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Book Reviews

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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 SAG Editor, at <sag@etgenealogy.se> so we know what you are working on.

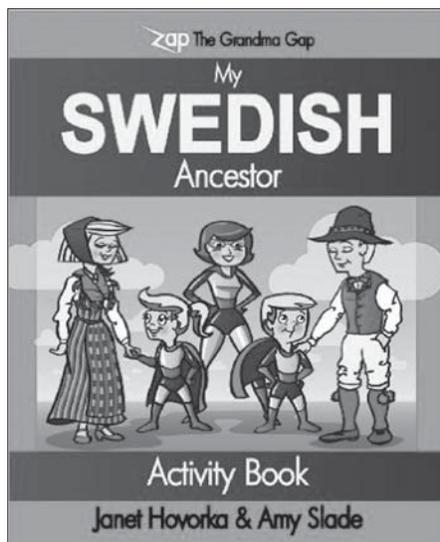
Sweden for youngsters

My Swedish Ancestor. Activity book by Janet Hovorka and Amy Slade. Paperback, 54 pages. Published by Family ChartMasters 2013. ISBN-10: 0988854848. \$9.95 at Amazon.com.

Come on the quest of a lifetime – the search for how your family came to be and why you are the way you are.

Here are the super activities, games, and questions that will help you discover the exciting lives of your Swedish ancestors. Learning about your family's past can be a fun adventure that strengthens your family relationships today as you learn about the past together. With this activity book you can:

- Place your Swedish ancestor in the context of broader Swedish history
- Complete a crossword puzzle about Swedish words your ancestors used
- Learn about and create items for a Swedish holiday
- Color and cut out Swedish paper dolls to tell the stories of your ancestors
- Write a letter to your Swedish ancestor
- Design and color



a drawing of a Dala horse such as your ancestor might have played with

- Involve your whole family in the fun of learning about your Swedish ancestors
- And explore many other activities. In this book, simple projects, recipes, and worksheets make it easy for your busy family to celebrate their Swedish heritage. No matter what your age, you can help your family accomplish these activities together. As you learn, you can record your family history here to create a new family keepsake and pass your great Swedish heritage down to future generations.

(Text borrowed from Amazon.com)

SALE!

Swedish Voters in Chicago 1888

By Nils William Olsson
302 pages of Swedes, comments, and indexes.

\$10 + \$5 S&H

Contact Jill Seaholm at

<jillseaholm@augustana.edu>

From Skåne to Minnesota

Minnesota Swedes, Volume 1, by Lilly Setterdahl. Second Edition, Revised 2015.

Volume 1 of *Minnesota Swedes* was

first published in 1996, and has been out-of-print for some time. *Minnesota Swedes, Volume II*, was published in 1999 and is still available in bookstores and online.

In the preface of the revised edition, Lilly Setterdahl explains why she felt it was important to republish the book. To her knowledge, no other study has been made and published in English about former tenant farmers from Swedish castle estates in Skåne and how they fared as homesteaders in America. The book has a chapter called “Comparison with Isanti County Rättvik Settlers” which compares those farmers in Isanti County from Rättvik with the immigrant farmers from Trolle-Ljungby that settled in Goodhue County. The Rättvik settlers were researched by Dr. Robert C. Ostergren and published in his “*A Community Transplanted: The Trans-Atlantic Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Settlement in the Upper Middle West.*” Dr. Ostergren researched the emigration from Upper Dalarna, especially Rättvik.

Lilly Setterdahl felt it was shocking to find out what abuse the masses in Trolle-Ljungby had to endure in Sweden in the mid-1800s. Many emigrants who left Trolle-Ljungby in Kristianstad, Skåne, settled in Goodhue County in Minnesota where they eventually found freedom.

Sections of the book cover Trolle-Ljungby – the setting, background history, and the emigration. These sections are followed by ones covering the Swedes in Goodhue County and their assimilation into American life. Subsequently, their experiences are compared with those of the Isanti County Rättvik settlers. The two

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Vikings again

perpetuation and exploitation of this story of Christian Vikings whose mission was to find and save the lost and strayed Christians who had disappeared from the Greenland settlement and presumably migrated into the interior of North America. Krueger considers also the effect on the Catholic community since the Viking searchers in the 14th century were Catholic Christians of several centuries prior to the Protestant Reformation in Scandinavia.

Without the career-long efforts of one Hjalmar Holand, the stone might have remained as a stepping stone into one of Olof Öhman's farm buildings. Holand was a Norwegian American with a strong interest in Norse history and Viking explorations in North America. He had studied at the University of Wisconsin, and soon became aware of the stone. Not many years later, Holand traveled to Öhman's farm near Kensington, Minnesota, and was able to see it in person. He spoke at some length with Öhman about the stone, its finding, and its history. He was able to take the stone away on loan "in order to study it further." Holand became convinced of its authenticity and brought it to several U.S. linguists, geologists, and the Minnesota Historical Society for their inspection, but despite his passionate arguments, was unable to convince any to agree. He then took the stone to Europe in 1911, where he also had little success in persuading Norwegian and Swedish scholars and runologists, all of whom decided the stone was a product of the 19th century.

Many ethnic Swedes and Norwegians were content to accept Holand's theories about 14th century countrymen in Minnesota, since it gave them a certain amount of ethnic pride in their heritage. Others were not convinced, however, and feared that the stories would bring ridicule on their fellows if it were proven false. The stories were further beclouded by



Myths of the Rune Stone: Viking Martyrs and the Birthplace of America, David M. Krueger, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2015, Softcover. 214 pages, Illustrated, Amazon.com, \$19.51 plus shipping.

If you are expecting this book to settle the century-old controversy over the authenticity of the Kensington Runestone, you will be greatly disappointed. The author has, instead, chosen to focus on the impact of the runestone over the century since it first surfaced in 1898. The stone was found, according to its discoverer, farmer Olof Öhman, "entangled in the roots of one tree they were pulling out of the ground to clear more land for cultivation." The myth of the Runestone came to its peak in the 1960's along with a pageant put on in 1962 by the Alexandria, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, to mark the six hundredth anniversary of the year 1362, the date carved on the stone's inscription. In more recent years, the stone's authenticity has been discredited by most scholars, relying primarily on claimed errors in the runic inscription. My own view, as stated in an earlier book review, is that the stone "remains unproven."

The author, David Krueger, has taken a look at the Kensington Runestone by taking a different approach, and that is to consider how the Stone which he refers to as "a Myth," has affected many of the various communities involved with the history of this myth over the years since its origins in Minnesota. These include the Swedish and Norwegian ethnic communities in the region and in Minnesota at large, a not inconsiderable percent of the population. He also identifies the business communities and chambers of commerce in the area who stood to gain through



largest sections are those covering letters written by the immigrants dated 1855-1881 and also interviews with their descendants. Missing from the reprint are the statistical tables and most of the footnotes.

Some of the more important footnotes were included as endnotes. The photographs from the front cover are now in the interior. Other photographs and illustrations have been omitted.

Two additional interviews were added; one of those was with SGSM (Swedish Genealogical Society of Minnesota) Past President Phyllis Pladsen. The book ends with an epilogue, bibliography, and the updated endnotes.

Janet Frye and Jan Carlson

Book Reviews



discoveries of claimed ship anchor holes drilled into rocks along the shorelines of the many lakes in the area, and other purported Viking artifacts found in the vicinity.

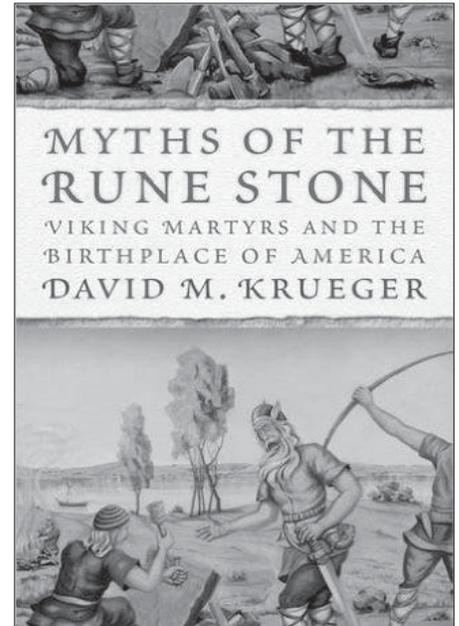
Holand continued to write prolifically and to speak to many groups about his theories, and finally in 1932 self-published a book-length treatment, *The Kensington Stone*. This book was revised, retitled, and published in 1940 by a New York publisher as *Westward from Vinland: an Account of Norse Discoveries in America 982-1362*. In this book, Holand has in effect created a new saga of Vikings in North America. Using an obscure document, he claims that King Magnus of Sweden in 1354 commissioned an expedition led by Paul Knutson to seek out the missing Norse from the Greenland settlement and bring them back to the church. Holand claimed that members of this voyage traveled west from Greenland via Hudson Bay and ascended the Red and Nelson Rivers to a point near the present Kensington River in 1362. There they were attacked by Indians, resulting in the dead of the inscription on the stone. The survivors returned to Norway by 1364.

Many claimed artifacts were found by local farmers and settlers and sent to Holand to reinforce his story, but most were discredited upon careful examination. But the story in the book was accepted by many, especially the Swedish and Norwegian residents of Northwest Minnesota. Local publicity generated awareness and spread this story through the Upper Midwest. An occasional article in regional newspapers and in national magazines spread the story even

further. This was not lost on local businesses and chambers of commerce, who may have been influenced by their ethnic heritage, but also were quick to see the financial rewards that exploiting Holand's theory might be gained. By bringing the Kensington Runestone story to their community, tourism could be generated which would bring more visitors and revenue to the area. Although the little village of Kensington with only a few hundred residents was closest to the site where the stone was found, this role was soon adopted by the nearest larger town of Alexandria. This larger city had several thousand people and lay on a major highway (later to become a freeway, I-94) with more facilities such as lodgings, restaurants, and stores to serve visitors. Alexandria already had a foothold on tourism, lying on and serving the southern part of a major lake district in that part of northwest Minnesota.

A Kensington druggist in 1927 organized a large rally on a farm near the Öhman farm, site of the finding of the stone, to raise funds and enthusiasm for a large monument to the stone. Some 5000 people were in attendance and heard Hjalmar Holand, a local congressman, and other enthusiastic speakers deliver impassioned speeches to the crowd. This was the same year that work began on Mt. Rushmore, and national monuments were on the minds of many. The Runestone was also present, guarded by two acclaimed heroes of World War I, armed and in full uniform. The monument was envisioned as a major tribute to one of the most important events in the founding of the nation, equal to Plymouth Rock, monuments in the East, and Mt. Rushmore. The ambitious monument was never built, but captured the attention of many at the rally.

By 1928 a group of Kensington businessmen raised \$2500 to purchase the stone from Hjalmar Ho-



land, who had kept possession of the stone since borrowing it from farmer Öhman. Soon after, the Commercial Club of Kensington purchased an old bank building for a civic center and museum to house the stone and related artifacts. In subsequent years the stone was exhibited widely throughout Minnesota and at the Minnesota State Fair, often accompanied by two uniformed honor guards. It was returned to Kensington where it was stored in the bank vault of the Museum building for the next two decades. In June, 1938, the fortieth anniversary of the Runestone's discovery, a pageant was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in Kensington as part of the "Runestone Remembrance Days." Participation by the community was reported as "disappointing."

World War II brought little attention to the stone but it was the period in which Hjalmar Holland was hard at work on two volumes, *Westward from Vinland*, (1940), and *America, 1355-1364: A New Chapter in Pre-Columbian History* (1946). His tireless efforts caught the attention of the Smithsonian Institution, who felt the stone was "worthy of display



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Who made the furniture?

The Jamestown Furniture Industry – History in Wood 1816 –1920, by Clarence C. Carlson. Published by The History Press, 2015. Softcover, 187 pages.

ISBN-number: 978-1-62619-295-9.

Available from Amazon, Google Books, Barnes & Noble, and Arcadia Publishing.

Mr. Carlson traces the history of the furniture industry in Jamestown from 1816 to 1920 in this book. His preface summarizes his interest in the early history of Jamestown and how his reading of the history of the Jamestown area nurtured his interest in the furniture industry. This was further fueled by the fact that his father was a cabinetmaker from Sweden who had worked in some of these factories. As he continued to read about the furniture industry, he was intrigued by the number of factories that he had never heard of, leading him to further research and the seeds of this book were planted.

The furniture industry began in Jamestown in 1816 with a company that made a number of different pieces of furniture. It was owned by Royal Keyes and John and William Breed. They were not of Swedish heritage as Swedish immigrants did not arrive until around 1860 with the coming of the railroad to Jamestown. Many of the early Swedish settlers were attracted to the climate and topography of Chautauqua County as it was similar to their homeland. They brought with them skills as lumberjacks and carpenters and the ability to build fine wood furniture. Originally they went to work at established shops, then gradually were able to found their own companies. Some of those enterprising gentlemen were named Carlson,

among our national collections.” It was promptly shipped to Washington, where it remained on display for a little over a year in 1948 and 1949. This was probably the high point of recognition for the stone, with publicity in the *National Geographic*, *Newsweek*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and Minneapolis newspapers. In March, 1949, it was displayed at the Minnesota Historical Society and later that year was exhibited at the Minnesota State Fair. Soon after, attacks by critics caused the Smithsonian to clarify its position as not in support of the stone’s authenticity. Alexandria boosters continued to take advantage of this icon of their city to use the name Viking or Runestone in their business and even to erect a 22 ton replica of the stone on the eastern approach to Alexandria. Viking murals were painted in two local buildings, and other promotional actions were taken. The controversy remained and the debate continued to rage.

The author has identified another community affected by the story of the runestone. Because of the date used in the inscription, 1362, the Catholic church took an interest in the stone. Holand in his book had referred to the group of Vikings as calling upon the Virgin Mary to save them from this violent enemy. He portrayed them as Christian martyrs who had died in another example of Christians dying for their faith in their attempts to bring Christianity to heathen lands. This idea appealed strongly to many of the Catholic faith and others, since these Viking martyrs suffered well before the time of the Protestant Reformation. This fit

well with the not-too-distant memories of the Dakota uprising of 1862, in which several hundred white settlers in Minnesota were massacred at the hands of Indians aggrieved by their treatment at the hands of the U.S. Government. This event was portrayed by some as a religious war in which God was on the side of the energetic white settlers against the heathen gods of the Native Americans. All of this entered into the mythology surrounding the story of the Runestone.

Krueger summarizes his book by arguing that the Runestone story has survived so long in the mythology of the American Midwest because it suited the many purposes of the various groups he has identified as being impacted by this story. These groups included the many Scandinavian settlers in the area, the business interests who saw the story as attracting tourists and commerce to the area, the Catholic church, and various others who wished, or found it in their interest, to believe in the authenticity of the Kensington Runestone. Krueger, like many including this reviewer, remains a skeptic. Further research may yet be brought to light, but for now the story of the stone remains unproven. Krueger’s book is an excellent summary of the history of the stone and the history of the stories surrounding its controversy.

Dennis L. Johnson



One of the Jarlabanke runstones from Täby (Stock.).

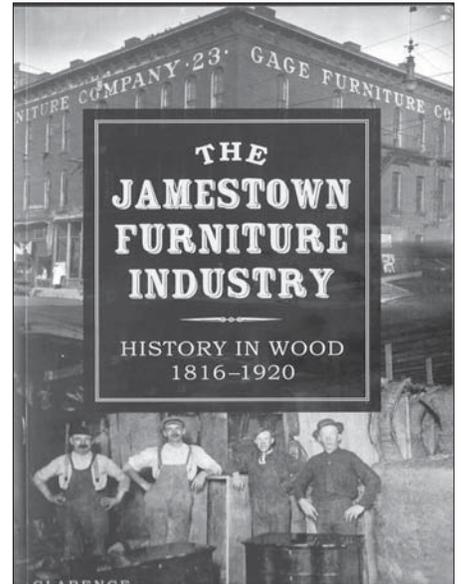


Johnson, Norquist, Linblad, Olson, Johnston, and Anderson.

Mr. Carlson sets his book up in small contained sections that include the dates that the company existed, the location, the founders, and the products produced there. He then provides a narrative of the company. Frequently there is a portrait of the company founder that may prove interesting to family members re-

searching these men. In addition there are a few photographs of the companies themselves and some of the pieces of furniture they produced. One item of particular interest is the chair of Chief Justice Robert H. Jackson that was produced at the Jamestown Lounge Company, unfortunately not owned by a Swede. Mr. Carlson intersperses his description of the companies with short descriptions of the changes that the industry witnessed over the years. It is a format that allows for focused research of a specific company.

Chapter 5 gives a great description of Jamestown as the second-largest producer of wood furniture in the



United States in 1900. Only Grand Rapids, Michigan, produced more. At this time there were more than 200 manufacturers of a variety of goods employing more than 7,000 workers in Jamestown. The four major industries were wood furniture, photographic paper production, worsted fabric mills, and metal furniture production.

He concludes his book with an epilogue that describes the influences that contributed to the decline of the furniture business in Jamestown. It is a somewhat complex issue and not unique to Jamestown. He also includes a great chart at the end of the book that is arranged in chronological order describing the start and stop date, original name of the company, what it became later on, what it specialized in, the location, and whether or not it was founded by a Swede.

I found this book interesting from a local history aspect and very easy to use to locate family members that owned furniture factories. If you are tracing family members in Jamestown, you might find it useful. If you have an interest in the furniture industry, you will definitely find it interesting and useful. While it does

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not include the names of individual workers, it can give you a picture of the work environment your ancestors would have experienced.

Janet M. Wahlberg

Swedish faith in Texas

History of the Swedish Lutheran Churches in Texas, by Elroy Haverlah. 2015, paperback, 292 pages. Amazon.com, \$14.99. ISBN-10: 1515256618.

A hen that came to Holy Communion, a church built from the remains of a burned-down capitol, six orphaned girls adopted after worship, a tornado that lifted one church, a hurricane that destroyed another. These are among the many unexpected accounts that fill the pages of the history of the first churches

established in Texas by Swedish immigrants. From 1870 through 1906, a dozen congregations emerged on the Texas prairies and coastlines. Haverlah has gathered the facts – some stranger than fiction – about these historic churches and their pioneer pastors into one book. Included as background material are the history of Christianity in Sweden, the introduction of Lutheranism in Sweden, and the formation of the Augustana Synod in the U.S. Learn about Ansgar (“Apostle of the North”), and many more.



SAG needs your help!

We regard the reviews as a very important part of SAG, as the readers are spread all over the U.S., Canada, and Sweden and a lone subscriber even in Australia.

For all of them it is very difficult to keep track of the many interesting books (and movies) that are published with a *Swedish* or *Swedish-American* theme.

We need you to keep your eyes open. And we are extremely pleased if you will write a review and send it to the SAG editor.

Family histories, church histories, local group histories, and lodge histories are among the things we would like to present in SAG. And all in English.

A good book review contains the full title of the book, name of author, year of printing, name of publisher, where it can be bought, and the price of the book.

Send all book reviews to the SAG editor!

Elisabeth Thorsell
SAG editor

New and Noteworthy

(short notes on interesting books and articles)

In the *Tidningen* 2016/1, published by the Swedish Genealogical Society of Minnesota) there is an interesting article about Swede Hollow (*Svenska dalen*) in St. Paul, MN. This place was a first stop for many Swedes from the 1850s onwards, but as soon as they could they left for better places. The city authorities burnt remaining dwellings in 1956, and in 1973 it was designated a Saint Paul Park.

Family Tree Magazine (March-April 2016) has a good article on how to get started with your own family history website. Various programs are mentioned, and the author, David Fryxell, tells what he thinks about their ease of use. But remember, if you start a family history web site you also have to keep it updated, which can be a chore.

The *Swedish American Historical Quarterly* (2016/1) has several articles of interest. H. Arnold Barton, the former editor, tells about his grandmother, Jenny Norelius, and her opera singing career, that took her all over the western world. Anne-Charlotte Harvey writes on her favorite subject “Swedish and Swedish-American Music: From Jenny Lind to ABBA”. Here also comes Eric Lund’s last article “Fifty Years for the Society’s Archives” in which he tells the story of the archives, how they has grown in contents, and how it has moved around until it found a safe home at the North Park University in Chicago. Well worth a visit!