

3-1-2015

## Book Reviews

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### Recommended Citation

(2015) "Book Reviews," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 35 : No. 1 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol35/iss1/12>

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# Book Reviews

Here you will find information about interesting books on the immigration experience, genealogical manuals, books on Swedish customs, and much more. We welcome contacts with SAG readers, suggestions on books to review perhaps.

If you want to review a book yourself, please contact the SAG Editor, at <sag@etgenealogy.se> so we know what you are working on.

## A spooky tale

*The number 7*, by Jessica Lidh. 271 pages, hardcover. ISBN 1-4405-8306-4. Published by Merit Press 2015. \$17.99.

This book is for young adults, and is a work of fiction. The author Jessica Lidh has a Swedish background, but also uses her experiences as a high school teacher to show the growth of her teenage heroine, Louisa.

Louisa and her father Christian Magnusson and her older sister Greta recently lost their mother and wife. To get hold of their life again the father decides to move from North Carolina to his boyhood town in Pennsylvania, where he has inherited the family home, after his mother's recent death.

It seems that it had been years since he visited with his mother, and his father had been long gone. Neither of them told anything about their past life. The grandfather Gerhard Magnusson never mentioned anything about his hometown, Trelleborg, or his parents and siblings. Louisa, who is a sensitive person,

feels that there is some dark mystery there, but she does not know how to find out about it.

She goes to a local school and becomes friendly with two boys, Gabe and Chris, and lives a teenager's life.

But one day she explores the attic in the house, and notices an old phone. Suddenly it starts ringing though it is not connected, and she answers it. An old voice starts to tell her stories about a couple of twins in Sweden, Lars and Gerhard, and how they lived during World War II with their parents and a sister in the small coastal town of Trelleborg.

Louisa finally understands that it is her late grandmother who is telling her the family secret, so she can pass it on to her father, who never knew.

Gerhard worked for the railway, and brother Lars (Lasse) on the ferry boats to Denmark. During the war German officers came to town and requested permission for wounded German soldiers in Norway to be sent

on the railway back to Germany. The Swedish government gave its permission for this, and Gerhard was the engine driver that had to do this task, which he felt was wrong.

Something happened and Gerhard went into hiding, and after the war was over he immigrated to the U.S. and never talked about his experiences during the war. The only person he told was his wife, who much later felt that it was necessary for the family to know about it, and understand why he was so reserved.

The book seems well written, and the author has got most Swedish facts fairly correct.

*Elisabeth Thorsell*

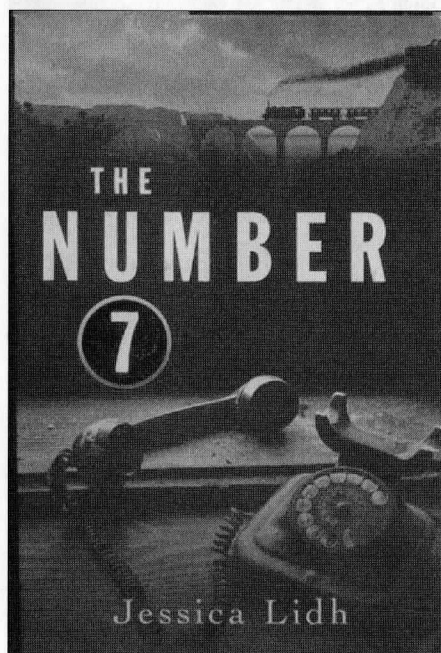
## Rural America has many capitals

*United Stockholms of America, The Swedes who stayed*, by Charlie Bennet, Anna Maria Bernitz, and Gabriel Mellqvist. 2014. Hardcover. 144 pages, 12 inches x 9 inches. ISBN 9789187283475.

More information from the publishers, <order@votumforlag.se>

This beautiful book starts with a nice foreword by author Anna Maria Bernitz about the causes of the great immigration of Swedes to the U.S. and Canada. Just a small mistake, Ellis Island did not open until 1892, not 1880.

Actually the book started as an exhibition for the House of Sweden



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in Washington, D.C. and was exhibited there in 2013.

Charlie Bennet is the photographer of these amazing pictures. Anna Maria Bernitz and Gabriel Mellqvist tell the stories that the team encountered during their travels to Stockholms.

To understand the background of why the Swedes left their home country, Professor Ulf Beijbom has written a chapter on the great immigration, which starts with a picture of the Great Hall in the Ellis Island main building, a space that once was filled with voices speaking many different languages.

Then we get to meet with the different Stockholms in America.

The first one is *Stockholm, Aroostook County, Maine*, which was founded in the 1870s by Swedish immigrants that had been recruited by the ambitious William Widgery Thomas, who was sent out by the Maine government to populate the huge forests in northern Maine. In the summer of 1870 the first group came to New Sweden, and more followed during later years. Stockholm village was first called Upsala, but changed the post office name in 1901 to Stockholm. Nearby settlements are called Jemtland and Westmanland. In 2010 some 253 people lived in Stockholm, and not all of them are elderly. In Stockholm village the population consists of French (42 %), Swedes (29 %) and English (10 %). In the summer many that moved away come back to meet with friends and relatives.

Then we move to *Stockholm, Saint Lawrence County, New York*. This is in the northern part of the state, just a two hour drive from Montreal in Canada. The area is a beautiful farming and recreational area with lakes, the Hudson river for fishing, and all kinds of outdoor life.

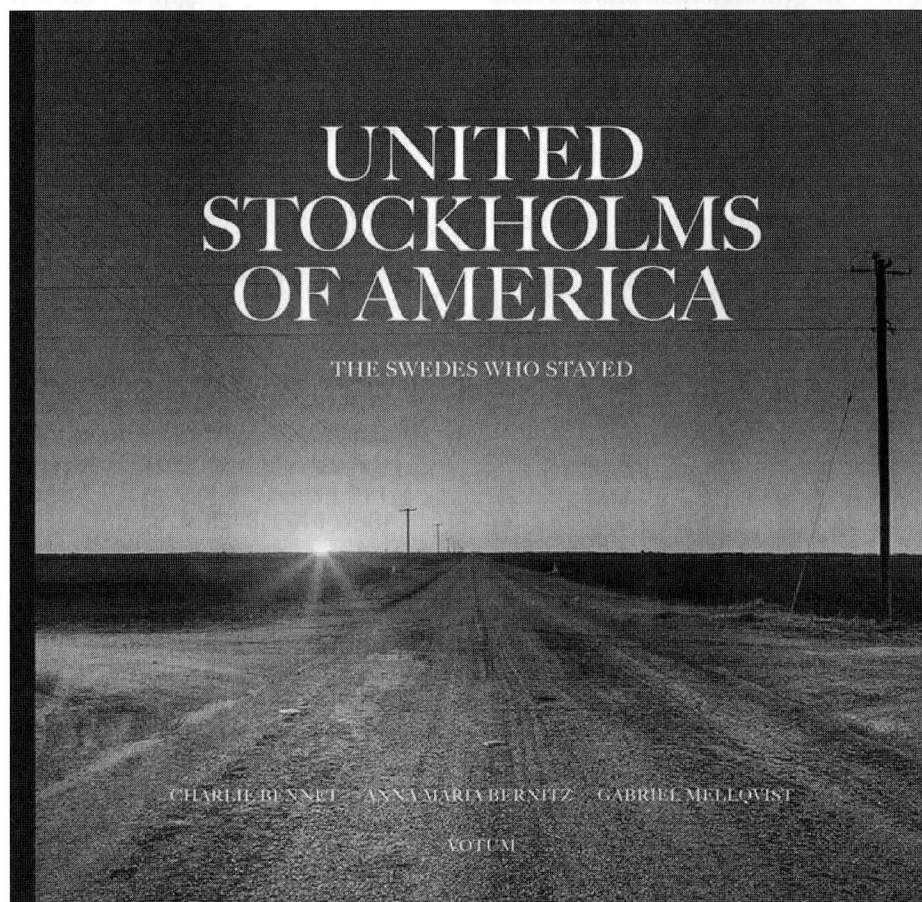
The community was founded in 1806, which means that it is probably the oldest place in the U.S. with this name. However, the name has been changed to Winthrop, but in the vicinity there are North Stockholm, East Stockholm, and South Stockholm. Surprisingly there does not seem to be any inhabitants with Swedish roots. None show up in the census statistics.

Another non-Swedish *Stockholm* is in *Sussex county, New Jersey*. It is just a 1½ hour drive from New York City. There has never been any Swedish settlements in the area. In the census data for Sussex County Swedes are listed as 1 %.

*Stockholm in Crawford County, Iowa* is a different matter. These days not many live there anymore, but still it was settled by Swedes in the late 1860s. Most of them came from older Swedish places like Swede Bend by the Des Moines River, and many of the new settlers lived along the river. The Stockholm Post Office opened in 1890 but closed already in 1915. Nearby Kiron is the city in the county with the strongest Swedish roots with 16 % percent of the population, the majority are the Germans with 37 %, but the Swedes come second.

There are two places in Minnesota, both named *Stockholm*. One is in *Kandiyohi County*, and the other one in *Wright County*.

In this book only Stockholm in Wright County is visited. Jacob Fahlstrom (b. 1793 in Sweden) was supposedly the first Swede to have come to the area, but did not stay long. The first settlers came in 1862, when the place was still called Moores Prairie. Later the township was divided, and



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the south section was called Stockholm. The Stockholm Lutheran Church was founded in 1866, and is still a living church. According to the church records, the first members were from northern Värmland; from parishes like Östmark, Vitsand, Lektvattnet, and Torsby.

The majority of the inhabitants have German ancestry (32 %), and then comes the Swedes (18 %). A fun fact, mentioned in the book, is that one of the largest collections of pinball machines is based in Stockholm, where a World Pinball Championship was held a few years back.

And the trail goes on, now to *Stockholm, Grant County, South Dakota*, which is in the northeastern part of the state. The first Swedes came here in 1880, and among them were three brothers Johansson from Hassle in Västergötland. They changed their surname to Berg upon arriving in the U.S. as Johansson was too common, a story you may hear in any Swedish settlement. The Berg brothers and their descendants played a leading role in the development of the place. In 1884 the Stockholm post office opened and in 1906 the Great Northern Railroad officially founded the town. The population is 26 % German, 23 % Swedes, and 15 % Norwegian.

The people of Stockholm have adopted the *Dalahäst* as their symbol, as have many other old Swedish communities. The landscape is flat farming land. Modern advances in agriculture have resulted in fewer and bigger farms, and many people have moved to the cities.

Now the book moves to *Stockholm, Pepin County, Wisconsin*, a place on Lake Pepin, a bulge of the Mississippi

River. The town was settled by people from the Karlskoga area in southern Värmland province. The first Swede was Erik Pettersson from Karlskoga, who with the help of his brother invited other local people to come.

All went well and in 1857 the town already had a steam sawmill, a school, and a Swedish Lutheran congregation with more than 70 members. After World War I the population diminished, and today no more than about 75 individuals live there. But here the Swedes are in the majority (43 %), Germans (29 %), and Norwegians (9 %).

In 1938 the town was visited by

Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf, his wife Crown Princess Louise, and his son Prince Bertil. They had come to the U.S. to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the founding of the New Sweden colony in Delaware, but also took the opportunity to visit more recent Swedish settlements. Today the town lives mainly as a tourist attraction, with hotels, shops, and restaurants. Visitors enjoy the natural beauty of Lake Pepin and the river.

The last American *Stockholm* visited in this book is situated in *Hidalgo County, Texas*, ca 22 miles north of the Mexican border, pre-

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## For more information, write

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# Book Reviews



## Memories from the SEI (part 2)

### SAG needs your help!

We regard the reviews as a very important part of SAG, as the readers are spread all over the U.S., Canada, and Sweden and a lone subscriber even in Australia.

For all of them it is very difficult to keep track of the many interesting books (and movies) that are published with a *Swedish* or *Swedish-American* theme.

We need you to keep your eyes open. And we are extremely pleased if you will write a review and send it to the SAG editor.

Family histories, church histories, local group histories, and lodge histories are among the things we would like to present in SAG. And all in English.

A good book review contains the full title of the book, name of author, year of printing, name of publisher, where it can be bought, and the price of the book.

Send all book reviews to the SAG editor!

*Elisabeth Thorsell*  
SAG editor

sumably a very different place from the other towns with the same name. It turns out that the town has become a ghost town, just a road crossing and not much more, unless you count the Stockholm cemetery.

The first settlers came here in 1912. They came from Colorado, Minnesota, Rhode Island, and other places. They were carpenters, painters, sailors, and so forth, and they all had a dream: a farm of their own. The land was still unbroken and the main crops were cotton, corn, grain, and rattlesnakes.

The new farmers broke the land, started three churches, but problems came. One was the very fluctuating water level in the Rio Grande, which at least once flooded the whole town. Also the change from Swedish to English in the churches during the 1930s made people lose the feeling for their own culture, and the youngsters moved on.

Today the population is mostly Hispanic, and there are no traces of the Swedes.

The book ends with a chapter on Stockholm, Sweden - the magnificent capital of the country.

This is a rich book that tells about a number of forgotten corners of the U.S. in both text and spectacular pictures. My only complaint is that too many of those seem to have been taken in wintertime and come out as sad and gloomy. The interviews with various oldtimers are fascinating, however.

A book that will fascinate you too!  
*Elisabeth Thorsell*

*Oföglömligt*, by Ulf Beijbom. In **Swedish**. Published by the Carlsson publishing company, Sweden. Publication #14 by the *Emigrantinstitutets Vänförening* 2014. Hardcover, 534 pages, illustrated, name index. ISBN 978 91 7331 650 7.

These memoirs by Ulf Beijbom is such a rich book that it is necessary to continue the review from SAG 2014/3.

In the second half of the book Mr. Beijbom tells more about his travels in the U.S., like the time he had the company of then Kronoberg governor, Mrs. Astrid Kristensson, in 1979 on a tour in the Midwest. They were to take part of the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis. They also had the opportunity to visit the Magnuson's *Yesterday of Memories Farm Museum* in Chisago County. That was a spectacular place, where you could find anything you could think of, and then more.

On the same trip Mrs. Kristensson was suddenly invited to give a lecture at Gustavus Adolphus College, and did so well that she was invited to come back the next fall as a visiting professor, which she did.

In Salt Lake City Mr. Beijbom and Mrs. Kristensson were guided in the library by Professor Carl-Erik Johansson, author of *Cradled in Sweden*, the longtime best manual in English for Swedish genealogy.

In the same year Mr. Beijbom visited Alaska and spent time in the town of Whitehorse, where he could study many documents about the goldrush. This later resulted in an exhibition at the SEI about the "Three Lucky Swedes" and other prominent goldminers.

A few years later he returned to

Minnesota in the company of the new governor of Kronoberg, Mrs. Britt Mogård, and a big group of people from Kronoberg. The purpose of this trip was to form a "sister state" connection with Minnesota, a project that now seems to be resting.

In 1993 Mr. Beijbom went on a lecture tour in Australia, his third travel there, which took him to Adelaide, Melbourne, and Canberra, and other places. In Sydney he studied the collections of James Sanderson about the Swedes in Australia, and they were later microfilmed for the SEI.

Mr. Beijbom's last trip to the U.S. while still working at the SEI took place in 2002 in the company of the pilot Carl Werner Petterson, a well-known person in emigration circles, and the leader of many tours to America.

After a couple of days in Chicago,



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the company drove by Rock Island to Rockford, IL, where they stayed for a celebration of the settlement of the first Swedes to the area in 1852. During the gala dinner it was announced that Borgholm on the island of Öland was now Rockford's new *Sister City*, because of the many *ölännigar* that immigrated to the area. During the trip Mr. Beijbom also visited the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where he found many old miners of Swedish heritage, including a very old cousin of Vilhelm Moberg's.

In another chapter Mr. Beijbom tells of his effort to increase the archives of the SEI, and thus make the institution of more interest to scholars and students. One of the more important donors was the former journalist Otto Robert Landelius

who during a long life had collected everything he could find about the Swedes and their immigration to many countries; this material covered many meters of shelf space. His huge collection of newspaper clippings had been sold to the Swedish Biographical Dictionary, but was later copied and is also in the SEI archives.

This chapter tells about many of the contributors to the SEI archives, people like Karl Olin, Berton Hansson, Björn-Åke Pettersson, Bo Björklund, Bertil Grundström, and Albin Widén.

Next Mr. Beijbom tells about some of the scholarly projects that he and the SEI were involved in during his time as director.

An interesting one was the inventory of old Swedish buildings in Minnesota. What influences came from the old country, and which ones came from the surrounding angloamerican building culture? This project resulted in a book by Lena A:son Palmqvist in 1983.

Another project started in the 1980s was geared towards immigrant literature, and resulted in several theses. One of those was by Anna Williams about the journalist and poet Jacob Bonggren, who started as a postmaster in Mora, Sweden. Another was Bigitta Svensson's about the poetry calendar *Prärieblomman*.

Mr. Beijbom tells a lot about the annual *Minnesota Day*, which used to be celebrated in the SEI park, but which has now moved to Ljuder church, and other events of the SEI, which were big happenings in the glory days of the SEI.

He also tells a bit of what happened after his retirement in 2002, but that is mostly a sad story of clashes with local politicians, and problems with the funding of the SEI, that has led to the present situation.

According to the website the *House of Emigrants* will be open all day from 1 June to 31 August 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Elisabeth Thorsell  
Link on p. 30

## New and Noteworthy

(short notes on interesting books and articles)

*Lilly Setterdahl*, the diligent author of many books, like for instance *Swedes in Moline, Illinois, 1847-2002*, *Chicago Swedes*, and *Not My Time to Die* (about the *Titanic*), has now published a new edition of her 1996 book *Minnesota Swedes Vol. I*. In this book she traces the effort of settlers from Skåne to build new homes in Goodhue Co., Minnesota. She also lets the immigrants and their descendants tell their own stories. The book is available from Amazon.com.

In *The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* (January 2015) there are three interesting articles: *From Compulsion to Persuasion: Voluntary Religion and the Swedish Immigrant Experience*, by Philip J. Anderson; *Birger Sandzén: Coming to America*, by James M. Kaplan; and Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey's *Rag Rug: The Last Lecture*. Ms. Hanes Harvey's Lecture was a fun read and covered a number of topics that told about her life in Sweden and America.

*Family Tree Magazine* (May-June 2015) has a couple of helpful articles. One is about *how to find and connect with distant cousins*. The article suggest using family tree web sites (your editor found her lost cousin when he put out his tree on Ancestry); DNA testing; surnames studies groups; social networks (Facebook is an example — your editor found an 8th cousin there, our common ancestor born 1723!); family forums, like rootsweb; look for a genealogical society where your family lived; check out old newspapers, more and more are digitized every day.

Another article is about *tax records*, and parts of that knowledge can be helpful even for later immigrants. Then there is an article about the all-important subject of *source citations*, and how they can be handled in three common genealogy programs: *Family Tree Maker*, *Legacy Family Tree*, and *Roots Magic*. Use these tips!