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Book Reviews

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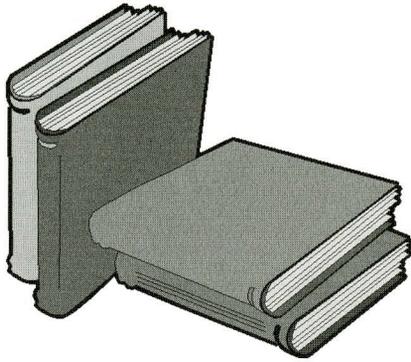
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Book Reviews

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 <j2vikings@att.net> or 2407 Hunsberger Drive, Limerick, PA 19468, so he knows what you are working on.

A New Basic Manual

Your Swedish Roots. A Step by Step Handbook, by Per Clemensson and Kjell Andersson. Ancestry, Provo, UT, 2004. 222 pages, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-59331-276-8. \$24.95 from Ancestry.com

This book, about which rumors were first heard in the middle of the summer, is written by an experienced team. Together *Per Clemensson*, retired 1st archivist at the Provincial archives of Göteborg, and *Kjell Andersson*, a journalist, have written the most widely spread manual for Swedish genealogy – *Släktforska! Steg för steg*, and its sequel *Släktforska vidare*. In 1996 the team also produced a special book about emigration research – *Emigrantforska! Steg för steg*, which was very good.

So it was with high hopes I opened the new book, aimed at all the descendants of the emigrants to the New World.

After reading the book twice I still like it, but am a bit frustrated by a number of errors that points to a too big haste in compiling this book.

This book is produced in cooperation with *Genline AB*, the company that is making scanned pictures of the church records available on-line, so there are many references to them everywhere.

The book is divided into 19 sections, covering issues like *Clues to Your Family's History in Sweden*, *The Emigration from Sweden to America*, *How to Find the Place of Origin in Sweden*, *Swedish Names and Swe-*

dish Spelling, etc.

In the chapter about Swedish names and spelling it is good that the quirks of the *gammalstavning* (old spelling) are explained, but for the handwriting no reference is made to any of the books on how to read old script.

In the section on how to find various sources the archives system is explained and also the role of SVAR as microfiche provider, except that The Swenson Center is not mentioned as their agent in the U.S.

When going through the organization of the church records a remark is made that the records from Statistics Sweden [SCB] are not on microfilm in the FHL, which is wrong. They are there, but in the catalog you must look under *län* and then civil registration.

Then there comes a part where a specific family, the *Gustaf Adolf Rapp family of Mölltorp* is used as a research example. The starting point is the tombstone for G. A. Rapp and his wife Anna Carlson, from where the research continues in the Swedish American church records. Here the authors states that the microfilms of those records are available only at The Swenson Center in Rock Island and the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö, but the majority of the films are also found at the Kinship Center in Karlstad.

When starting to go through the research example, the authors start with "Let us imagine that we are the ancestors of Gustaf Adolf Rapp." If that was the case we would long be dead and have little interest in his fate. Let us rather imagine that we are the descendants.

In this case they go first to the

Swedish American church records, but I think one would be more likely to start with Passenger lists and other records of that type. Many descendants have no knowledge of which church the emigrants belonged to, and find that information later, in an obituary or so.

Then when it comes to identifying the immigrants in Swedish records, it is stated that the moving-out-records for Mölltorp 1879 are to be found on Genline, which is not true. Their moving-out records end in 1868. This book is based on the idea that Genline has finished their project, but that is not so, many parishes are still missing, and the subscriber who does not realise this will be disappointed.

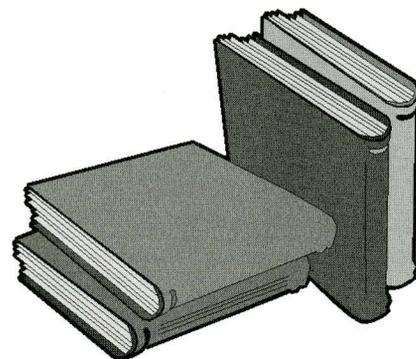
In the section on *How to Find the Place*, the authors mention the *Rosenberg Gazetteer*, and for some reason state that it was printed in five volumes and reprinted in 1883. It was printed in two volumes and the reprint in 1982 was in four volumes!

As Gustaf Adolf Rapp was born in a soldier's family his home is also mentioned, where the authors coin a new term for the soldier's cottage, they call it a "soldier's stead," which is confusing.

When describing the ongoing project of transcribing tombstones the authors, as in many other places, do not distinguish between projects handled by The Swedish Federation of Genealogical Societies (*Sveriges Släktforskarförbund*) and the older but much smaller Swedish Genealogical Society (*Genealogiska Föreningen*) who gets the kudos for the efforts of the Federation (somewhat irritating for me after 15 years with the Federation).

The text goes on with good illus-

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trations from the records and all remarks transcribed and translated. There are also many remarks that explain abbreviations and notes. Also there are discussions on how to continue the research.

The chapter on emigration records shows pictures of the original passenger lists and explains the matter of the source code. There is also a listing of existing passenger lists for various ports of departure, but Hamburg is not listed though some of their lists are on the Internet for the years around 1900, and the Bremen lists for the early 1920s.

In the discussion of the early, pre-1850, emigrants Dr. Nils William Olsson's and Dr. Erik Wikén's major work *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in the United States 1820-1850* is said to be based on the List of fees to the Swedish Navy's Pension fund, when the fact is that the basis for this tremendous work are the arrival manifests from the U.S. ports, which have then been supplemented with information from Swedish records of many types.

Another research example concerns the nobleman Ivar Alexis Hall. To find information on people belonging to the nobility there is a huge 9-volume work *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* by Gustaf Elgenstierna, which is now available in a reprint and also in the Family History Library and on their microfilms, not only in Sweden as stated in the text.

Most reference books mentioned in this book can be found in the FHL Catalog with a little creative and thoughtful searching.

Latin names can be a problem as they change form according to their grammatical position, but the minister on p. 131 was certainly not named Catullo Nicolai Oriensulano, he must have been *Catullus Nicolai Oriensulanus*.

Also I do not understand the difficulties in reading the birth notice on

p. 132, which clearly shows that "on the 3rd of January 1689 was born Anders Swens[son's] daughter in Kåhlbäck, baptized on the 6th with the name Elisabeth." Instead there is a confused discussion of what the name of the baby was - another instance that shows that too little time has been spent on editing the text.

The main part of *Your Swedish Roots* concludes with a discussion of *Other Old Records*, which mentions special tax records, the *mantalslängder* and land records (*jordböcker*). A glaring omission is that the legal records are not mentioned, including the estate inventories (*bouppteckningar*), which are very important and mostly also on FHL films.

Next there is a section on how to trace living relatives, where the CD database *Sveriges dödbok* is mentioned as having data between 1968-1996, when for several years the version II has been out, with data for 1950 to 1999.

Then there are travel tips for making a trip to Sweden, which seems a bit unnecessary in a genealogical manual, but I console myself with the knowledge that "Swedes are easy-going and hospitable." This is followed by almost 20 pages with more tourist information, which we could also do without. Then comes a nice *Word List*, but no reference to Phyllis Pladsen's more comprehensive *Swedish Genealogical Dictionary*. Then there is a good list of abbreviations and a list of church records destroyed by fire.

Next comes 6 pages of addresses for local genealogical societies, of which many are already obsolete, it would be much better to just refer to the Federation's web site

<www.genealogi.se> where the latest addresses are always to be found.

At last comes a web site listing with addresses both in Sweden and America. The bibliography is very short, only 15 titles, of which one is a totally confused citing of one of Nils

William Olsson's books. The title I miss the most is of course, *Swedish American Genealogist*, but I could also think that John Philip Colletta's *They Came in Ships*, or Allan Kastrup's *The Swedish Heritage in America* could be of great interest to researchers. Or maybe O.R. Landelius' *Swedish Placenames in North America*, or...

Still, this book has many good points, especially the detailed explanations of the records, so I think I can recommend you buy it. But don't throw out your *Cradled in Sweden*, you will need that too.

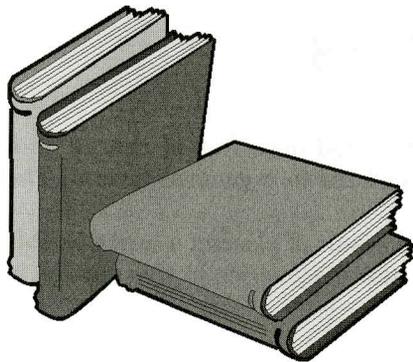
Elisabeth Thorsell

Swedish Texans

Stockholm on the Rio Grande, a Swedish Farming Colony on the Mesquite Frontier of Southernmost Texas (1912-1985), David E. Vassberg, 2003, University Press of America, Lanham, MD, 2003, Soft Cover, 258 Pages (Available at Amazon.com for \$44.00).

There are five towns in the United States with the name Stockholm, after the largest city in Sweden: Stockholm, Maine; Stockholm, New Jersey; Stockholm, South Dakota; Stockholm, Wisconsin; and Stockholm, Minnesota. Once there were six. This is the story of one colony by this name which did not survive.

By 1912, most of the prime homestead farm land in the Midwest had been claimed, even many western states had seen their good agricultural areas come under the plow.



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Less appealing or favorably situated lands now became targets of speculation and the promotion of development in ventures intended to make a profit for the developers.

In the early 1900's, southern Texas was a sparsely inhabited ranch country with no railroad access. It was dry and covered with brush and mesquite but could be irrigated for farming. By 1904, the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexican Railway had been extended to Brownsville, Texas, a town on the southernmost tip of the state and on the Mexican border. This railway made the Rio Grande Valley accessible to the rest of the country, and crops grown there could be economically shipped to northern markets. Land developers from the north bought up the cheap land, paying as little as \$2.50 per acre. Reselling the land in small farm tracts could bring as much as \$75.00 per acre, an immense profit.

In 1912, three Swedish American developers from Minneapolis, the Wallin, Johnson, and Matson Land Company, bought a ranch of slightly over 12,000 acres known as the Turner tract. This land, only a few miles from the new railroad and just west of a railroad station at Lyford, was to be the agricultural settlement that became the Stockholm community. The land company heavily advertised and promoted this farm land among Swedish Americans in Canada, Minnesota, and Texas. (There had been a substantial settlement of Swedes in Texas since the 1850's, mainly further north around Austin.) Advertisements were in both Swedish and English newspapers, and rail tours brought prospective buyers to the area to see the land.

By 1914, about 150 Swedes had purchased land in the Turner tract and nearly 2,000 acres had been cleared. By 1915, 28 houses had been built, silos and cattle barns added, and before long a school and a church, shared by a Lutheran and a Mission Congregation. The town of Stockholm had begun, there were telephone lines, a farm club was organized, and dirt roads were graded. Many farmers operated dairy farms, others grew cotton in the newly cleared and plowed fields. The town and community continued to grow through the 1920's, although many of the new residents found conditions too harsh and they moved elsewhere or returned to their origins. Most of the settlers in Stockholm were staged migrants; that is, they had lived elsewhere in the U.S. or Canada before coming to Stockholm. About sixty per cent came from Canada, Minnesota, and Texas, the remainder from a scattering of other locations.

The Depression of the 1930's was the beginning of the end for Stockholm, when drought and poor markets for crops caused many of the settlers to give up and seek better conditions elsewhere. Fifteen of the original landowners were still there in 1935, but Stockholm had lost its school, the general store, and the last church. Remaining residents went to church in nearby Lyford. By 1985, a visitor to Stockholm would find only historical markers and a dust-blown cemetery. There remained only two families (both non-Swedish) living in the area.

The author, David Vassberg, grew up in the vicinity of Stockholm, Texas. His grandfather, John Ulrik Vassberg, was born in Sundsvall, Sweden in 1865 and he emigrated to the US in 1885. After working for a time as a salesman, he farmed in South Dakota and, after 1894, in Saskatchewan, Canada. John married Hannah Ericksson from Sweden and they had seven children. Disliking the cold

Canadian winters, he became interested in Texas and purchased 240 acres near Stockholm in 1917. Several of his sons also settled in the Stockholm area, including Sven, father of the author. Sven lived in the area until he died in 1967. His oldest of three sons, David, was born in 1936 and graduated from nearby Lyford High School. He farmed with his father for five years, then went to the University of Texas in Austin, earning a Ph.D in history. He has had a distinguished academic career and became an expert on 16th century Spain.

David Vassberg taught History at the University of Texas-Pan American for 28 years and is now retired. He recently decided to write this book about Stockholm, Texas, fearing that the story of this town and its Swedish settlers would otherwise be lost to history. His view is that while Stockholm was unsuccessful as a colony, it was a resounding success in that the descendants of these pioneer settlers have now become mainstream participants in American society.

Vassberg's book is thorough, well researched, indexed, and well documented. After describing the birth, growth, and decline of Stockholm in six chapters supplied with many historic photographs, over 100 pages entitled "Swedes of the Local Colony" are devoted to listing as many of the early settlers in Stockholm as he was able to identify. A brief description of their lives and experiences in Stockholm is given for each, even for a number of absentee owners who purchased land but did not ever live there. Any reader with roots in this part of Texas, or an interest in an unusual Swedish American farming colony will find this book a valuable resource and a most engaging story.

Dennis L. Johnson