

# Researching in Older Swedish Church Records

## ***SWEDISH CHURCH BOOKS***

The Swedish church books are usually the first set of records people look at when they begin their Swedish genealogy because they are so complete and contain much information. The church books begin in the late 1600s and go up to 1991.

The Swedish Church was a state church responsible for maintaining Sweden's vital records until 1991. The Church Law of 1686 required parish ministers to record all births, marriages, deaths, and movements in and out of the parish. There are some parish records before 1600, but most begin in the late 1600s. The Swedish Church Books include fourteen record types, and the primary books used by genealogists are:

1. Birth and Christening (födelse- och dopbok)
2. Banns and Marriage (lysnings- och vigselbok)
3. Death and Burial (död- och begravningsbok)
4. Moving in and out (In- och utflyttningslängd)
5. Household and congregation (husförhörslängd och församlingsbok)
6. Church accounts

Swedish research is rewarding because one can often trace a person from birth to death or emigration using a combination of vital records, household, and moving records. But as one goes further back in time, the researcher faces challenges.

## ***CHALLENGES RESEARCHING IN THE OLDER CHURCH BOOKS***

Some of the challenges that the researcher may face in the older records include the following:

1. No record standardization, so the record's content will vary by time and parish.
2. Household examination records don't usually go as far back as birth, marriage, and death records, so the trace becomes more difficult.
3. Handwriting is a challenge in older records.
4. Moving in and out records are not always preserved.
5. Figuring out the meaning of a place abbreviation.
6. Errors in the household examination records.
7. Spelling is not standardized.

## **Case Study**

Search for a birth record for a person whose birth parish is not noted in the household books. As one researches one's family heritage back in time in the Swedish church books, one will find an ancestor where not all the correct birth information is noted in the household books. In this example, we will search for Hinrik Wieweg's birth record and follow his life from birth to his residence in Älvsbacka parish.

1. Find the birth record for Hinrik Wieweg (Viweg)
2. The following chart shows what is known about Hinrik Wieweg

<b>EVENT</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>
Birth	1773	Västmanland County	Household Examination Record Älvsbacka AI:5 (1811-1816) Image 12 / page 6 <sup>1</sup>
Marriage	9 Oct 1798	Älvsbacka, Värmland	Älvsbacka EI:1 (1732-1810) Image 112 / page 211
Death	23 Aug 1847	Älvsbacka, Värmland	Älvsbacka EI:2 (1811-1860) Image 53 / page 99

### Case Study Challenges

1. The Household examination record does not show the birth parish; it only notes the birth county. There are 75 parishes within Västmanland county.
2. The household examination record only notes a birth year, which is a lesser problem.

### Search Process

1. Begin searching backward in the household examination records to find out when he moved into this parish and where he is from.
2. Examine each record to see if there are additional clues such as parish name, birth date, or moving-in date for Hinrik.
3. Search in the previous household examination books and look for the place in the place index. Plåthammaren is the place in this case.
4. Search the following household examination books
  - a. Älvsbacka AI:4 (1807-1811) Image 13 / page 7
  - b. Älvsbacka AI:3 (1802-1807) Image 10 / page 5
  - c. Älvsbacka AI:2 (1791-1801) Image 3
    - i. In this book, you will notice in the table of contents that the book is divided into sections: (1791-1795) and (1796-1801)
      1. Älvsbacka AI:2 (1796-1801) Image 95 / page 89
      2. Älvsbacka AI:2 (1791-1795) Image 12 / page 6
    - ii. **The last record is a key record.** This one shows Hinrik with his parents and siblings before his marriage. You will see that his mother and several siblings were born in Västmanland. The last birth in Västmanland was in 1780. The next child was born in Älvsbacka in 1783. So, this suggests that the family moved to Älvsbacka between 1780 and 1783.
  - d. Älvsbacka AI:1 (1779-1790) Image 86 / page 5
    - i. This book is also divided into sections: (1779-1785) and (1786-1790).
    - ii. There are some missing pages in the first section, and the family does not appear in the section for the years 1779-1785.

<sup>1</sup> As shown in app.arkivdigital.se

## Evaluate Current Situation

There are no more household examination records that we can search for, and there are no moving-in books for this period. At this point, we still only know that Hinrik was born in Västmanland County in 1773, and it appears that he moved to Älvsbacka with his parents and siblings between 1780 and 1783.

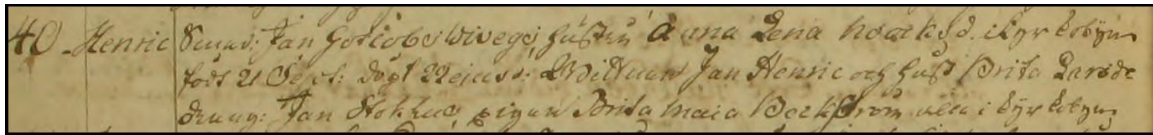
- Name – Hinrik Wieweg
- Birth date – 1773
- Birth place – Västmanland County
- Father – Christian Gottlieb V(W)ieweg born 1736 in Tyskland (Germany)
- Mother – Anna Lena Noacksdotter-Åberg born 1744 in Västmanland
- It appears that they moved into Älvsbacka between 1780 and 1783

## Identify next steps

1. One possibility is to search the birth records in 1773 for all parishes within Västmanland. Since there are 75 parishes, this could be a tedious process. However, one could list the Västmanland parishes and look in the birth book for each parish for the year 1773. About 15 years ago, this probably would have been the only solution.
2. **Identify searchable name index databases.**
  - a. Today, more searchable name indexes exist. ArkivDigital has a searchable birth index for all birth records between 1750 and 1840.

## Search for the birth record using ArkivDigital's birth index

1. Go to [app.arkivdigital.se](http://app.arkivdigital.se)
2. Select Index Search
3. Select *Births, parts of Sweden* under the Index source
4. Use Simple search
5. Enter the following variables Henrik | Hinrik Västmanland 1773 and click search.
6. There are six matches
7. Review the index record matches
8. One match notes the parents as Jan Wieveg and Anna Lena Noacksdotter, which we know are the correct parents from the household book in Älvsbacka.
9. The index links to the source. Compare the index records with the source.
10. We learn that he was born in Kyrkobyn in Skinnskatteberg in Västmanland county. Below is an image of his birth record.



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<sup>2</sup> Skinnskatteberg (U) C:6 (1756-1774) Image 107 / Page 172 (AID: v74054.b107.s172, NAD: SE/ULA/11336)

### ***Transcription***

*Entry 40 Henric Jan Gotlieb Wieweg, hustru Anna Lena Noaksdotter i Kyrkobyn, född 21 Sept, döpt 22 ejusdem; vittne Jan Henric och hustru Brita Larsdotter, dräng Jon Stokhus, pigan Brita Maria Bäckström in Krykobyn*

### ***Translation***

Entry #40, Child's Name, Henric

Parents: Jan Gotlieb Wieweg and wife Anna Lena Noaksdotter at Krykobyn

Birth date – 21 September 1773

Baptismal date – 22 September 1773

Witnesses – Jan Henric and wife Brita Larsdotter; farmhand Jon Stokhus and maid Brita Maria Bäckstrom at Krykobyn

Krykobyn is the place or village where the family lives. We need this information to find the family in the household book.

### **Search for household examination record**

1. Search in the household examination book for Skinnskatteberg for the year 1773
2. Search in the table of contents for Kyrkobyn. Records begin on page 151.
3. You will find the family in the following record:
  - a. Skinnskatteberg AI:6a (1770-1774) Image 167 / page 161 (AID: v74006.b167.s161, NAD: SE/ULA/11336)
4. Since they didn't move, go to the subsequent household examination book and search for Kyrkobyn.
5. You will find the family in the following record:
  - b. Skinnskatteberg AI:7b (1775-1785) Image 178 / page 170 (AID: v74009.b178.s170, NAD: SE/ULA/11336)
  - c. This record shows the family moving to Nora in 1777

### **New Problem – Where is Nora?**

There are three parishes in Sweden named Nora.

1. Nora in Västmanland County
2. Nora in Örebro County
3. Nora in Västernorrland County

### **Suggested steps for identifying the correct Nora**

1. Look at a map to check distances
2. Look for moving-in registers for parishes
3. Nora in Västmanland does have a moving-in register
4. Check the moving-in register for 1777 – the family is not listed
5. The other two Nora parishes do not have moving-in records for that period
6. Review one Älvsbacka household examination records that showed the family's birth years and birthplaces.
7. Greta Stina was noted as born in 1780 in Västmanland
  - a. Search for her using ArkivDigital's birth index
  - b. Enter the following search variables: Greta Stina 1780 Nora

- c. You will find her birth in Nora bergförsamling at the following reference:
- d. Nora bergförsamling C:3 (1770-1788) Image 182 (AID: v53618.b182, NAD: SE/ULA/11098)
- e. The birth record states that she is living at Hagaby bruk
8. Search for a household examination book for the year 1780 and look for the place in the index. The starting page is 338.
9. You will find the family at the following record:
  - a. Nora bergförsamling AI:8a (1775-1784) Image 351 / page 342c (AID: v51986.b351.s342c, NAD: SE/ULA/11098)
  - b. This record shows the family moving to Ny in Ed parish in 1782.

## Summary

In this case study, our goal was to find the birth record for Hinric Wieweg. We started with a household examination record for 1812 showing him married with a family. The household examination records stated that he was born in Västmanland county in 1773. We traced him backward in the household examination records for Älsbacka, Värmland, to 1786. In the search, we identified his parents' names and birth years for them. By reviewing the household examination records and looking at family members' birth dates and places, we feel comfortable that the family moved to Älvsbacka between 1780 and 1783.

***Our first problem was to identify a birth parish for Hinric.*** We had a birth year, name, names of the parents, and county of birth. With this information, we could search for the birth record using the Birth indexes within ArkivDigital's service and successfully found the birth record.

The birth record gave us the village's name in the parish so we could find the family in the household examination book.

After examining several household examination records in Skinnskatteberg, we discovered that the family moved to Nora in 1777. ***We then faced a second problem identifying the correct Nora parish in Sweden since there are three parishes*** in different counties. One of the parishes did have a moving record, but we did not find the family. The other two parishes had no moving in records for that period. One solution would have been to page through the household examination books for both parishes hoping to find the family, and we may have been forced to do that.

**It is important to step back and review what records you have.** The household examination records show that one child, Greta Stina, was born in 1780 in Västmanland. We could find her birth record by going to the Birth index in ArkivDigital and searching for a Greta Stina in Nora in 1780. Then by identifying the village name in the birth record, we could find the family in the household book.

In conclusion, the new birth indexes in ArkivDigital are helping one to go back further in the Swedish church books when the household books may not give complete information.

Swedish church books are on multiple sites. ArkivDigital has the most indexed church records, with an index record that includes a partial transcription and a link to the source.

### ***BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, AND DEATHS INDEXES IN ARKIVDIGITAL***

ArkivDigital is indexing all the Swedish church birth, marriage, and death records from the earliest times (the 1600s) to about 1900 or 1920. The index record has a link to the source. The indexing is being done by genealogists within Sweden, thus resulting in a high-quality index. Today, the index includes all birth, marriage, and death records for Kronoberg county, about 80 parishes in Södermanland county, most of Värmland, records up to 1860 for Jämtland county, and a few parishes in Blekinge, Jönköping, Kalmar, Kristianstad, and Norrbotten counties. Birth records for 1750-1840 have been indexed for all of Sweden. Marriage records for all of Sweden for 1800-1840 have been indexed. Currently, death records for all of Sweden for the years 1750-1700 are being indexed. Following are links to pages showing what parishes and years have been indexed for the birth, marriage, and death records. These pages are organized by county, parish, and years.

- Births: <https://www.arkivdigital.se/online/register/fodelseregister>
- Marriages: <https://www.arkivdigital.se/online/register/vigselregister>
- Deaths: <https://www.arkivdigital.se/online/register/dodregister>

### **FAMILY TREES AND OTHER INDEXES**

One must be very careful when looking at Family Trees on various platforms. They should be used only as a hint to find a source if they are not sourced. Some search possibilities are:

1. Search the name and date on Google
2. Search FamilySearch.org
3. Demographic Database of Southern Sweden
  - i. <http://www.ddss.nu/>
4. Computer Genealogical Society of Sweden - <https://www.dis.se/>
  - a. Below is the image of information about Hinrik Wieveg's birth parish

b. 

## HANDWRITING

One of the biggest challenges in reading older records is handwriting. I wish I could say there is an easy way to solve this problem. Indexing with transcriptions makes Swedish research easier, but not all records have been indexed and transcribed. Below are a couple of sites that provide some tools and tutorials.

### *Online Tools and Tutorials*

1. ***Swedish Genealogy Guide*** – Here, you will find a Learning Center that includes two tutorials, *Reading Gothic Handwriting for Swedish Genealogy Part 1 and Part 2*. You can download a PDF, *Swedish Gothic Alphabet Samples*.  
<https://swedishgenealogyguide.com/learning-center>
2. ***Family Search Wiki Sweden***  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Sweden\\_Handwriting](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Sweden_Handwriting)

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