

12-1-2016

## In Memoriam: H. Arnold Barton

Dag Blanck

Harald Runblom

Elisabeth Thorsell

Chris Olsson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Blanck, Dag; Runblom, Harald; Thorsell, Elisabeth; and Olsson, Chris (2016) "In Memoriam: H. Arnold Barton," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 36 : No. 4 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol36/iss4/6>

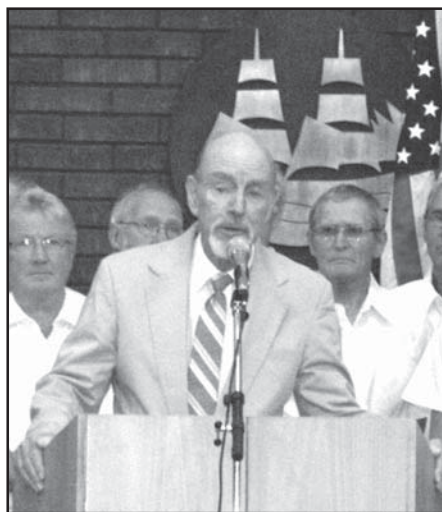
This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@augustana.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@augustana.edu).

# In Memoriam H. Arnold Barton 1929-2016

Professor H. Arnold Barton, Tyresö, Sweden, passed away on 28 September 2016. He was born in Los Angeles in 1929, the oldest of four siblings. His parents were Sven Hildor Barton and his wife Marguerite Lemke. In his book *The Search for Ancestors* (1979), also in Swedish as *Släkten* (1981), he tells his family saga. Arnold had his roots on his *farmor's* side from Hälsingland and from his *farfar's* side from Småland. His *farfar* Ernest Svensson assumed the name Barton as it sounded more American. Already as a youngster Arnold realized that he had Swedish roots among the pioneers in the Midwest and decided to learn Swedish. After high school and studies at Pomona College he spent four years in the U.S. Coast Guard. For a period he was stationed at Rhodes, Greece. He had plans to continue his military career, but chose studies for a Ph.D. at Princeton University instead. During a quarter of a century he was professor of European history at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, IL, where he also played the cello in the university orchestra.

Arnold Barton was a prominent authority on Nordic history and he became a leading person in the American Scandinavian studies community. His doctoral thesis dealt with the arch aristocrat Hans Axel von Fersen the Younger, who played an international role during the French Revolution and in Napoleonic Europe. Arnold Barton's research into the Nordic countries around the turn of the century 1800 was summarized in *Scandinavia in the Revolutionary Era 1760-1815* (1986). *Sweden and Visions of Norway* (2003) should also be mentioned.

When Arnold Barton started a new subject, he did so in earnest. His systematic approaches and his surveys were impressive. The transatlantic mass migration became his other great area of research. His long list of publications includes *A Folk Divided: Homeland Swedes and Swedish*



*Americans, 1840-1940* (1994), in which he shows how the relations between Swedes in Sweden and the Swedish-Americans have changed from distrust and stereotypic views to an effort to better understand each other. From 1974 to 1990 Arnold Barton was the editor of the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, published by the Swedish-American Historical Society of Chicago.

In New York, Arnold Barton met Aina Bergman from Solna, Sweden. They married and became inseparable. Their summers were always spent in Sweden, and after Arnold Barton's retirement they settled in Tyresö, southeast of Stockholm, for good. His research in later years on Kanton, near Drottningholm palace, caught the interest of King Carl XIV Gustaf. The Bartons had many friends in Sweden. Both attended the John Ericsson Day in Filipstad for many years, and also came to many other places with Swedish-American celebrations.

Arnold Barton personified the Swedish-American cultural and academic relations. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from Uppsala University and was elected Swedish-American of the Year 1988. In the U.S.A. Arnold Barton played a leading role in the Society for the Advancement of

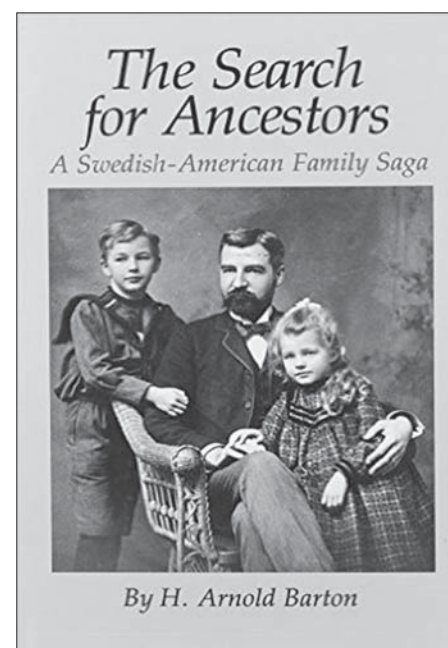
Scandinavian Study, the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, and in the Swedish-American Historical Society. The latter awarded him the Carl Sandburg medal.

Arnold Barton's great-grandfather, Ernst Svensson from Bullebo in Djursdala, Småland, immigrated with his entire family in 1867, and settled on the prairie of Iowa.

For Arnold Barton life and learning became one and the same. He fulfilled the ambition to learn the language of his forefathers and had, like few Americans, a thorough understanding of Swedish culture. With Arnold Barton's passing a Swedish-American odyssey, lasting for generations, has ended.

*By Dag Blanck and Harald Runblom*

*Translated by Elisabeth Thorsell and Chris Olsson*



*Arnold Barton's own family history, still available from Amazon.com*