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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.

Another Swedish pioneer

Tillie the Terrible Swede: How One Woman, a Sewing Needle, and a Bicycle Changed History, by Sue Stauffacher, illustrations by Sarah McMenemy. Hardcover, ca 30 pages, color. Published by Alfred A. Knopf. ISBN 978-375-84442-3. 2011. Amazon.com \$15.28.

This is a colorful children's book about a female pioneer from the late 1800s.

She was known in Sweden as Matilda Andersdotter, and came to America in 1891 from Ängelsbäck in Grevie (Skån.) with her sisters. Her mother, Anna Maria Kristiansdotter, came the year after, and they all settled in Chicago.

Matilda, better known as *Tillie*, worked as a seamstress, but got interested in the current craze – bicycles. Although Women's Bicycle Racing began in 1879, during the high wheel era, it was considered

more a novelty than a sport until the advent of the diamond-framed safety bicycle in 1890.

At that time bicycles were only for males, but Tillie had other ideas. She saved up for a long time and one day she bought her own bicycle.

Newspapers of that era like to say that she was thin and weak when she first came to America, but she was quoted as saying “I did not take to the wheel for my health, particularly. I suppose it was more for the reason that bicycles were being used by women and I wanted to try the fad.”

She did not dream of going slowly on her bicycle, as she was much more interested in speed and going fast.

At that time women went on bicycles in long skirts and dresses, but Tillie had the skills to make herself a comfortable cycling dress, which seems to have shocked her

friends, as it showed that she had legs, and could use them in races.

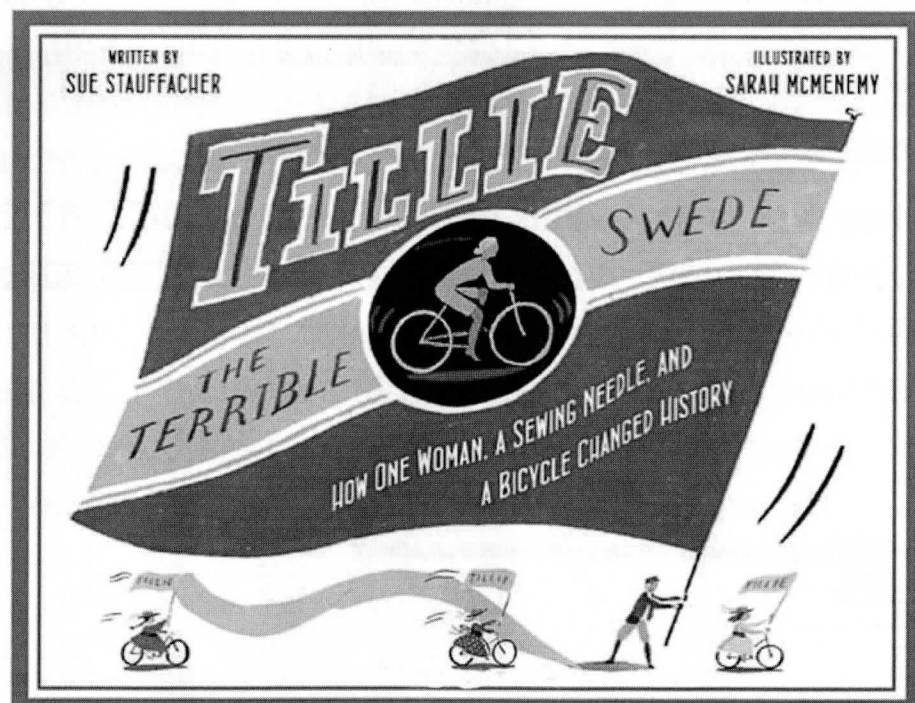
By now she had met another cyclist, fellow Swede Filip Sjöberg, who realized that Tillie was better at racing than himself, and instead became her trainer. They married in 1897, but he died in 1902. She was a champion cyclist in almost all forms of the sport, particularly the favored six-day events of the era.

She held the title of world champion from 1897 until 1902, when women were banned from racing due to the perceived level of danger in the sport. She got the nickname “Tillie the Terrible Swede” after winning many races. Tillie died in 1965 in Minnesota.

A charming and fun book about following your dreams.

Elisabeth Thorsell

SALE!
Swedish Voters in Chicago 1888
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 <jillseaholm@augustana.edu>



Book Reviews



Lilly keeps writing

Emigration historian *Lilly Setterdahl* of East Moline, IL, is a prolific writer. After the death of her husband Lenart Setterdahl, who did all those very useful microfilms of the Swedish-American church records, she has continued his valuable work with taped conversations with older Swedish-Americans, and used those as basics for books.

In 2010 she published *Chicago Swedes. They Spoke From the Heart*, which contains stories from immigrants, born from 1873 to 1965, and stories from American-born interviewees born from 1883 to 1943. A very interesting book that makes life in Chicago in the old days come alive. The book has a name index with birth places for the people interviewed.

Another book called *Swedes in Moline, Illinois, 1847-2002*, was published in 2003. This book also has edited oral interviews, and lots of portraits of the people involved. This book has a similar index.



Author Lilly Setterdahl.

A third book of the same type is *True immigrant stories: Swedes of Cleveland, OH, 1873-2013*, see review in SAG 2014:4.

Lilly has also written about the *Minnesota Swedes* in two volumes. The first volume has among other materials 40 immigrant letters. The second volume centers on the immigrants from Trolle-Ljungby in Skåne.

Her major work is probably her book *Not my time to die - Titanic and the Swedes on Board* (2012) in which she gives short biographies of all the 125 Swedes on board the *Titanic*.

Her newest book is the *Growing Up in Sweden: In the Shadow of*

World War II, 2nd edition (2015).

Lilly has also started to write historical fiction, the first is *Maiden of the Titanic* (2007), followed by the *Hero of the Titanic* (2011).

In her *Second Love After 50* (2015) she tells a romantic story. She gives the book an international flair by making some of the characters Swedish, Danish, and Irish, and by describing journeys to France and Denmark.

Lilly Setterdahl's books can be found on her Author's page on *Amazon.com*. They are published both as regular books, and some in Kindle editions.

Elisabeth Thorsell

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Mention the Genealogist when you join or order books



Book Reviews



Have some coffee!

Fika: the Art of The Swedish Coffee Break, with Recipes for Pastries, Breads, and Other Treats by Anna Brones and Johanna Kindvall. Hardcover, 2015. 168 pages, illustrated. Published by 10 Speed Press. ISBN 978-1607745860. Amazon.com \$11.31.

Fika is to Sweden what Starbucks is to the United States.

The five chapters in this book give you the history, tradition, necessity, vocabulary (both Swedish and English), recipes, and complete understanding of why coffee and baked goods are Fika. Everything and then some is included in this book—whatever you wanted to know or did not know about Swedish coffee time is available to you in the contents.

The word fika came from *kaffe* spelled backwards, of course, in Swedish. All of this started, was recorded or became so important to the Swedish culture in the early 1900s. Swedes plan for a fika at least once a day. Their daily schedule is incomplete without it. And some Swedes have more than even one a day.

You will learn which recipes are part of fika, when and how to bake them and also when to serve them. Your friends will enjoy the fika even more when you share your knowledge with them. They will be truly impressed!

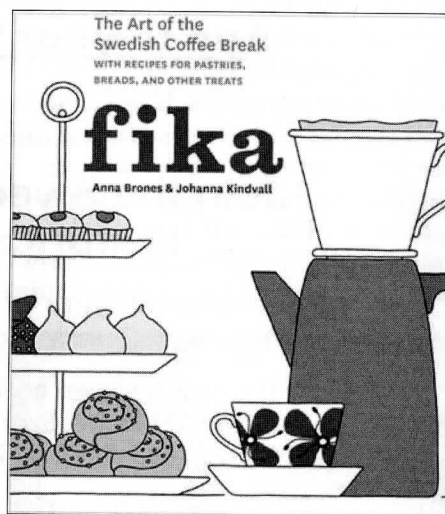
The book is well-illustrated and very entertaining. The authors really

enjoyed themselves putting all this information in such readable form. You are able to become a wonderful baker by following the instructions. Your reputation will be greatly enhanced.

As I was reviewing the book, many aromas and memories were brought to mind from my youth. My Swedish grandmother was an excellent baker and always had something put away for a fika. However, she did not call it fika, but many of her recipes are included in this book. It was pleasant to relive those days. I believe that the only missing recipe is how to make coffee the 'Swedish' way.

Fika is complete, enjoyable, and its content is worth every page.

Alice Johnson



[Editor's note: I think that "making coffee the Swedish way" as mentioned in the above review means "äggkaffe."

To make that, you mix an egg with the coarsely ground coffee, and pour boiling water over it, then boil it more, and then let it stand for about 10 minutes before serving.

It might surprise some readers that this is entirely a Swedish-American way of making coffee, and totally unknown in Sweden today.

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

What you might need to know?

Sweden - Culture Smart!: the essential guide to customs & culture, by Charlotte J. DeWitt. 2006. 168 pages, illustrated. Published by Kuperard, U.K. ISBN 978 1 85733 319 0. Amazon.com \$17.92.

This book, in a small format, sets out to explain many things about Sweden that you might want to know to better understand your ancestors and the people you meet when you visit the country. Being a born and bred Swede there are things I agree with and some that I don't. Also, this

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book is almost 10 years old, and some things have changed.

In the introduction it says that the book is “written for the inquisitive traveller who wants more than research into hotels, sightseeing, and transportation; they offer an insight into the human dimension of a country based on the values and attitudes of its people.”

The book starts with a chart of key facts, like what is the capital, and what type of electricity we have (220 volt) and other useful things.

Next comes a short lesson of geography, which starts with the myth that we are all tall blondes with blue eyes, for which you just have to walk down a street to see that it is wrong.

Next comes a brief history of Swe-

den, starting with the Vikings, which is a bit late, as the country became populated after the end of the last Iced Age around 9,000 B.C., when stone age people came from the south.

The chapter on politics and parties is very outdated.

The emigration 1850–1930 is said to be caused by famine and economic hardships, and by that some wanted more religious freedom, which is a sweeping generalization. The cause of emigration was mostly a personal decision for many different reasons.

There is one section that discusses values and attitudes, including the concept of *lagom*, and the *Jante law*. The first can perhaps be translated as “just enough;” not too much and not too little, for instance concerning work or pleasure. The *Jante Law* (invented by the Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose) says that it is not good to be too proud of yourself and your achievements, in contrast with other cultures.

Other sections are about *Customs and traditions*, *Making friends*, *The*

Swedes at home, *Time out*, *Getting around*, *Business briefing*, and *Communicating*.

It can be noted in the chapter of *Customs and traditions* that Whitmonday is no longer a holiday and that 6 June, the National Day is now a holiday. The toasting ritual is described in great detail, but the description seems a bit old-fashioned.

It is also amusing to see that the Swedish people always gets up at 6:30 in the morning, and go to bed at 10:30 or 11:00 pm.

I like the view that “Swedes are honest and direct, but not aggressive in style.”

Smoking is no longer allowed in restaurants or other public areas.

Any web addresses needs to be checked to see if they still work.

“Sweden is still one of the most progressive, egalitarian, and unspoiled countries in the world. Some call it a well-kept secret. Many would like to keep it that way.”

This is an interesting book, showing Sweden from the foreigner’s view

Elisabeth Thorsell

New and Noteworthy

(short notes on interesting books and articles)

The July 2015 issue of *The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, published by the Swedish-American Historical Society of Chicago, has two very interesting articles. The first is *Anna Sophia: Memoir of a Prophet’s Wife*, by Brita Butler-Wall. The author is an expert on the Erik Jansonist colony at Bishop Hill, Illinois. In the archives of the colony she found some 8 pages of Swedish that was filed as “Papers in Swedish” and that no one had tried to find out what they were. Ms. Butler-Wall is fluent in Swedish and gave the papers a try. She found out that they contained an eyewitness narrative of the colony at a critical time.

The writer turned out to be the last wife of Erik Jansson, whom he married just a few weeks after the death of his previous wife. Her name is best known as Anna Sophia Pollock, and it is all about the events that finally ended with Erik Jansson being shot by John Root.

The other very interesting article is written by Roger McKnight, professor emeritus at Gustavus Adolphus College. The title is *“Doing What She Could”: Poor Relief and the Augustana Women’s Mission Association, Minneapolis 1896-1961*. The article has two principal persons, the deaconesses Bothilda Svenson and Cecelia Nelson, who both did what they could to help the very poorest of the Swedish immigrants to the Minneapolis area, especially orphaned children and destitute women. They both worked for the Augustana Mission Colony, under the direction of Reverend Carl J. Petri. Cecelia Nelson recorded her work and the families she helped in a book of records for many years. The examples in the article from those records show that many immigrants had a very harsh life, as opposed to the otherwise quite rosy pictures of the successful Swedish-Americans. The main problems seem to have been alcohol, tuberculosis, unemployment, and broken families.