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Book Reviews

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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.

Little known immigration: to Canada

Swedes in Canada: Invisible Immigrants, by Elinor Barr, 2015. 555 pages, ill., softcover, also hardcover. ISBN 978-1-4426-1374-4. Published by the University of Toronto Press. Available at Amazon.com: \$60.95 (hardcover), \$ 35.44 (softcover).

Finally, this long-awaited book has appeared, and it was well worth waiting for!

Only about 100,000 Swedes went to Canada, as compared with the more than one million that came to the United States. This number of people was the foundation of the many Swedish communities where Swedish was spoken and used daily and in the churches.

The project *Swedes in Canada* started with the goal to make them visible, and learn about their lives and their part in Canadian life. The project has been going for many years, starting in 2001, at the initia-

tive of fundraiser Don Sjöberg and sponsored by the Lakehead Social History Institute. The project leader and researcher has been historian Elinor Berglund Barr of Thunder Bay, Canada, author of this tremendous book.

Already in 1977, professor H. Arnold Barton wondered about why there was so little interest in the Swedish Canadians? In 1982 an entire issue of *The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* was devoted to the subject, but with little impact.

The conclusion in general was that as they were so few, they had married into families of other origins, especially as there were more male immigrants than female ones. The women were the ones to carry traditions from the homeland further.

The 1931 census showed that those with Swedish origins formed only 0.78 percent of the whole population, which was 10.3 million. The British were more than half of the whole, and the French about a quarter. Even Norwegians were a larger group, about 0.9 percent.

In 2008, figures showed that the people that had Swedish origins now had increased to 1.1 percent of a total of 33 million Canadians; a number of those had immigrated during the 1900s.

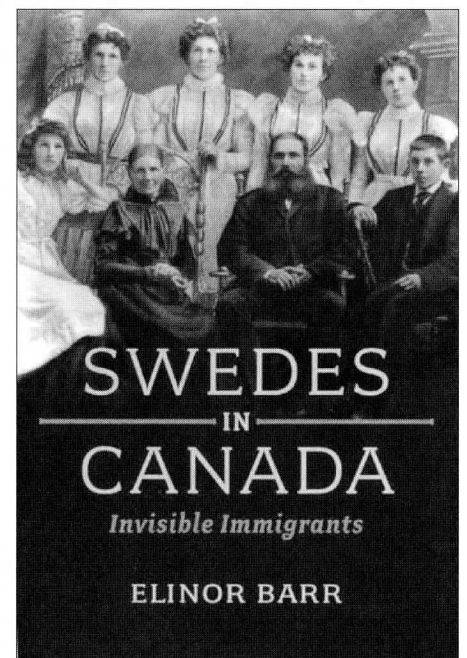
The author discusses if Swedish humility may be one of the reasons for the invisibility of the Swedes. Many of the immigrants had been brought up in a culture where it was not well received by neighbors and even family to brag about oneself, and try to climb to a higher level in society. Going to Canada they met another mentality, more influenced by the American spirit of making the

dreams come true, which a true Swede might also want, but did not speak about.

After the introductory chapter, the author starts with "Emigration from Sweden, Immigration to Canada."

In 1884 the Canadian government started a campaign to promote Canada as a good destination, with plenty of free land and ease of getting a job. Shipping agents in Sweden were provided with maps and brochures which were distributed for free.

Not until the early 1900s did the Swedish government seem to realize that a valuable part of the population was leaving the country. In 1907 they published the huge *Emigrationsutredningen* (Emigration Survey) in which all kinds of statistics and facts can be found, even letters from immigrants, who tell about their lives, including a few Canadians. (Some of those letters might appear in a future issue of SAG.)



SALE!

Swedish Voters in Chicago 1888

By Nils William Olsson
302 pages of Swedes, comments, and indexes.

\$10 + \$5 S&H

Contact Jill Seaholm at
<jillseaholm@augustana.edu>



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One of the results of that survey was that the Swedish government started to help willing farmers to build farms in northern Sweden, so they could get cheap land now in their own country.

Labor unrest and the growth of labor unions forced many workers to leave Sweden, especially after the *Storstrejken* (big strike) in 1909. In their new country this caused a conflict between old, more traditional, and the new, radical, immigrants.

During the earlier immigration period the big dream of the Swedes was to have their own farm, and land was cheap. A quarter section of government land could be had for just \$10 + the cost of building a house and cultivating some land. Railway land was also available, but sold at the going rate. Immigrants were recruited from Sweden, but also from the U.S. where land prices had gone up.

The next chapter is about the immigrants. The first wave started in 1884, when Canada started promoting itself, and lasted until about 1900; the next wave lasted until 1914. It was followed by another wave in the 1920s, when the U.S. enforced new immigration quota laws that almost stopped the immigration from Sweden, due to the small population of the country. The fourth wave started after World War II.

The first wave consisted of families and single men, the second were many maids, the third young men seeking work and adventure, and the fourth refugees and business people, relocating in a more global world.

In this chapter we find all kinds of tables and statistics on the Nordic people in Canada. That might seem

a bit dry, but this helps to understand trends and movements.

Included in this chapter is an interesting part about the Swedes from Gammalsvenskby in the Ukraine. They originally lived on Dagö in Estonia, but in the 1780s were forced to walk to the Ukraine and settle there as farmers. They kept their Swedish culture and language. After World War I the conditions became very difficult, and many of them came to Sweden. Some stayed there, and others went on to Canada, where some of them had immigrated already in the 1880s.

Other chapters are about Settle-

ment patterns; Religion; World Wars; The Swedish Press; the Depression; Strikes and Unions; Earning a Living; A Woman's Place; Swedishness in Canada; Links with Sweden; Language; Discrimination and Assimilation; Literature; and Emerging Visibility.

A chapter by Charles Wilkins is called "The Swedes in Canada's National Game; They Changed the Face of Pro Hockey" which is about the many Swedish hockey players, with names like Börje Salming, Mats Sundin, Anders Hedberg, Håkan Loob, and Peter Forsberg are shown as vital parts of the Canadian teams.

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In the chapter on Language, etc., there are explanations about the Swedish naming system of the old days, the patronymic system; farm names; soldiers names; and the Latinized names of clergymen and other educated people like Berzelius. People living in towns and cities often started to use special family names, often based on nature; *Lindström* (linden stream) or *Grönberg* (green mountain).

When it comes to spelling, the author maintains that the letter “q” was added late to the Swedish alphabet because of the need to be able to spell “Quisling” (the Norwegian traitor) correctly. This is not right. The letter “q” is more frequent in old scripts from the 1700s than the letter “k”.

Here we can also read about the problems children had when they were embarrassed by their parents speaking Swedish in front of their friends. Consequently they did not learn the language. This is now regretted by their descendants, who would need the knowledge when they start doing their family history.

In the chapter “A Woman’s Place” as in most of the others, we get lively examples from letters, diaries, and books that give a real insight into the subject. For instance there is a cry from the heart, when Kerstin Kvarnberg wrote “If father (her husband) had not insisted, I would never have left. Here there is nothing but a huge land full of willows and trees, and in summer when it rains it is impossible to go out without wading over your boot tops in water. I am so sad many times that I lose all hope and will power. Oh, if it could be undone! I remember the fun when all the neighborhood women could come to

visit me [in Sweden], but now that is impossible.” Kerstin then lived on an isolated homestead in Alberta and had left with 5 children in 1905 from Gagnef in Dalarna.

In another chapter we are introduced to the rich literature of facts and fiction about the Swedes in Canada. One such writer was Harry Macfie (1878–1956) who, as a youngster worked as a trapper, returned to Sweden around 1905, and then came back to Canada in 1925 to visit with his partner Sam Kilburn from the trapper years. They had many visitors, and every evening they told stories to them around a campfire. This he collected in a book, the first of many. He is also famous for having introduced the Indian canoe to Sweden, where they are now quite common.

Other authors, writing about the Canada nature, includes Albert Viksten, Erik Munsterhjelm, and Helge Ingstad.

There are also many books only in Swedish that tell about experiences in Canada. The most well-known author is Sven Delblanc (1931–1992) who wrote about his family’s struggles in Manitoba during the Depression. Lars Ljungmark (1927–2005) wrote a scholarly book about the Swedes in Winnipeg, which would be very interesting to have translated.

Also included in this rich book are list on various subjects. One is a list of Swedish place names in Canada, with explanations. Examples are Nordstrom Lake in SK, Olson in BC, Sandell Lake in BC, and Westeros in AB. Another list shows the “Firsts for Swedes in Canada,” starting with Pehr Kalm, who came in 1749, followed in 1767 by The Reverend Paul Bryzelius, born 1713 in Jonsberg (Ög.), Sweden. And so on until 1998, when King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia came for an official visit. Next we come to a listing of all the lodges in Canada belonging to the Vasa Order of America, all 39

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

of them, with information when they were started and where they are.

Next we find a list of all envoys, ambassadors, consul generals, consuls and vice consuls representing Sweden during the years. Among them I find my old friend Sten Aminoff.

Several pages are in memory of ancestors of donors to the project. The listing contains: name of donor, name of pioneer, his/her origin, the year he/she came to Canada and where they settled, and information about the person this commemorates.

This book is very well-documented with many pages of notes and source notes.

Every Swedish-Canadian should have this book, and give it to their children for Christmas!

Elisabeth Thorsell



The founder of Swedish Baptism

Sjömannen och kolportören Fredrik Olaus Nilsson från Vendelsö – landsförvisad för sin tros skull, by Göran Valinder. 2014, ISBN 978-91-9773-0334. 50 pages, softcover. More information: valinder.maritim@gmail.com
In Swedish.

By some coincidence, this book was found in one of my heaps on the desk, and is all about Fredrik Olaus Nilsson, who was connected to the Berndtsson family, the subjects of an article on p. 14 in this issue. As noticed in the article, F. O. Nilsson

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For *Kindle* owners

was a first cousin to Inger Christina Lyckberg, and grew up in her parental home.

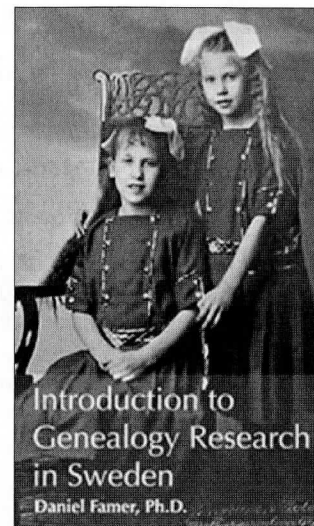
The focus of this book is F.O. Nilsson and his life and problems, after he was converted to Baptism.

He became a sailor in 1827, and sailed on Swedish ships until 1832. That year he jumped ship in New York and then sailed on a steamer along the Atlantic coast. In New York he made contact with an American seamen's mission and started to think about religion. He assisted at the mission while continuing sailing.

In 1839 he returned to Sweden, and started as a missionary for sailors. During a temperance meeting in Jönköping, he met George Scott, who worked for changing the Swedish law that prohibited people from gathering and studying the Bible.

In 1845 he met Gustaf Wilhelm Schröder, who was a confirmed Baptist, and who converted F. O. Nilsson, who soon afterwards was baptized in Hamburg, and the rest is history.

Elisabeth Thorsell



I don't know about this book, but it appeared when I was searching for something else. The author is *Daniel Famer*, and it is 28 pages and costs \$3.74 at Amazon.com. Only for Kindle!

New and Noteworthy

(short notes on interesting books and articles)

Family Tree Magazine (May-June 2015, p. 62), has a short column on how to trace ancestors that arrived in New York before the opening of Castle Garden in 1855. Customs collectors began working the various docks in the port of New York in 1819, collecting information on arriving ships, passengers, and ports of origins. In 1847 a state commission found that arriving passengers often fell victim to fraud and crime. Boardinghouses would hire "runners" to steal luggage and even snatch children to force immigrants to go to their lodgings, where they would overcharge them and assess fraudulent fees. In 1848 New York State leased a pier at the end of Hubert Street in lower Manhattan to use as a processing site. Complaints from neighbors forced a move south to Castle Clinton, where Castle Garden opened in 1855. The passenger lists and indexes to these early arrivals are all available on microfilm from the National Archives, and on Ancestry.com. For Swedes we have the fantastic book, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in the U.S. 1820-1850*, by Nils William Olsson and Erik Wikén (1995).

In *The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* (April 2015) the main content is John E. Norton's translation of parts of Ernst Skarstedt's memoirs *Vagabond och Redaktör – Lefnadsöden*, published in 1914 in Seattle. Ernst Skarstedt was a wellknown editor and author, especially of useful books, in Swedish, about the Swedes in California (1920), in Oregon and Washington (1890), Washington (1908), and his book *Våra pennfåktare* (first edition 1897) about Swedish journalists working in America. The present excerpt from his memoirs is an interesting account of Lindsborg, KS, in the late 1870s, and I am presently reading and looking forward to his further progress. There are three book reviews: Klas Bergman's *Land of Dreams: A reporter's Journey from Sweden to America* (2013); Annette Kolodny's *In search of First Contact: The Vikings of Vinland, the Peoples of the Downland, and the Anglo-American Anxiety of Discovery* (2012), and a third that will be mentioned in the next SAG.