

## Finding Your Swedish Roots – Where Do I Start?

Lenora Lynam, Director – Lindsborg Old Mill & Swedish Heritage Museum  
info@oldmillmuseum.org

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Swedish and Nordic records are among the best in the world. With a little research in family and American records you will soon be tracking your family.

### **Familysearch.org/wiki/en/Sweden\_Genealogy**

Gather the following information about your immigrant relative:

Full Name – note any variations or changes, middle names, etc.

Date of birth (month, day, year) – check several sources

Birthplace (or place of residence) in Sweden or other country

Approximate year of immigration – check several sources if possible

Why do you need these? Unique names, birthdates, places, and dates help separate your ancestor from others with similar names born at similar times. Remember that thousands of immigrants were moving at the same time. In addition, you need to know where your ancestors lived before emigration to follow them in the parish records there.

Thoroughly review all FAMILY RECORDS, for example:

Family Bibles

Old Letters & postcards

Certificates & other documents written in Swedish

Old photographs

Family histories, Family stories

Employment/Retirement documents

Death Certificates

Obituaries – check English and Swedish language newspapers

Tombstones/Cemetery information , Funeral Cards or Memorial information

Swedish American Newspapers -

Minnesota Historical Society [www.mnhs.org/newspapers/swedishamerican](http://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/swedishamerican)

Talk to extended family members to see what information they may have filed away.

Move beyond family records to other American records that might contain part of the information you need.

Census Records:

1900 Federal Census – gives month & year of birth + immigration year, along with name  
1910, 1920, 1930 also asked for immigration information

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Where to find the census:

Family Search.org – free site

Ancestry.com – subscription site

Local libraries – free access

Marriage Records – Check for applications, licenses, and certificates, not just a ledger entry.

Naturalization Records – 5 year, 3 step process, papers may be filed in several locations, before 1906 check county level, after 1906 federal courts standardized process.

Homestead Application Records – Check land records which may lead you to a Homestead certificate/application number. Application packets can be ordered from the National Archives.

Court Records – civil, wills, probate records

Military Records – draft registration, service records, discharge records, veterans' organizations

Passport Application Records – Did your ancestor return to Sweden? Detailed information in these.

Passenger Arrival Records – Difficult to use due to a lack of detail. Later records asked for a contact in the U.S. Ellis Island opened for New York arrivals in 1892. Before that New York had the Castle Garden site to process new arrivals. Both have web sites. Be careful because many immigrants with the same name arrived around the same time. It is easier to come back to these records once you have confirmed all data on your ancestor, rather than to search here in the beginning.

A better search option:

American Church Records – may contain information on your ancestor's birth date & place. Lutheran and Covenant records especially can be very detailed.

How to check church records:

Contact the church directly if it is open

For Swedish-American Church Records:

Contact Swenson Center at Augustana College – they have copies of many

For questions on Lutheran churches contact ELCA, Chicago

For questions on Covenant churches contact North Park University Archives, Chicago

Many of the Swedish Lutheran & Covenant Church records – Ancestry.com \$

ArkivDigital.net \$ - Swedish American Church records for Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Colorado & partial for Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Wisconsin

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Don't forget to contact the local archives, museums, libraries and historical societies where your family lived. They may have copies of many types of records. They also may have collected information on immigrants for special projects.

Information may be hidden in unusual places in local records, for example in funeral home records. There are many local records not yet online.

Things to understand about Swedish research:

Names: Americanization of names, name changes at time of emigration or after

Spelling variations – stay flexible about spelling

Name changes due to military service in Sweden

Patronymic naming system – Eric Olofsson's children: Johan Ericsson, Anna Ericsson

Women's names did not change with marriage in Sweden

Swedish Alphabet: The Swedish alphabet has 28 letters:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V X Y Z Å Ä Ö

Å Ä Ö are separate letters.

They stand for distinctive and separate vowel sounds.

They are NOT an 'umlaut' like in German. Forget German.

In Swedish there is no connection between A and Ä or O and Ö.

Remember Å, Ä, Ö come after Z when you are looking at alphabetical lists.

www.typeit.org to type Swedish letters

Emigration Facts: 1.2 million Swedes left Sweden between 1821 & 1930.

The first big wave was in 1860s. All together Sweden lost one in five citizens to emigration. Immigrants settled together in the U.S. both in cities and rural areas.

This ties back into names – don't assume your Gust Johnson is the only one in an area.

Geography: You'll be searching by place in Swedish records so it's important to know these divisions – listed here from largest to smallest:

Provinces *Landskap*

Counties *Län*

Parishes *Församling* – *Socken*

Villages & Farms

Indexes to emigrants can help you find a place of origin if you have name, birth date and approximate emigration year. For Sweden these include

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EMIBAS – Index to people signed out of the parish records – Originally published on a CD, now available on both Ancestry.com \$ (world edition) and arkivdigital.net \$

THE SWEDISH EMIGRANT or EMIGRANTEN POPULAR – Index of emigrants leaving Swedish ports. Originally published on a CD, now available on both Ancestry.com \$ (world edition) and arkivdigital.net \$

Using these search techniques, you will probably find what you need to start in the Swedish records. If not, go back and look again at your ancestor's life. Check every document possible for the family. Look at the people around them.

Focus on the places they lived. Work with genealogists in that area for more help. They can be your best resource. Also check with genealogists who work regularly with Swedish American research.

There are many connections between families in Swedish American communities. Swedish immigrants settled near other people from Sweden. The fact that they often they settled very near friends and relatives can help you.

Sometimes it takes a while, and help can come from unexpected sources. Don't give up!

Records from Nordic countries contain a wealth of information. Most people can find more than they ever thought possible.

### **Swedish Church Records:**

The church was the official record-keeper for the people of Sweden. Church records are a major source of information on your family. They include birth records, marriage records, death records, moving records, and household examination records.

- The Swedish Church Records are a treasure for the Swedish genealogist because there are so many records and they are so complete. While it is not known for certain, when the Swedish Church began keeping the records, some records from the 1500's have been preserved. A Church Law of 1686 required the clergy to keep records of births, christenings, marriages, deaths and burials in the parish as well as records of persons moving in and moving out of the parish. The Swedish Church was responsible for maintaining the vital records up to 1991.
- The Swedish Church Records include fourteen record types. The most commonly used by the genealogist are the birth (födelse), marriage (vigsel), death (död), moving in/moving out (inflyttning och utflyttning) and household examination records (husförhörslängd).

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- The household examination records (husförhörlängd) are wonderful sources to reconstruct one's family history. Each year, the minister was required to take a spiritual and physical accounting of all who lived within the parish. The ministers recorded this information in the large books usually one spread (similar to an accounting spread sheet) per household and they were updated each year for about 5 to 10 years and then a new volume was created. These books are usually organized by farm, village or place in alphabetical or geographical order. Many books include village indexes in the front or the back of the volume. For each household, the minister recorded name, birthdates, birth place, marriage date, moving in or moving out information as well as notations on each person's religious knowledge. The household examination records allow one to trace a person from birth to death or birth to emigration. In many cases, it is possible to know exactly where a person resided each year of his life.
- SCB Records
  - These are transcriptions of birth, marriage and death records kept by the government agency, Central Bureau of Statistics (Statistiska Centralbyrån). These records cover the years 1860 to 1952.
- Estate Inventories (Bouppteckning)
  - These are inventories of the assets and debts of the deceased somewhat similar to a probate record. The estate inventories consist of two parts: the ingress or preamble and the inventory. The preamble gives information about the deceased and names the heirs. Estate inventories can be helpful in proving genealogical relationships as well as solving genealogical mysteries.
- Tax/Population Registers (Mantal)
  - Tax/population registers were created annually. These records are not as detailed as the household examination records but can be helpful in cases where the church records have been destroyed.
- Other Records
  - There are many other records that one can use to research further one's Swedish heritage. Those include: court records, military records, prison records, land records, orphanage, hospital, school and much more. Many of these records are now becoming accessible online.

### **Where to find the records**

- Original Records
  - Regional Archives in Sweden
- Online sites
  - [www.arkivdigital.net](http://www.arkivdigital.net) \$
  - Swedish National Archives <http://sok.riksarkivet.se> Free
  - [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (world edition) \$
  - [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) – Indexes available to all but most of the images are only available to members of the Church of Latter-Day Saints or at the Family History Library, a Family History Center or a Family History Affiliate.
  - [www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com) \$ Household examination records 1840-1952 for all of Sweden

Printed Books & Guides:

Your Swedish Roots: A Step by Step Guide by Per Clemensson & Kjell Andersson, published by Ancestry, Provo, UT 2004.

Explore Your Swedish Heritage by Håkan Skogsjö, published by ArkivDigital, Lyrestad, Sweden 2020

A Practical Guide to Swedish Church Records by Geoffrey Fröberg Morris, published by The Swedish Genealogy Guide, West Jordan, Utah 2020

Husförhörslängder, Swedish Household Examination Records by Robert W. Johnson & Elizabeth Williams Gomoll, self published, Minneapolis, MN 2020

CATEGORY	Name	URL
Research Guide	Family Search Wiki	<a href="https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Sweden_Genealogy">https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Sweden_Genealogy</a>
Research Guide	Swedish Roots	<a href="https://www.rotter.se/swedish-roots">https://www.rotter.se/swedish-roots</a>
Dictionary	Swedish Genealogy Guide	<a href="https://swedishgenealogyguide.com/">https://swedishgenealogyguide.com/</a> click on dictionaries
Dictionary	Demographic Database of Southern Sweden	<a href="http://www.ddss.nu/">http://www.ddss.nu/</a> Click on English flag for English and then click on glossary
Maps	County Maps 1890	<a href="https://memmingsforskarna.se/sockenkartor">https://memmingsforskarna.se/sockenkartor</a> Click on desired county. A PDF will open with a county showing parishes with numbers followed by one-page listing parishes by number and a second page with parishes in alphabetical order showing the number on the map.
Maps	Historical Maps	<a href="https://www.lantmateriet.se/en/">https://www.lantmateriet.se/en/</a> Click on historical maps
Swedish_American Resources	Swenson Center	<a href="https://www.swensoncenter.org/genealogy">https://www.swensoncenter.org/genealogy</a>
Military	Central Soldier's Register	<a href="https://www.soldatreg.se/sok-soldat/">https://www.soldatreg.se/sok-soldat/</a>
Military	Hans Högman Genealogy & History Site	<a href="http://www.hhogman.se/military.htm">http://www.hhogman.se/military.htm</a> Scroll down and search military – excellent site for Swedish military history and Swedish Genealogy