born 1872, the 7th of December at Dynas."

"Second son Gullbrand Adolf was born at Dynas the 20th of December 1874."

"Third daughter Mina Lovisa born at Meastrand the 27th of April, 1877."

"Arndt Teador born the 19th of March at Meastrand."

"Otto Bernhard born the 21st of June 1880."

and: (stands first) "Vores Eldste son Gustaf Reinhart fodd till
(in the bible) Verlden pa Svarverud den 12 April 1869."

Some original documents:

1. A letter from Gullbrand, written in Meastrand the 6th day of July, 1876 to a friend, obviously in Dynas. Appendix 4
2. A purchase resp. selling contract for a crafters place in Dynas the year 1873 resp. 1876. Appendix 5

The places mentioned here are situated in Adalou or next to it at Faxalveu, where Edsele lies. There you also can find Gardsjo (or Gassjo) not far away from Gideaberg, that will show up later on. See route map 17 Sundsvall. Appendix 6

Now that we know where and when Clara Mathilda was born, we should look for her on the parish register in order to find the starting point in Sweden. The question is: "Where is Gardsjo?" Obviously some where in Adaleu. On the map we find one Gardsjo (there are several of them in Sweden) nearby Gideaberg, that belongs to the parish of Edsele. And very true, there she is:

"8th May 1871. Clara Matilda
Parents: Father - Gullbrand Isaksson,
his wife, Thore Andrea Gundersdotter
from Gudenundra. Married 2 years.

Note: Christened by C. Naslund, Certificate of Baptism sent to the parish at Gudenundra on the 23rd of May, 1871.

They were not mentioned in the file for the catechitcal meeting in Edsele this year. In the file from Gudenundra on the other hand you find them in AI:5A page 76, corresponding to Sandviken at Dynas.

There is mentioned that they moved on the 1st of July 1870 from Norway. Gullbrand is mentioned as "workman".

The communion was taken the first time the 15th of August, 1871.

Obviously Gullbrand had some casual job at Gardsjo in Edsele. he is called "factor" which means that he was some sort of foreman, dealing in this case with timber in some way. The place of destination however was no doubt Sandviken at Dynas.

This was the time when sawmills developed close to each other along the river mouth's in Norland, as was the case in Aelalen within the town Harnssand.

"Saw by saw I saw where ever I saw"
is a well known remark by a Swedish poet, Sehlstadt, after he had visited this region.

At Sandviken there existed for some time a one frame sawmill. Sandvikens Säjvorks AD had been founded in 1868 by Fredrik H. Vorstegh. Gradually the mill expanded, 1876 to 4 frames, 1882, a totally new sawmill with 5 frames was built. 160 permanent workers were employed at the time.

The company possessed large forests within Vasternorlands and Vasterbottens districts. Head man for the company was here above mentioned Vorstegh.

In the file AI:5A for the catechetical meeting at the same time appears the wholesale merchant and counsel Fredrick Heurik Vorstegh who came from Edane and Holland the 10th of August, 1870. He belonged to a wealthy dutch family, who early carried on timbertrade in Sweden, but now wanted to increase their activities within Sweden.

Gullbrand came to play an important part as a valuable fellow worker in the company. A close and trustful relation between Vorstegh and Gullbrand was gradually formed during coming years. V stegh needed timber for his mill. Gullbrand successfully helped him to get it.

Gullbrands background as sargeant no doubt means that he had a good theoretical education as well as practical experience to lead and handle people and as a son of a farmer he certainly had some ideas about forestry.

Vorstegh and Gullbrand arrived to Sandviken almost at the same time (July-August) and learned to know each other from the beginning.

Gullbrand and Thore Andrea lived the first time obviously rather primitively in a workers lodging. The 25th of November, 1873 they bought, as mentioned before (Page 3) a crafters place in Dynas. They payed 1500:- Riksdaler Riksmünt for it.

Appendix 5.1

In this purchase contract the name Bjelke appears for the first time.

Also of interest is the fact that Gullbrand did not sign the contract himself. This was done by K. Isaksson by proxy.

The signers full name was Knut Isaksson, who in the files is said to be born in Kristiania (present Oslo) the 3rd of February, 1831. He came to Sweden several years beofre Gullbrand. He was married to Ingeborg Olsdotter also from Kristiania, lived 1860 in Bjartra and was in Dynas 1866. He moved 1877 to Gunkoldsvik. In a letter from Vorstegh to Gullbrand is said that Gullbrands brother Knut is dead (around 1881). Knut is not mentioned among Gullbrands brothers in the Nord-Odal Book. The case is not further investigated. Anyhow, Knuts existence in Dynas could explain why Gullbrand happened to go just to Sandviken.

In the files from the catechetical meetings these years Gullbrand is called "cr fter". There son Gullbrand Adolf was born there the 20th of December 1874.

The property was sold to the son of peasant Nils Jonas Rostrom for 1700 Kroun on the 17 April 1876. The selling contract is signed by Gullbrand Bjelke

Appendix 5.2

Back to Sandviken he goes under the title "Factor". Shortly afterwards the family is moving to Edsele. Officially they are transferred from Dynas to Gideaberg in Edsele the 23rd of October 1876.

From the files there we find that Gullbrand is a tenant of a farm Gideaberg on 1 Iceland, a farm that Sandvikens Ab has bought from the former owner Pei Olofson, Aks in Edsele.

There is a letter written by Gullbrand the 6th of July 1876 to a friend at Sandviken

Appendix 4

Here he describes hardships and troubles during the journey by steamship to Holmstrand, then by land. One can easily imagine that Gullbrand and Thore Andrea with household goods and four children 17, 5, 3½ and 1½ years has some problems on their way to a new living.

In Gideaberg, Edsele, the family is presented in the following way in the file from the catechetical meeting:

Bjelke, Gullbrand Isaksson, Tenant
W. Thore Andrea Gundersdotter
S. Gustaf Reinhard (1) b. 1869 17/4 in Norway
D. Clara Matilda (2) b. 1871 8/5 in Edsele
D. Ingeborg Katarina (3) b. 1872 7/12 in Gudmundra
S. Gullbrand Adolf (4) b. 1874 20/12 in Gudmundra
D. Mina Lovisa (5) b. 1877 27/4 in Edsele
S. Arndt Theodor (6) b. 1879 19/3 in Edsele
A dead born female child (7)

Man servant Carl Edward Gundersson b. 1849 4/2 in Nordre Odalen, Norway

Also a noting on the family's ability to read and their knowledge of divinity.

	ability to read	catechism	explanation	understands
Gullbrand	IIII	I	IIII	IIII
Thore Andrea	IIII	I	IIII	IIII
Gustaf Reinhard	II	I	II	
Clara Matilda	II	I	IIII	
Ingeborg Katarina	I	I	I	

The priests own testimonial seal:

ability to read
I has started to read
II reads slightly
III reads fairly
IIII reads passibly
IIII reads cleverly

I for catechism means that he or she had learnt the Luthern catechism by heart (at least part of it)

As for the explanations:

I means that you know the first article of the catechism, II the second and so on.

Gullbrand and Thore Andrea did not get IIIII in ability to read by book, which might be caused by the fact that they still were living with their norwegian language. (The letter that Gullbrand wrote from Meastrand was in Norwegian). Otherwise there was nothing wrong with their knowledge according to the conception of the priest. Notable is Clara's knowledge of all five articles.

In the file appears Carl Edward Gundersson. He is a brother to Thore Andrea. It is not known if he accompanied Gullbrand and Thore Andrea from Norway. According to the Nord-Odal book he was unmarried and back in Nord-Odal and Svaverud in 1891.

Gullbrand seems to have rented Gideaberg for some time. A common practice that companies who bought a forest-home-stead rented the estate to a tenant just to be free from maintaining the house.

He still had a position as "Factor" for Sanvikens Augsags AB under Vorstegh. The family did obviously not live in the very Gideaberg. The letter mentioned was written in Meastrand where also Mina Lovisa and Arndt Teodor are born. Meastrand lies quite near to Gideaberg and might have been a part of the estate rented.

The tragedy with the dead born female most likely occurred in 1881. The last communion at Gideaberg was taken 1881. Thore Andrea did not participate.

Meanwhile Gullbrand had bought a farm. Waneda 1 seland, still in Edsele a little further upstream the river. To this place the family moved in 1882.

Gullbrand is here called "Estate owner Gullbrand Bjelke, Factor". They stayed here until 20 November 1886 when they left for Asele. Sandvikens Augsags AB bought Utanedi.

Children these years:

1877 the 27th April

Mina Lovisa (5)

Factor Gullbrand Bjelke and his wife Thore Andrea Gundersdotter in Gideaberg christened by Kom. W. Hagstrom.

1879 the 19th March

Arndt Theodor (6)

Gullbrand Belke, Factor, Gideaberg, Thore Andrea Gundersdotter. g. 11 as.

1882 born the 2 May

Johan Otto Bernhard (7)

Parents: Factor Gullbrand Bjelke and Thore Andrea Gundersdotter in Wanede,
14 year marriage

Some Comments from Gullbrand's time at Asele

1. The family moved in to Asele the 21st of November, 1886. Gullbrand obtained the title "Inspector".
2. Received from Vorstegh and Sandvikens Sjöverksaktielolag a letter of attorney, 4 of June, 1887 to take care of the company's interests in Asele, Dorothea and Vilhelmina.

Appendix 7

3. Letters to Vorstegh and Sandviken reflect Gullbrand's activities in lumbering, timber floating, purchase of forest-homesteads and so on. Gullbrand as well as his sons Gustaf and Gullbrand Adolf travelled a lot in the district winter and summer.
4. In the Dorothea district Gullbrand had an assistant Grols Naslund, married to Hilda Cristina Alstergren (it was considered important to be married).

In Vilhemina a man by name Vinter, was removed from his employment as Gullbrand's assistant though he could deal with the Vilhemina district himself. By and by Gustaf Bjelke took over and moved finally to Vilhemina the 17th day of October, 1892.

Gullbrand suggested to Vorstegh in a letter 21 October, 1892 that Gustaf should take over our employment after a Mr. Burman at Bredbyn (a place further north, away from Gullbrands district) apparantly this could not be worked out.

In the same letter 21/10 1892 is mentioned that "the old man" Olof Johansson had payed Gullbrand a visit in Asele.

Olof is my (Sune's) grandfather (father's side). He had a similar connection to Vorstegh and Sandviken as Gullbrand. He had a homestead called Normas at Boderun in Angermanland (not so far from Dorothea). He was born 1836 at Clara in Varnland. Came to Goosjö 1868 and was employed as "Timberfactor" by Vorstegh.

My father Erik Johansson came to Asele 2nd of December 1897 and worked for Gullbrand as his amanuensis. Erik married Mina Lovisa Bjelke on the 23rd of June 1901. He took her over to the Dorothea district during 1900 and Grils Vaslund came to Asele to replace Gullbrand on the 16th of September 1900. Gustaf stayed in Vilhelmina.

5. Gullbrand, at the end of 1890 began to have problems with his health. In a letter to Vorstegh the 9th of November 1897 among other things:

"With my health it is not the best, as my stomach is rather bad and I suspect that my smoking has caused the most part of it, what also the Doctor claims. I have now had to stop smoking."

In a letter of 28/4 - 98 Gullbrand mentions that his health lately has been and is bad.

"and God knows what end this will be."

A journey to Stockholm for an operation could possible be undertaken around midsummer.

A letter the 15 June 1898 Gullbrand intends to go south:

"and I think it would be best if Gustaf could come home, while I am away, for the accounts sake, and Johansson goes to Vilhelmina instead."

I prefer to go by train and were it perhaps convenient if "Mr. Consul" could meet at Amundsgo, so we could go together to Langsile. Kindly bring also 1000:- Kr as all money being here will be spent this month."

I feel rather poorly. I hope the journey will make me healthy again. What a happy day shouldn't I have then!"

The 19th of June a further letter to Vorstegh. Gullbrand will leave Asele the 1st day of July. He mentions that his intention had been to go by boat to Stockholm, but as his wife who does not like the sea, wants to join him on her way to Norway "to collect a small legacy after her mother", they have to take the railway.

There are a couple of letters from Porla in July (Porla is a well-known watering place in the south of Sweden). Gullbrand is answering a letter from Vorstegh of the 22nd. In this letter Vorstegh has mentioned that Gustaf was back in Vilhelmina already the 9th of July. He obviously was travelling along Storsjon and Kallsjon (Jaintland) and intended to proceed to Steusela. Gullbrand does not find Porla to be a place for pleasure. It is an unpleasant place to stay at. It is raining all the time. But he is willing to accept all discomfort, only that his health is recovered.

Back to Asele the 12th of August, 1898. Letter to Vorstegh. He had stayed in Stockholm for 8 days. An eye specialist there had examined his eyes and verified cataract in his right eye. The doctor did not believe an operation could help very much.

Gullbrand mentions that he suffers from Bright's disease (better now after the treatment at Porla) and suspects that this could cause trouble with his eyes. His stomach is very well after the treatment he had in Porla.

He also mentions that the "carting Parcellings" are inspected and according to what Erik claims they should in general be very good.

Gustaf is said to have been at Steusele nevertheless this summer even if it is gone hastily, he is supposed to be at Granliden at present to buy markings.

Appendix 9

The last letter from Gullbrand to Sandviken that was found at Bollstabruk was dated the 8th of October 1898. It was countersigned by Erik Johansson. The receipt of 17,000:- Kr is acknowledged. Gustaf is arriving to Sandviken next week for further information.

Appendix 10

Gullbrand received for the year 1899 a salary of 4000:-Kr and subsidiary for journey to Porla - 800:-Kr

6. The board of directors for Sandvikens S jverks ktelolag decided the 14 June 1900:

"To the former employee in the company, Inspector G. Bjelke, Asele who by reason of sickness retired from his appointment the 31st Okt. 1899 is granted as grateful acknowledgement for his lasting faithful and ardent activity an annual pension of three thousand Kronor to be paying during his remaining lifetime.

Otto Gavelius"

Gullbrand died January the 13th, 1901 (13/1 - 01) cause of death was critical infection of the kidneys.

Fredrik H. Vorstegh died the 23rd January 1901.

7. The new century brought important changes for the company. A new board of directors was constituted after F.H. Vorstegh. A brother to him, younger Arndt Vorstegh took over the lead. A group of five companies, Graurge, Utanof's and Sandviken were reorganized and became "Graingaraken".

Otto Gavelius became director for Sandvikens  ngs gs AB under the new group.

In 1900 it was decided in principle that Graingaraken should stop buying more forests.

The forestry was more and more passed over to trained people like woodwards, and executed foresters.

This meant no doubt changes in tasks to the staff after Gullbrand Bjelke. The private owners of forests had become more aware of the value in their forests. Many owners no doubt regretted that they had sold too early on the other hand it was first that firms with a large capital had built up large modern factories, organized timber-cutting and timber-floating in a big scale that the inland forests got their value.

The Asele district which had lied under Gullbrand Bjelke, was divided into three obviously more independent districts. To Asele came from Dorothea Grels Naslund. To Dorothea Erik Johansson from Asele married Mina Lovisa Bjelke and Gustaf Bjelke remained in Vilhelmina.

What really happened to Gustaf Bjelke in Vilhelmina we do not know. Minutes from board meetings tell their story.

Appendix II

A letter from Gustaf Bjelke of the 1st of December, 1944 to his brother Gullbrand in Dynas, Sweden translated to english is Appendix 12.