

Basics of Swedish Research

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Have Swedish Roots and don't know how to get started?

The two biggest challenges for descendants of Swedish emigrants are locating the ancestor's parish of origin and identifying the ancestor's original Swedish name. You will need your ancestor's Swedish name, parish where your ancestor lived and a date such as a birth, marriage, death or emigration date before you can begin your research in the Swedish records.

Get started

Study Swedish research guides (Guides are listed in the resource section).

What do I need to know before I begin my Swedish research?

- *Become familiar with the Swedish alphabet.*
 - Three additional letters at end of alphabet – å, ä, ö.
 - Flexible spelling, letters are often interchanged such as k and q, v and f, e and ä.
- *Naming Conventions*
 - The **patronymic naming system** was in common use up to the end of the 19th century within Sweden. Between 90 and 95% of the population used the patronymic naming system. A child was the son of or the daughter of the father. Thus, if the father's name is Sven Johansson, his son's name might be Anders Svensson or Anders the son of Sven. Likewise, a daughter might be named Anna Svendsdotter or Anna the daughter of Sven. When a woman married, she did not adopt her husband's name upon marriage but kept her patronymic.
 - During the 19th century, many townspersons who didn't want to be considered poor farmers adopted family names often called "**nature names**". These "nature names" usually would consist of two parts such as Dalberg. Dal is valley and berg is mountain.
 - Soldiers were given **military names** while in the military. One could not have fifty Johan Andersson's in a military unit, so each person unit was assigned a unique name. Military names sometimes represented a personal quality like Rapp (quick), a military term or an association with the place where the person served. When leaving the military service, some soldiers did keep their military name while many reverted to using their patronymicname.
 - Many of the Swedish emigrants changed their name while in Sweden and after they emigrated often the name was changed again. Some kept the patronymic but usually dropped the second "s" in the name. "Andersson" became "Anderson". Other names were changed to an Anglicized form; Karl or Carl in Swedish often became Charles in the New World. Some names were partially translated into English. Sjöberg became Seaberg. Once in the new country, some emigrants totally changed their names, "New country, new name".
- *Geography*
 - The key to Swedish research is to know the parish in Sweden where your ancestor resided because the church records are organized by parish. There are several important geographical terms to become familiar with: province (*landskap*) or province; county (*län*) and parish (*socken*).
 - The creation of Sweden in the 11th century was formed by the unification of local kingdoms that were ruled by local leaders. These kingdoms became the 24 provinces (*landskap*) of Sweden. In 1634 the Swedish kingdom was reorganized and provinces gave way to the new county (*län*) structure. Some provinces were identical to the new county. Other provinces were subdivided into two or three counties. These county boundaries remained mostly the same until about 1970 when some boundaries changes or counties merged.

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- It is important to understand the difference between province (*landskap*) and county (*län*). While the provinces have no administrative functions, they still retain a cultural historical significance and have defined geographical borders. The counties (*län*) were and remain administrative units and that is where the records were kept. The county (*län*) is divided into parishes (*socken*). The church records were kept by the local parish and the church was responsible for keeping all vital records up until 1991.

The Hunt Begins

➤ *Search personal sources*

- The first step is to begin with yourself and your family. First, gather all the information that you can from personal sources about your Swedish ancestor who emigrated. Personal sources include interviews with family members, the family Bible, old letters, post cards and diaries. These sources may include names of family members and place names in Sweden. Old photographs may have the name of the photo studio that took the picture that may prove helpful in providing a clue to the place of origin. Old letters and diaries might provide names of siblings and parents who might provide links to tracing your ancestor. Remember, spellings of place names may be phonetic or anglicized but gather this information.

➤ *Search public sources*

- Marriage and death certificates may provide age information. U.S. Census and state census records can provide information such as age, birth year and emigration year. Applications for naturalization often have detailed information including the place within Sweden where the emigrant resided. World War I and World War II draft registration records will provide birth date and the World War II draft registrations records often will show the place in Sweden where the person had resided. Obituaries often provide the name of the place in Sweden of origin as well as siblings or relatives within Sweden. Tombstones will often have the birth date and death date. These records can provide additional clues in the hunt. Many of these records are now online. Many are available on subscriptions sites such as www.ancestry.com or on free sites such as www.familysearch.org.

➤ *Search Swedish-American Church Books*

- Many Swedish immigrants joined Swedish-American churches primarily Lutheran but also other denominations such as Baptist, Swedish Covenant and Methodist. These churches kept very detailed records including the name of the parish in Sweden where the person was born. Many of these Swedish American church records have been microfilmed and are available at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center in Rock Island, Illinois. The link to the Swenson Center is: <https://www.augustana.net/general-information/swenson-center/genealogy>. Many of these records are now available on Ancestry.com. The amount of information will vary dependent upon the individual congregation but if the information is complete, you can often find in these records: date and place of birth and baptism; date received as a church member; and arrival year in America. Many Swedish-American church records for Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota and Nebraska are now available on ArkivDigital.net, a subscription site.

➤ *Search Swedish-American Newspapers*

- The Swenson Center also has many Swedish-American newspapers on microfilm. Many obituaries can be found in these newspapers. For a list of the newspapers that are on microfilm, visit the Swenson Center's website: <http://www.augustana.edu/x14666.xml>. Now, many of these newspapers are now online at the Minnesota Historical Society's web site: <http://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/swedishamerican>

➤ *Search Passenger Ship Lists*

- There are two out of print books that give detailed information about Swedish passenger arrivals between 1820 and 1850 in U.S. ports both written by Nils William Olsson. One is

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titled *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in U. S. Ports 1820-1850* and the other is *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820-1850*.

- The majority of Swedes traveled from Gothenburg (Göteborg) to New York but some ships also landed in Boston, Philadelphia, Portland, Maine, Halifax, Montreal and Quebec. For New York arrivals, you should check Castle Garden records and after 1892 Ellis Island records.
- You can find indexes and ship manifests of passengers leaving Swedish ports on Ancestry's World Edition <http://www.ancestry.com> in the section, Emigration Records from Sweden and also on the subscription sites: www.arkivdigital.net and www.emiweb.se. This index includes the names of about 1.4 million persons leaving from Swedish ports between 1869 and 1951.
- Many Swedes emigrated from Norwegian ports especially emigrants from Dalsland, Värmland and Jämtland.
- You can find Swedes who left from Danish ports at <http://www.udvandrerkivet.dk/udvandreprotokollerne>. This database includes persons leaving between the years 1869 and 1908. You can select the English language.

➤ *Search Emigration Records*

- There are two sets of Swedish records listing emigrants: *utflyttning* records in the church books and the annual emigrant list sent from each parish to the Central Bureau of Statistics (*Statistiska Centralbyrån*). The latter set of records begins in 1860.
- Emibas is a CD with 1.1 million names of persons who left Sweden of between 1845 and 1930 and is 75 per cent complete. The original source for the database is the moving out (*utflyttning*) records from the church books. This is one of the most powerful tools because it is searchable on many parameters such as birth date, emigration date, name, parish, county, and other data. The CD is no longer being produced but the contents of Emibas are now available on the subscription site www.emiweb.se and also on www.ancestry.com.
- The emigration extracts or SCB emigrants are available on the National Swedish Archives subscription site (<http://sok.riksarkivet.se/>) and some are listed on www.emiweb.se.

What are the Swedish Records?

➤ *Swedish Church Books*

- 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, christening, 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*).
- The household examination records (*husförhörslängd*) 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 large books usually one spread (similar to an accounting spread sheet) per household and they were updated each year for about five or ten 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 this life.

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- *SCB Records*
 - These are transcripts of birth, marriage and death records kept by the government agency, Central Bureau of Statistics (*Statistiska Centralbyrån*). These records cover the years 1860 to 1949.
- *Estate Inventories (Bouppteckning)*
 - These are inventories of the assets and debts of the deceased somewhat similar to a probate record. The estate inventories consist 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 that 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. Among the many records 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 are the records?

- *Original records*
 - Regional Archives in Sweden
- *Online sites*
 - www.arkivdigital.net \$Subscription site.
 - Swedish National Archives <http://sok.riksarkivet.se/> Free site
 - www.ancestry.com World Edition \$Subscription site.
 - 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 \$Subscription site - Household examination records 1840-1947 for all of Sweden

Seek assistance

- *Message boards and Facebook groups*

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Swedish Resources

CATEGORY	NAME	URL
<i>Research Guide</i>	Family Search Wiki	https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Sweden_Genealogy
<i>Research Guide</i>	Swedish Roots	https://www.rotter.se/swedish-roots
<i>Dictionary</i>	Swedish Genealogy Guide	http://swedishgenealogyguide.com/ Click on dictionaries.
<i>Dictionary</i>	SweGGate	http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~swewgw/ Click on dictionaries and encyclopedias,
<i>Dictionary</i>	Demographic Database of Southern Sweden	http://www.ddss.nu Click on English flag for English site and then click on glossary.
<i>Maps</i>	County Maps 1890	http://memmingsforskarna.se/sockenkartor.html 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.
<i>Maps</i>	Historical Maps	http://www.lantmateriet.se/en/ Click on historical maps.
<i>Swedish-American Resources</i>	Swenson Center	https://www.augustana.edu/swenson/genealogy
<i>Emigration</i>	Emigration Records	http://www.emiweb.se \$Subscription site
<i>Emigration</i>	Swedish Passenger Ship Index	http://search.ancestry.com/Places/Europe/Sweden/Default.aspx \$Subscription site
<i>Emigration</i>	Norwegian Passenger List	https://digitalarkivet.no/
<i>Emigration</i>	Danish Passenger List	http://www.udvandrerkivet.dk/udvandrertprotokollerne/ Select the English language.
<i>Military</i>	Central Soldier's Register	https://www.soldatreg.se/sok-soldat/
<i>Military</i>	Hans Högman Genealogy & History Site	http://www.hhogman.se/military.htm Scroll down and search military – excellent site for Swedish military history and Swedish genealogy.
<i>Directories</i>	Swedish Telephone Book and searches for living people	http://www.eniro.se/ http://www.birthday.se http://www.hitta.se
<i>Other</i>	DIS Society	http://www.dis.se Search for other people researching your family

SWEDISH RESOURCES

ONLINE SITES FOR SWEDISH RECORDS	URL
ArkivDigital - \$ subscription	http://www.arkivdigital.net
Ancestry (World Edition) - \$ subscription	http://www.ancestry.com
National Swedish Archives free site	https://sok.riksarkivet.se/
Family Search – free site	http://www.familysearch.org

MyHeritage \$ Subscription (1840-1947 household records)	http://www.myheritage.com
Stockholm City Archives – free site	http://www.ssa.stockholm.se/

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SWEDISH ARCHIVES	URL
National Archives (Riksarkivet)	http://riksarkivet.se/startpage
Regional Archive Göteborg	http://riksarkivet.se/goteborg
Regional Archive Härnösand	http://riksarkivet.se/harnosand
Regional Archive Lund	http://riksarkivet.se/lund
Regional Archive Uppsala	http://riksarkivet.se/uppsala
Regional Archive Vadstena	http://riksarkivet.se/vadstena
Regional Archive Visby	http://riksarkivet.se/visby
Regional Archive Östersund	http://riksarkivet.se/ostersund
Stockholm City Archives	http://www.ssa.stockholm.se
Malmö City Archives	http://www.malmo.se/stadsarkivet#
Värmland Archives	http://varmlandsarkiv.regionvarmland.se/
Military Archives	http://riksarkivet.se/krigsarkivet
National Archives Database	http://sok.riksarkivet.se/nad

Swedish Genealogy Books

Clemensson, Per & Kjell Andersson. <i>Your Swedish Roots</i> . Provo, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2004.
Johansson, Carl-Erik. <i>Cradled in Sweden</i> . Sandy, Utah: Everton Publishers, 2002. (Out of print)
Olsson, Nils William. <i>Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820-1850</i> . Chicago, Illinois: The Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1967. (Out of Print)
Barr, Elinor. <i>Swedes in Canada: Invisible Immigrants</i> . Toronto, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Swedish Genealogy CDs

CATEGORY	NAME	WHERE TO PURCHASE
<i>Death Index</i>	1860-2017	https://www.rotterbokhandeln.se/product.html/sveriges-dodbok-7?category_id=10