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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.

A film review

Everlasting Moments (Maria Larssons eviga ögonblick), 131 minutes, Amazon.com \$25.49 plus shipping, or watch on Amazon instant video.

This film is a 2008 Swedish drama with English subtitles, directed by Jan Troell. He was the director of the *The Emigrants* and *The New Land* in the 1970's, the Swedish epic of Vilhelm Moberg's account of Swedish immigrants to Minnesota in the mid-nineteenth century.

This film takes place in the first decades of the twentieth century beginning in the year 1911, and centers around a working family in the city of Malmö, a port city in the south of Sweden. Maria Larsson lives with her husband Sigfrid (Sigge), in a tiny apartment; Maria works as a cleaning woman and as a seamstress and Sigge is a dockworker. At the beginning of the film they have three children and by the end Maria has had seven. Maria is a shy woman and Sigge, a good-hearted man when sober, is not able to handle his drinking problem and becomes brutal when drunk. The children fear him and



hide when he comes home late after drinking.

Maria has won a camera in a lottery soon after her marriage but, not knowing what to do with it, she has hidden it away among her things. It is an early bellows-type camera with glass plates, a good camera for its time, but complicated to use and to handle and to develop pictures with chemicals in a darkroom. This camera is to become the key to the transformation of Maria from a battered wife to a creative person with special artistic talent. She takes the camera to a photographer's studio to try to pawn the camera to feed her family, but is persuaded by the photographer, Sebastian Pedersen, to borrow it back and learn to use it and to develop the photos she takes. Timidly at first, she takes a few pictures and after a time has some success in selling a few of her photos. She has a "gift for seeing," Pederson tells her, and encourages her to continue.

It is apparent that Pedersen admires and cultivates her talent and she is deeply appreciative of his interest. He is older than she and always polite and proper with her, but they develop a deep affection for each other. Her husband Sigge becomes suspicious, however, and tries in every way, including threats on her life, to make her give up her interest and her camera. He continues with his drinking and his woman-chasing, and she refuses to be bullied. She will

not leave him in spite of his brutality because she holds to her vows of "until death do us part" and wants to keep her family together. Children keep coming along with regularity with more mouths to feed and rent to pay.

Sweden's mobilization for World War I causes Sigge to be drafted into the army in 1914 and his meager income from dockwork, labor, masonry work, and other odd jobs is lost to the family. Thanks to the kindness of Mr. Pedersen in providing her with more equipment, she is able to support her family by taking marriage photos and family photos, now increasingly popular in Sweden. Sigge comes home from his army posting, and Mr. Pedersen later returns to Denmark to be closer to his family.

I do not wish to reveal the whole story, but the film comes to a brighter ending than many other Swedish films. Although Maria dies within about ten years, probably of consumption, the older children are admitted to college and seem destined for a good future. Sigge has built up a drayage business based on his having adopted a neglected horse a few years before, and becomes a much more reliable father and provider. But the real story is about Maria, who evolves from a shy, submissive housewife with little perception of her own worth, to an accomplished professional of great talent. She has, with Sigge's help, acquired and renovated a studio for

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>



Book Reviews

Swedish women's rights 1600–1857

with women and economics. *Domestic Secrets: Women & Property in Sweden, 1600-1857* chronicles changes to married women's property rights and deals with the unintended consequences of the erosion of legal rights. The public sphere of influence – including the wife's family and the local community – held sway over spousal property rights throughout most of the seventeenth century. Around 1700 creditors and lawyers campaigned to codify spousal property rights as an *Arcanum domesticum*, or domestic secret. Their ef-

her photography business, which continues to grow.

The story is beautifully told by Jan Troell and the cast with great sensitivity and attention to details. It has won several awards at foreign film festivals and been nominated for a number of others. To quote one reviewer, "Beholding Troell's exquisite images is like having your eyes almost washed, the better to behold moving pictures of uncorrupted purity and clarity." The story is based on the life of a family member of Agneta Ulfsäter Troell, Jan's wife, who wrote a novel about her relative, the real Maria Larsson. Troell thought it was a story worth telling, and this film is the result. To add to the convincing reality of the time of the story, it was filmed in 8 mm. black and white, then enlarged to 35 mm in order to achieve a soft, slightly grainy look to the images.

For genealogy enthusiasts and those interested in the history of Sweden in this early period of the Industrial Age, the film offers a very convincing portrayal of the lives of the working poor who, rather than immigrating to America or elsewhere, remained in Sweden and had to find a way to make their living in the emerging cities as they grew and absorbed the population of the earlier rural communities and farms. Along the way we see strikes and strike-breakers, the pressures of Marxism and socialism, and relations between the working classes and their betters, the rise of temperance societies, and other features of these decades early in the twentieth century. Viewers will be well rewarded by seeing this fine film.

Dennis L. Johnson

Domestic Secrets: Women & Property in Sweden, 1600-1857, by Maria Ågren, University of North Carolina, 2009, 285 pages, bibliography, map, and illustrations.

Maria Ågren is a professor of history at Uppsala University and author or editor of four previous books dealing

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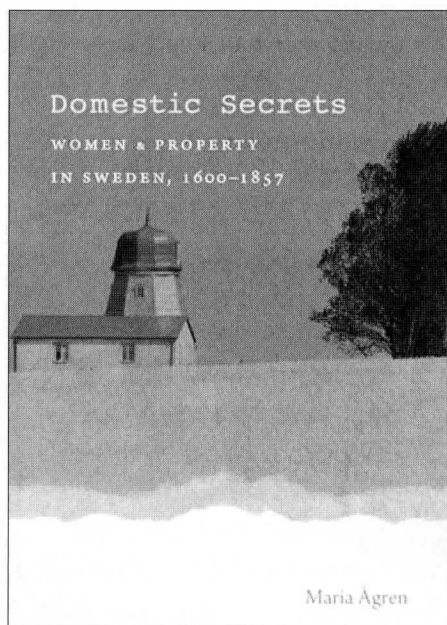
Book Reviews



forts led to regulatory changes that reduced the amount of control a woman's natal family could exert over her land and her husband's choices. But the new rules made families less likely to give land to women and insulated property matters from community input.

The advent of the print medium ushered property issues back into the public consciousness, this time on a national scale. The press's focus on private scandals exposed domestic secrets of finance and property as well as the failures of husbands to perform culturally defined duties. Mass politicization increased sympathy for women and public debate popularized more progressive ideas about the economic contributions of women to marriage, leading to mid-nineteenth-century legal reforms that were more favorable to women.

The final chapter, entitled "Drastic Changes deals with Marital Rights," the relationship between the sexes,



contributions to society by men and women, usage of land, and the abolition of lineage property.

Multiple issues of inheritance are covered in the book, including the treatment of spouses and children, the different treatment of inherited property and acquired property, and the variations of inheritance practices between classes of society and between urban and rural areas.

Also included in the volume are a historical chronology of inheritance practices, a glossary of Swedish words, notes, a source bibliography, and an index.

Janet Frye

This review was first published in "Tidningen," 2014/2, the quarterly newsletter of the Swedish Genealogical Society of Minnesota, USA, and is reprinted here with permission.

Editor's note: A new edition of this book was published in 2014, 304 pages. Available in paperback from Amazon.com, price \$36.95.

Early settlers in Texas

Anna's Journey. A story of Early Swedish Immigrants to Texas, by Elroy Haverlah. 2014, 333 pages. Available from Amazon.com, price \$13.49.

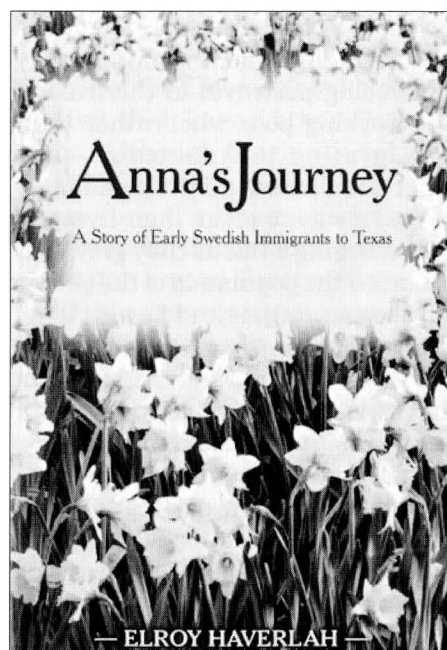
About the author: Elroy Haverlah is a native Texan who has lived in various locations across the state and served as a minister for over four decades. Half of that was spent at Palm Valley Lutheran Church in Round Rock, Texas, a congregation founded by Swedish pioneers. His personal conversations with descendants of those settlers, plus extensive research, led him to a deep appreciation of those immigrants and a desire to share the story of their journey.

This is indeed a novel, but based

of facts and real people. The story is mostly told by Andrew Palm (b. 1839), whose mother was Annika (Anna) of the title. His father was Anders Andersson from Barkeryd, a brother of Gustaf Palm and Svante Palm. When Anders, his wife, and six sons immigrated in 1848 on the *Augusta*, they all changed their surname to Palm. The Palm brothers were siblings to Margareta Andersdotter, born 1795 in Barkeryd, who was the mother of Sven Magnus Svensson, born 1816, also in Barkeryd. He immigrated in 1836 and in 1838 settled in Texas, where he became a famous land owner under the name S.M. Swenson.

The Palms, including Margareta Andersdotter, also went to Texas, but first there is a vivid description of life in Sweden, the deliberations before they decided to join the relatives in Texas, and a long tale about the months spent at sea before they landed in Boston on 9 Oct. 1848.

Next they continued by other ships to Texas, where they met with S.M. Swenson, and stayed for some time with him, before they got a place of their own. Then the father Anders Palm died after just a few days of





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nia, New Jersey, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.

There are evidently many more places to visit than I thought possible, and every place has this nice color phot, and a short history of the place and with Visitor information, with a full address, open hours, e-mail and web address (if there is one), so it should be easy to access these places.

In total a good book for the area, even if you do not live there, and at a very good price also. Kudos to Kim-Eric and Kenneth for this book!

Elisabeth Thorsell

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

illness, and the widow and six sons have to struggle on their own.

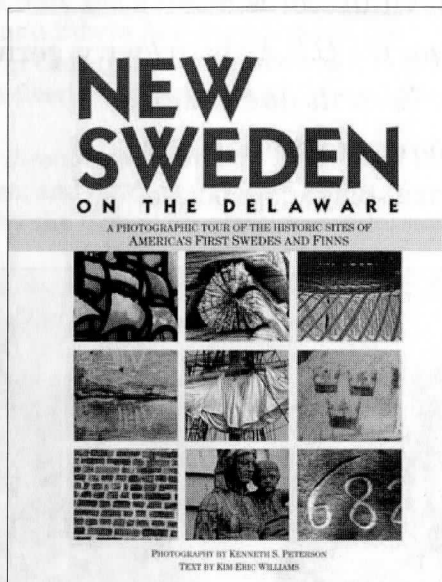
This book is an engaging read and you get to feel the hardships that Anna and her children go through. And then comes the Civil War...

I think this is an interesting book, not just for those with Texan connections, but for all that have early immigrants. *Elisabeth Thorsell*

Places to visit in New Sweden

New Sweden on the Delaware, by Kim-Eric Williams, photos by Kenneth S. Peterson. Hardcover, 127 pages, 247 pictures in full color, 2013. Available from The Swedish Colonial Society, [link on p. 30](#). Price \$25 + Shipping.

This new book on New Sweden is full of very good pictures of all the places you can visit with a New Sweden connection in Delaware, Pennsylva-



New and Noteworthy

(short notes on interesting books and articles)

Swedish *kock* Tina Nordström has just published a new book: *Tina Nordström's Scandinavian Cooking: Simple Recipes for Home-Style Scandinavian Cuisine*. Hardcover, illustrated, 384 pages. Available at Amazon.com for \$20.76.

In *The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* 2014:2, there is an interesting story by James A. Bailey and Margaret B. Bailey about the 1876 bank robbery in Northfield, MN, when Nicolaus Gustafsson was shot. The authors try to find out who exactly killed him. They suggest that relatives of Gustafsson should have him exhumed, so it would be possible to decide the caliber of the bullet that took his life. In an 2006:3 article in SAG, by Swedish authors Magnus Ekstrand and Birger Bring, gang member Cole Younger is pointed out as the killer. The debate continues, who killed Nicolaus?

The Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet) has for several years published a yearbook on a specific theme, all in Swedish. This year the theme is *World War I in Swedish Archives*. One of the articles is called "He left everything and went to war," Swedes in the Canadian army, by Anette Sarnäs. At least 1754 men were recorded as having been born in Sweden, and a couple of hundred of them died in the war.