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Book Reviews

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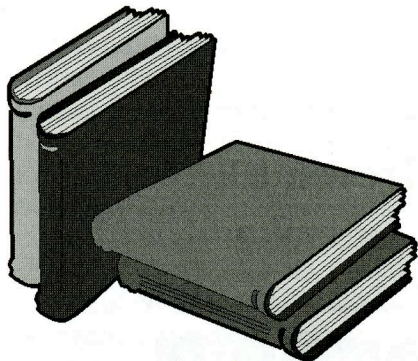
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Book Reviews

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 Book Review Editor, Dennis L. Johnson at <djohnson@2vikings.com> or 2407 Hunsberger Drive, Limerick, PA 19468, so he knows what you are working on.

Swinglish or what?

Tracking Swedish-American English, A Longitudinal Study of Linguistic Variation and Identity, Angela Hoffman Karstadt, soft-cover, 262 pages, Uppsala University Library, Uppsala, Sweden, Coronetbooks.com, \$57.50.

It is fairly well known that most people identify others as much by their speech as by any other characteristic. Those of us who are third generation Swedish-Americans are quite familiar with the evolution of speech among our immediate ancestors, which has affected our own speech. My grandparents were born in Sweden and spoke only Swedish when they arrived in this country. English was picked up as a second language, their degree of facility with English varying with their age when they migrated and whether they lived in rural areas among other Swedes, or in urban areas with much more contact with English speakers. They were usually most comfortable speaking Swedish among fellow Swedes. Their children mostly spoke Swedish until they went to school, and then began to learn English with greater facility than their parents. Swedish became their second language and was only used in the family and among other Swedes.

The first generation, and to some extent the second generation, often adopted a sort of Pidgin dialect which intermixed English and Swedish

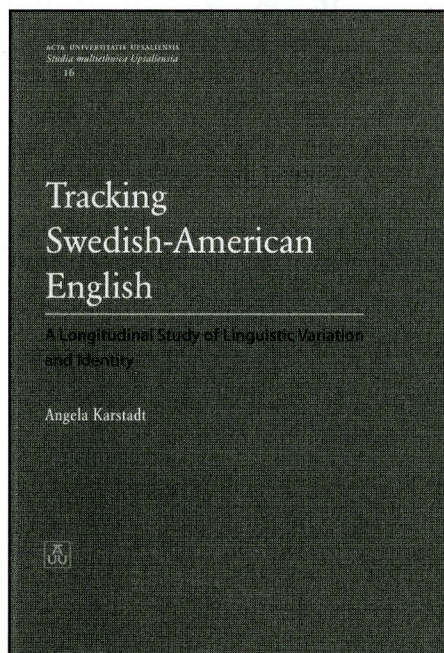
words and speech forms. This has been variously referred to in terms such as "Swinglish," "Fargo talk," or "mixat språk."

The third generation was raised on English, and the parents mostly felt that there was no point in teaching their children Swedish, except possibly a few words or songs as part of certain traditional occasions. It was unusual for the third generation to develop enough skill with Swedish to use it in conversation, but their English was increasingly proficient, depending on their level of education and occupation. Certain characteristics of speech, and often a discernable accent, remained among this generation to indicate remnants of the ancestry of their speech. By the fourth generation, their speech would be more similar to their school,

neighborhood, and occupational peers, and little trace of their particular heritage would be apparent.

[**Note:** In Minnesota and in Minneapolis (my home town) the "Minnesota accent" lives on, easily recognizable by those from other regions and by those like myself who have lived elsewhere for many years. This is not addressed in Karstadt's book, but my own view is that the high proportion of Swedes and other Scandinavians settling in the area has affected the speech of not only their own descendants but of the population at large even into the 21st century. (Unlike Chicago, a center for "Standard English," which had as many Swedes but not as large a proportion in the total population consisting of many groups. This tended to homogenize the English spoken there.)]

In her book, Angela Karstadt seeks to illuminate in great detail the general patterns of speech among Swedish Americans, using studies from two principal locations. The first is Minneapolis, MN, an urban area in which many Swedish immigrants settled, and Lindsborg, KS, a small town in a predominantly rural setting. Minneapolis received an almost constant flow of immigrants from Sweden between the Civil War (1865) and World War I (1918). Lindsborg, on the other hand, was settled in only a few years in the 1860's. Karstadt conducted over seventy recorded interviews among residents of both locations, and also listened to hundreds of taped interviews conducted by other researchers as part of her study. She has attempted



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to look at variations between locations, among generations, and even examines the evolution of speech in the same person from an early age to late in life. Case studies and many examples of dialogues between interviewer and person interviewed are included in the text.

Ms. Karstadt grew up in Lindsborg, KS, in close contact with many Swedish Americans, although she herself is not. She developed a strong interest in linguistics, and studied at the University of Minnesota. She received her Ph.D. in English at Minnesota and later studied and did research at Uppsala University in Sweden. She is now senior lecturer in English linguistics at Gävle University College in Gävle, Sweden. This book is an expansion of Karstadt's doctoral dissertation which she prepared at the University of Minnesota.

For the lay person who has an interest in the language experience of Swedish Americans or a curiosity about the origins of the patterns of speech of their own relatives or friends, this book is heavy reading with marginal satisfaction. The chapters are heavily laced with the jargon of scholars of linguistics, and drawing simple or generalized conclusions from the abundance of data presented is far from easy. A sample excerpt from one of the chapters: (Chapter 3, Relatives in Contact, page 93):

Tokens of 653 syntacticised relative clauses are analyzed quantitatively, after which I turn to a discussion of how discourse-governed structures compensate or counterbalance strategies from the syntactic plane (Section 6). My purpose in the qualitative section is to illustrate how some elderly immigrant speakers mobilize pragmatic particles – specifically discourse markers and deictic particles – to boost a syntactic arrangement that is more coordinating than subordinating. Thus the chapter

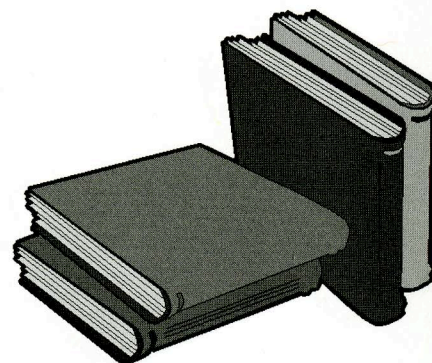
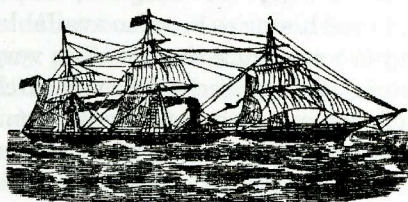
presents some preliminary evidence for investigating the crossroads of syntax and pragmatic particles between Swedish and English. Though the focus”

Most of the author's text is much like the above. A welcome relief is to read some of the many transcribed interviews of the many subjects of the study, to read their actual words and expressions. I turned to Chapter 7, Conclusions, to see what it was the author learned from her study.

This chapter was equally difficult to digest and I found mostly a summary of the work described in other chapters, little in the way of useful conclusions, and an ambitious program of further study. Among the conclusions I was able to extract were: Language evolves over time, speakers adjust their speech to better suit the person being spoken to or to better show their identity, speech among Swedish-born speakers varies from that spoken by Swedes born in the U.S., and so on. The reader longs for simple conclusions simply stated.

For the linguistics scholar, this work no doubt adds substantially to the previous work and to the literature of Swedish-American English. Karstadt documents her work thoroughly and gives credit to those upon whose work she has drawn, including Folke Hedblom, Einar Haugen, Nils Hasselmo, and several others. There is an extensive bibliography and a complete index to assist users.

Dennis L. Johnson

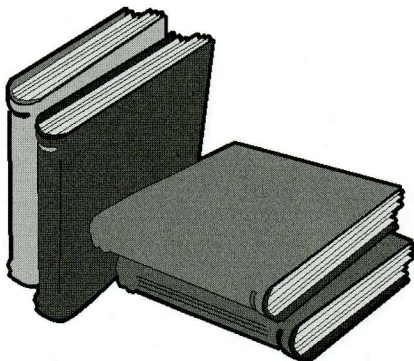


Chicago, Chicago...

Finding Your Chicago Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide to Family History in the City and Cook County, Grace DuMelle, softcover, 321 pages, Lake Claremont Press, Chicago, 2005 (www.Amazon.com, \$11.53).

The Chicago metropolitan area has a population of over 8 million people, two-thirds of the population of the state of Illinois. It has the greatest number of Swedish-Americans of any state. If your roots are in the Midwest, chances are you have an ancestor or relative who lives or at one time lived in Chicago – it was a destination for many immigrants from Sweden from soon after its beginnings in the 1830's until the second decade of the twentieth century. The famous Swedish American poet and writer Carl Sandburg (1878-1967), born in Galesburg, IL, lived and worked in Chicago from 1913 to 1928. While there, he immortalized the growing city with his poem "Chicago," (1916) which begins with these well-known lines: "*Hog butcher for the world, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler; Stormy, husky, brawling, City of the Big Shoulders:*"

My mother's mother (*Mormor*) first lived in Chicago for a few years soon after she immigrated as a girl of 18 from Småland. There she worked as a maid for a wealthy doc-



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tor in the 1880's until she met my grandfather, an immigrant railroad worker from Dalsland. They moved to Nebraska, and later Minnesota, as farmers. My wife was born in Chicago, where her parents were living in the mid-1930's. One of my uncles attended North Park College in Chicago, and there are other family connections with that great city.

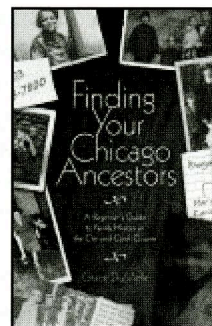
Finding Your Chicago Ancestors is a very complete and useful guide to searching for ancestors or other relatives in and around Chicago, written by family historian and experienced researcher Grace DuMelle. The book is well organized into two parts, the first being "getting your questions answered," and the second is practical advice in doing research and using various types of sources of information. Checklists of points to remember are included at the end of each chapter making this volume one to bring along with you as you visit various archives, libraries, and sources of records. Samples of many resource documents are reproduced in the book, with tips on how to read and interpret them for all useful information.

DuMelle's guide is most useful for those who are beginning their research and seeking ancestors on this side of the Atlantic, or for Swedes who may be tracing relatives who left Sweden for Chicago. Since the book deals with all records regardless of ethnic origins, it is also a good guide for those with blended ancestry beyond only Swedish. The author takes you through the basics of getting started, birth and baptismal records, census records, baptismal,

marriage and death records, and many other special types of records where useful information may be found. The nuts and bolts of finding, using, and interpreting various types of records are spelled out in detail, with special attention to the kinds of pitfalls a researcher can run into. Step-by-step strategies for researching as efficiently as possible are spelled out, to help readers avoid wasting steps or following false paths.

Although this book is mainly focused on research in Chicago, many of the records are very similar in most other larger cities in the U.S. For example, U.S. census records are alike for each census year throughout the U.S., and many state and local records are similar from one place to another. Techniques of finding and searching newspapers for birth, marriage, and death notices will be similar in most cities and towns, and tips on finding residence locations, occupations, gravesites, and other sources will also be usable for many other locations. Persons doing genealogical research in almost any U.S. location will find this book very useful despite its concentration on research in Chicago.

Chicago has a unique resource in its Newberry Library on Washington Square Park. The local and family history section on the second floor has census, city directory, and biographical research collections including biographical dictionaries, indexes to vital records, and a growing collection of Chicago Lutheran Church records and cemetery records. Chicago newspapers, maps, and local histories are also available, and the reference desk staff is very helpful. Other Chicago area research facilities are also listed, with summaries of what you can expect to find there. Many other cities have their own special resources such as the Newberry, which can be sought out by researchers.



For researchers in Chicago, this book is matchless as a guide for both beginners and more advanced research. It will be found extremely useful for researchers, both for its general guidance and for the many useful tips in using research facilities. Included also are many Chicago-area and general websites, and lists of specific ethnic resources.

Included among the Swedish sources are the Swedish American Museum Center at 5211 No. Clark Street, the Swenson Center Immigration Research Center in Rock Island, IL, and the F.M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections of North Park University, 3225 West Foster Avenue, in Chicago. The latter documents the history of Swedish immigrants in Chicago and holds the Swedish-American Archives of Greater Chicago.

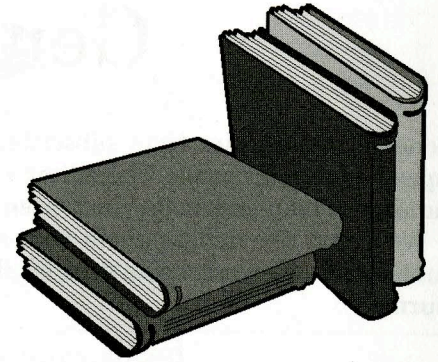
Dennis L. Johnson

Old Swedes in Kansas

Sunset Home. 100 Years of Caring. 1905-2005. A book of celebration.
By the Sunset Home Society. 2005, 140 pages, photos, name index.
More information from Susan Hoppe
<hoppe257@sbcglobal.net>

This is a book about a thriving institution in Cloud County in North Central Kansas, a rural area with many Swedes. It was started in 1905 when an old missionary of the Swe-

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A Colleague

The Swedish American Historical Quarterly. 2005:4, October. More information:

www.swedishamericanhist.org

This issue of SAHQ has two major articles, *When Fredrika Bremer Came to Charleston*, by Rev. Lennart Pearson; and *Scandinavians in Washington Politics*, by George W. Scott.

A separate supplement contained the *Swedish-American Bibliography 2004*, compiled by Ulf Jonas Björk, Yngve Turesson, and Mariann Tiblin.

dish Baptists, August Johnson, felt that his days soon would be over. He gave all the money he had, about \$100, and then became the first guest at the Sunset Home. An important donation was also made by Olof Anderson and his wife from the Gotland community north of Concordia, as they donated their farm, which gave some financial stability to the home.

The first home was located in Clay Center, but also open to Concordia residents.

When the need for an expansion became apparent, the Home was moved to Concordia, as the local businesses there offered better support than Clay Center, both in cash and in reduced rates for water and electricity.

So the story goes on, told first in a 25 year chapter and then decade by decade. The story is well illustrated by many photos and newspaper clippings. In the early years the Home had two dining rooms, a Swed-

ish one and an American one, so the old folks should feel at home.

In the 1930s and 1940s Mr. L.R. Graves recorded both staff and guests in his special notebook, where he notes characteristics of people and their duties, if any. He writes about himself *Empties trash cans at both buildings. Works in the American dining room after each meal, taking dirty dishes to kitchen and returning them clean for next meal. Helps with laundry and repairs broken furniture and other necessary work requiring his attention.*

Interviews with both staff people and guests adds interesting insights in the Home life. There are notes on elephant collections, dust storms, and much more.

I like this book very much, and I just hope that there are very many retirement homes like this one.

Elisabeth Thorsell

New and Noteworthy

(short notes on interesting books and articles)

Window on the Past, the Harris, McBride, Russell, and Bivans Families, by Lila Harris Kikwood and Wendy Ruth Kirkwood, Gateway Press, Inc., Baltimore, MD., 2004, Softcover, 121 Pages. Available from L. Kirkwood, \$17.00 plus \$3.00 shipping, contact dkirkwood@maine.rr.com One of the four families traced in this book, the Harris family, has Swedish roots. Includes a genealogy, photographs and an index of names of related persons. The author traces her roots through six generations to one Adam Johansson, from Gammelgarn, Gotland. See also SAG 1996:4, and 2000:4.

The Swedish Ancestry Research Association (SARA) of Worcester, Mass., www.sarassociation.org/ has a monthly newsletter, but also publishes a journal, *The SARA Journal*, which appeared recently with issue VII (2005). The focus this time is on the province of Östergötland, which is presented by a map, some general information and a number of postcards in color or b/w, some rather old and some quite new. Then there is an article about the "Swedish National Federation of Worcester", which tells a lot about the Swedish life in Worcester. Another article, "Hälsning från Sverige - The Mjölby Nybergs" is of a more genealogical nature, based on a collection of postcards in the possession of a member, Bob Cumming.

When reorganising a part of her library, your editor found a long forgotten little book, *Stockholm Cemeteries, Wright County, Minnesota*, printed in 1995 by the Park Genealogical Books. These 32 pages lists several hundred burials, most of them with Swedish names, from 1869 onwards. Many inscriptions mention the place of birth, sometimes rather garbled, but still... Park Genealogical Books <http://www.parkbooks.com/> has a nice catalog with more cemetery transcriptions from othe counties in Minnesota.

The newest issue of *Family Tree Magazine* (Feb. 2006) lists 365 tips for tracing and improving your genealogical searches, tips that will keep most of us busy for another year.