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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

The People of the Red Barns. De röda ladornas folk. Emigrants from Västmanlands- Kopparbergs-Gävleborgs- Västernorrlands- Jämtlands- Västerbottens- and Norrbottens län 1851-1863. By Elsa Lagevik. Translation in English by Vicky Oliver (Gävle 1996). 327 pp. Illustrated. Hard cover. \$65.00 plus \$5.00 for shipping and handling. Order from Elsa Lagevik, P.O. Box 814, Cape Coral, FL 33910.

The colorful, attractive cover featuring red barns, the bi-lingual title, and the 11 1/2 by 8 1/2 inches landscape format of this volume at once signal that this is a book of unusual characteristics.

It is unusual, first of all, in providing facing texts in Swedish and English, as the author is directing her book to a readership on both sides of the Atlantic, "to help those of Swedish ancestry in the USA who want to find their roots, as well as those genealogists in Sweden, who have emigrants in their families." In about 100 richly illustrated pages, she surveys the background of emigration (often with an emphasis on Ockelbo parish, which experienced the greatest out-flow), the emigrant journey, and aspects of immigrant life in the new world. Although the text is not closely documented, the author does provide a bibliography of 58 printed sources. The specific work on Ockelbo parish is evidently Elsa Lagevik's own research, growing out of her 1985 thesis in folk-life studies *Amerikaemigrationen 1846-1857 från Ockelbo socken*. This initial section of the book concludes with an interesting statistical summary about the number of emigrants, family size, occupation, age, and gender distribution.

The title is also unusual: *The People of the Red Barns*. What does that have to do with the content of the book? Mrs. Lagevik sees a link between the red barns in the American Midwest and the Swedish immigrants who settled there: "Wherever one travels in Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota, one sees red barns, while the houses are painted white. If one researches more closely who previously lived there, one finds out, almost without exception, that it was Swedes who built the house and were the first farmers..." To the boy brought up on a non-Swedish (albeit Norwegian) midwestern farm with a big red barn, her broad generalization intuitively does not ring true. A light brushing into what I have discovered to be a rich and colorful literature on the subject of barns also reveals that a blending of traditions and economics distinct from the Swedish penchant for "Falu rödfärg" (red paint from Falun in Dalarna) lies behind the stereotypical midwestern barn color. The premise for the title is an overstatement, but it remains a pleasant-enough notion, and one that provides a picturesque jacket for the columns of data that make up the bulk of the book.

It is in any case the sub-title which describes the heart of the undertaking, laid out in those very columns of data. This is a prodigious compilation of emigrants from the seven northern counties of Sweden for the years 1851 through 1863. It encompasses some 110 parishes as well as mariners from the Seamen's Hiring Hall in Gävle who jumped ship in American ports, and it also includes emigrants from the city of Stockholm who had been born in the counties covered in this book. The author lists the emigrants in chronological order of emigration, by family group, parish by parish, within each county. While the book's landscape format may make it a problem for fitting on some bookshelves, we now see the reason for the unusual size, namely the fourteen columns of data on each emigrant. The listings are very thorough: each emigrant is identified by a family number, individual number within the family, date of emigration, surname(s), first name, date of birth, place (parish and village) of birth, and occupation, all of this keyed to the volume and page in the household examination roll of the parish of emigration. In addition, for many of the entries, Mrs. Lagevik lists the ship on which the emigrant arrived in America and the passenger number from the manifest. A further column of "Notes," only in English, often has additional remarks from the Swedish church records, cross-references to other family members, or post-emigration information from American church records or other sources.

The author has culled through a great many primary sources for her information, from the parish household examination rolls, birth records, and exit registers to various passport journals, New York and Boston passenger arrival information, and American church records. The thoroughness of her work is indicated by the fact that in comparison to the official statistic of 1883 emigrants cited in Lars Ljungmark's *Den stora uvandringen* (English language revision, *Swedish Exodus*, updated and reissued by Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), Elsa Lagevik has identified 2,550 emigrants from the seven counties. Her work in identifying emigrants from Ockelbo parish is particularly impressive, since this is, what is called a "burned parish," the church records having been destroyed

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by fire in 1904. Thus, Mrs. Lagevik has had to piece together the emigration from other sources, including tax lists, estate inventories, and information from Swedish-American descendants.

The volume is richly indexed for the user. Emigrants found on passenger manifests are listed a second time by ship in chronological sequence of arrival and there is an alphabetical index to the ship names and the 64 arrival dates (63 for Boston and New York, one for Quebec). In addition to a general index, which includes the parishes and the counties, Mrs. Lagevik provides no less than four indices to the persons: the emigrants are indexed by first name, by "Last name 1," commonly the patronymic, "Last name 2," e.g., husband's patronymic or surname, alternative surname such as a military name, or name used in America; and by date of birth. If the emigrants you seek are named in this volume, there can be no excuse for not finding them!

The foreword describes *The People of the Red Barns* as a work in progress. It is ever so with genealogical research: there is always more information to be found, gaps to be filled in, and corrections to be made. Thus, the author invites readers to provide additional information for a possible new and more complete edition in the future. Should this occur, one can hope for a closer proofreading of the English text. As much as I admire the work, this fine documentation of emigration from northern Sweden is marred by typographical and orthographic errors, peculiarities of punctuation, occasional phrases that are less than idiomatic in English, and by some idiosyncratic renderings of Swedish terms. A final reading by a persnickety copy editor would have improved the English text significantly.

The anomalies of the English text aside, Elsa Lagevik has done a fine job of identifying emigrants and tracing them from Sweden to America. Beginning as it does in 1851, the book dovetails nicely for this part of Sweden with the classic work of Nils William Olsson and Erik Wikén, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in the United States, 1820-1850*. Since the book encompasses the very areas which were at the heart of the Janssonist movement, it is an especially timely and worthy contribution to the 1996 Year of Emigration. *The People of the Red Barns* is a valuable resource presented in an appealing package.

Ronald J. Johnson, Madison, Wisconsin

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Svenska arkitekter i USA 1846-1930. By Göran Rygert (Marietta, GA 1996). 234 pp. Multilithed, spiral-bound. Soft covers, \$30.00 (including postage). Order from Göran Rygert, 4390 Ivywood NE, Marietta, GA 30062.

For the first time in the history of documenting Swedish contributions to American life, Göran Rygert of Marietta, GA, has given us a comprehensive overview of the role of Swedish architects in the building of the American nation between 1846 and 1930. It is surprising that, except for an occasional individual biography, this important cadre of professionals has been virtually ignored by Swedish and American scholars. It is to the credit of Mr. Rygert, himself an architect, to have researched all types of source material, some of it quite obscure, in ferreting out material to illustrate the professional careers of 140 Swedish-born architects who came to America, either for a period of time before returning to Sweden, or who settled permanently in the U.S. Although Mr. Rygert's excellent and well researched introduction to the history of Swedish architects in America is in the Swedish language (58 pages), the corpus or the meat of his study, that part which deals directly with the career of each of the 140 studied individuals, is in the English language (151 pages).

In each of the biographies listed in this larger section we learn a great deal about the architect's life, not only his vital statistics, but his education, whether in Sweden or the United States, his date of emigration, his residence in the U.S., and most importantly of all, the facts surrounding the architectural legacy he left behind in order to enrich the cultural life of America.

Mr. Rygert is to be commended for having brought this important group of Swedish individuals to our attention. The author is himself aware of the fact that many other Swedish architects may yet be discovered and it is his hope that his present study will spur readers and researchers throughout the United States and Canada to help him complete the saga of this group of builders of America.

Nils William Olsson

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Roos af Hjlemsäter, a Swedish Noble Family, with Allied Families and Emigrants. By Lillie Rollins Crawford and Robert Junious Crawford (Marietta, GA 1996). xxviii + 628 pp.+ 1 pedigree chart. Hard covers. \$49.50 (plus \$3.50 for postage and handling; \$4.50 for foreign shipment). May be ordered directly from Donald Roos Johnson, 1969 Fields Pond Drive, Marietta, GA 30068.

This ambitious volume of more than 650 pages seeks to document the Roos af Hjlemsäter clan, one of the oldest and most prestigious noble families of Sweden. Though much of the text is a direct translation of the story of the Roos af Hjlemsäter family in Sweden as presented in Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* I-IX (Stockholm, 1925-1936), the authors have sought to bring into the volume much extra material, which not only updates the Elgenstierna matter but also presents a wealth of information on allied families. We also note that the authors have provided details which weave a rich tapestry background for the unfolding story of this most interesting family.

This genealogical story spans a time period from the Middle Ages to the end of the 20th century. The volume is made up of several segments, each one different, but dovetail well with other portions of the book.

After the introductory material, which includes a useful list of translations of Swedish words and expressions, the reader is presented with a pedigree chart going back to the founder of the family, Jon Raud Ivarsson, who, according to Elgenstierna, lived in the 13th century. Then follows an ancestral table (ahnentafel), parts of which appeared in *Swedish American Genealogist*, March 1991, pp. 97-105.

More than 400 pages are devoted to the Roos af Hjlemsäter dynasty and with it allied families. The volume ends with a number of appendices covering topics involving some aspect of the Roos af Hjlemsäter family.

This handsome volume contains ninety photographs of family members plus a color plate of the Roos af Hjlemsäter coat of arms, on display in the House of Nobles in Stockholm.

Nils William Olsson

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A Swedish Family Odyssey. By Charles H. Hendricks (Chapel Hill, NC 1995). xxii + 394 pp. Hard covers. \$15.00 plus \$2.50 postage and handling. Order from Dr. Charles H. Hendricks, 102 Boulder Lane, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

Readers of *SAG* will remember the excellent articles written by Charles H. Hendricks in the issues of the journal dated Sept. 1992, March 1993, Sept. 1993, and Sept. 1994, where he documented his research of his family history. Dr. Hendricks has now published the story of his Swedish ancestry in a delightful work which should tickle the palate of every American with Swedish roots, entitled *A Swedish Family Odyssey*. The volume, comprising more than 400 pages, is a classic example of what a family history should be. The author, starting from practically ground zero with scarcely any information concerning his Swedish background, leads the reader step by step, as he unfolds the story of his ancestral discovery. He admits to a certain amount of luck or serendipity, as he is overheard by a research scholar while discussing his problem with an archivist at the Lund District Archives. The scholar pricks up her ears and it turns out that she is thoroughly familiar with Hendricks' problem and thus becomes the key to unlocking a fascinating family history. Hendricks and his Swedish colleague developed a transoceanic correspondence which over the years became a channel by which the author was able to document his origin in Skåne and produce a volume of singular worth. Not only is the book an excellent case study, but it is beautifully printed and at its price should be in the library of every Swedish American genealogist.

Nils William Olsson

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