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Treasures in Rock Island, Part 2

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Treasures in Rock Island

News and general information about the Swenson Center. Part II (continued from SAG 4/04)

BY JILL SEAHOLM

Genealogy

There is also quite a bit of family history research that goes on at the Swenson Center, and that's what I am responsible for. Our sources center primarily on the mass migration period of roughly 1850-1930, which is when about 1.2 million Swedes immigrated to North America.

People hire us through the mail to do research, and they also come to us to do the research themselves. A few years back our board decided that in order to help make ends meet, we needed to start charging genealogists a daily fee when they come to use the center. Maintenance on our microfilm readers is costly, and we are not a public library. So, we followed the lead of similar private libraries such as the Vesterheim Norwegian Research Center in Madison, which does the same thing. That daily fee of \$10 is waived for Augustana students and their parents, Augustana alumni, faculty, and Swenson Center annual supporting members. Members are also given a discount on our genealogical research services through the mail and a discounted subscription rate to our journal *Swedish American Genealogist*. Our hours are by appointment, so please contact us ahead of time to schedule your visit and give us the opportunity to chat with you beforehand about your research needs.

We want to be sure to have staff available and to be able to give you the attention you need. The bulk of our records are in Swedish and the average visitor will need some help getting started.

Our request form

People who hire us through the mail to do research fill out our research request form that we designed to be sure that people will or can provide all of the information necessary to do a search. For the same reason, we also have people fill one out who are coming here to do research themselves, so that when we consult with them about the records they will use, we can be assured that they have their information collected and organized before they get here. That enables us to help them much more efficiently.

Impact of the internet

The internet has made us more visible and busy with research and visitors. Our usual genealogical goal is to help people find out where their ancestors came from Sweden, which is one of the early steps in tracing Swedish ancestry. We try to achieve that using our Swedish-American church records, which are on microfilm. These are records of churches that were founded by Swedes in North America. We also have Swed-

ish port passenger indexes starting with 1869, which is when Swedish ports were required to start keeping records. We also have some other types of microfilmed emigrant indexes and lists from all of the counties in Sweden. Usually some tidbit of information can be found about an immigrant, unless all you know is that your immigrant ancestor is named John Johnson from Sweden and he disappeared in Chicago. Then we need to know some more before we can get started. I perform some of the research requests, my co-worker Anne does some when needed, and we have a pre-med Augustana student worker named Karen O'Quin, who was hired to assist with genealogy research. Karen has gotten pretty good at the chase and still takes it personally when she can't find someone in the records.

Karen lived in Karlstad for a year as a high school student, and her experience with the language and her determination make her good at it. She also spent this past summer in Karlstad as an intern at the Emigrant Register/Kinship Center, which specializes in the province of Värmland.

Some computer CD-ROMs that we have purchased recently for our use and for patron use are the 1890 Swedish census, so if you know that someone was born before 1890 and emigrated after that, you should be

able to find him or her there; and the 1970 & 1980 Swedish censuses to look for more current or living people. Another CD-ROM is "Sveriges Dödbok," which is an index of deaths in Sweden from 1947-2003. The Swedish port indexes have been on a CD-ROM called "Emigranten" for several years now, and the Norwegian and Danish ones are online. We also have indexes to Scandinavian heads of household in the 1870 and 1910 U.S. Federal Censuses. And, there are 5 CDs of indexed City Directories for various parts of the U.S. that cover the years surrounding the 1890s in order to try to make up for the no-longer-existing 1890 U.S. Census. We try to be on the lookout for U.S. records that contain Swedish immigrants and other U.S. records that are pertinent to the specialty research that we do.

Contact work

We also do a lot of referring to other places of people who just don't know

where to go or what to do with the information they have, or don't understand what they already have. We answer many dozens of e-mails a year that come from our web site. We can usually refer them to another part of our web site for the answers or for information about how to get those answers, and we try to mold our web site based on the types of questions we get.

The ultimate goal almost always seems to be to find living relatives in Sweden, so we have a genealogy *Frequently Asked Questions* or FAQ web site. It answers a lot of the questions that people have asked over the years about the different ways to go about finding their relatives in Sweden.

<http://www.augustana.edu/SWENSON/genfaq/>

Swedish TV in the U.S.

A tidbit of information of my own that's not about the Swenson Center: for those of you who live in the Quad

City area (Moline, Rock Island, East Moline in Illinois and Davenport and Bettendorf in Iowa) and have cable television, Channel 11 is the St. Ambrose University channel, and they broadcast foreign newscasts from the SCOLA network. They show news from dozens of countries including the Ukraine, Spain, France, Israel, Mexico, and even Sweden.

Every Saturday and Sunday morning at 4:30 on cable channel 11 they show news from Sweden. I do not know why SCOLA uses this particular newscast, but the one they use is called "Smålandsnytt," which is the local newscast from the province of Småland. It is in Swedish and without English subtitles, so it is good practice, even if you don't know what they're saying. It's fun to see Swedish news coming out of my TV. Check www.scola.org, your local college or university's communications department, or TV listings to see if there is something similar in your area.



The Denkman Library and Old Main at Augustana an early October morning.