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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.

Sami Americans

We Stopped Forgetting. Stories from Sámi Americans, by Ellen Marie Jensen. Published by Cálliidlágádus – Authors’ publisher, Pb140, No – 9735 Kárášjohka – Karajok – Norway. 133 pages. ISBN Number: 978-82-8263-119-8. Price: \$24.95
Purchase: Back Home Books; see link on page 26.

A few weeks ago I attended the Scandinavian Festival in Jamestown, NY. One of the vendors there had many books from Norway. As I perused the titles, one jumped out at me. It was titled *We Stopped Forgetting. Stories from Sámi Americans*. I have been fascinated by the Sámi people for many years but knew very little about them except that they lived in the far North and were noted for herding reindeer. After chatting briefly with the young lady who was manning the table, I purchased the book.

As I settled down to read it the very next day, I was initially quite disappointed. I had anticipated that it would be descriptive stories of the lives of these indigenous people of northern Norway, Sweden, Rus-

sia, and Finnmark. However, what I had was a book that included the stories of five people living in the United States who were descendants of various Sámi communities in the old country describing the prejudice and secrecy that surrounded their heritage.

I will quote the author’s opening in the foreword of the book: “Over the years people have asked me why I choose to identify as a Sámi American or why I have chosen to ‘stop forgetting’ the Sámi part of my mixed heritage. The answer is quite simple: love and justice. I write this book out of a deep sense of love and respect for the multicultural home and family that continue to shape and nourish me, and out of a sense of justice for those who have been silenced in our history.”

All of those interviewed had a common theme of parents and grandparents who had in many cases hidden their ethnic identity. At best they had limited exposure to the culture of their ancestors. All had suffered discrimination and prejudice in their American communities because they looked different. In many cases they were identified as Native American or Black.

Gradually these five people and others mentioned began to research their heritage and to reconnect with others of their ethnic background. In many families it was a very painful and difficult project. Old letters, directly asking questions and trips to their ancestral homes in Scandinavia helped to fill in the blanks.

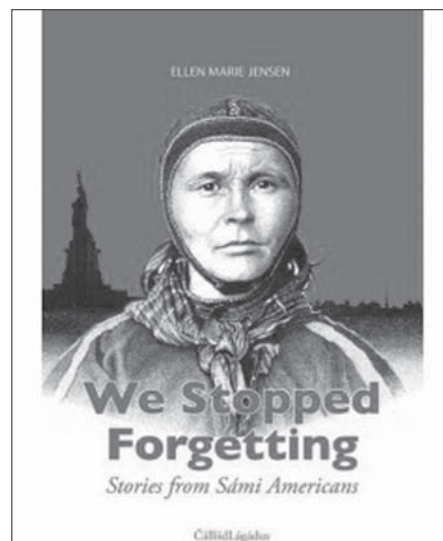
Ms. Jensen revealed the character and personality of each person that she interviewed. One gentleman is deeply involved in the worldwide Indigenous Christian Movement. All identified in some way with the Native American culture in this country either by blood relation or as members of the world community of indigenous people.

Ms. Jensen very deliberately selected the cover photo. She states in her book that

the first time that she saw the photo, it virtually “took her breath away.” The unknown woman is part of the gallery of immigrant’s portraits that line the walls at Ellis Island and is described as a Sámi woman wearing *gákti* who arrived between 1905 and 1920. Ms. Jensen has done a great deal of research on her, but to date cannot identify her. She speaks of the look of both hope and loss in the woman’s eyes and the feeling that this woman is beckoning her to “do justice to her story.” Ms. Jensen says that the portrait haunts her.

While I started out being disappointed, I ended my reading of *We Stopped Forgetting* with an appreciation of this unique culture. I also banished my romanticized look at the Sámi people and developed a clear, unvarnished look at the prejudice that these people endured here as well as in their ancestral homes. An enlightening read.

Janet M. Wahlberg



Editor’s note: The Swedish Federation of Genealogical Societies just published a book in Swedish, called *Samiska rötter, släktforskning i svenska Sápmi* which contains 10 essays on how to do Sami genealogy. Price 255 SEK + postage. See link on p. 26.

SALE!
Swedish Voters in Chicago 1888
By Nils William Olsson
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Book Reviews



Two crime stories with a Swedish touch

- 1) *In Sheep's Clothing*, by Rett McPherson. Published by Minotaur Books 2014. 250 pages. ISBN 978-0373266395. This is the seventh book in a series of eleven.

Torie O'Shea manages a museum in Missouri. She uses genealogy to solve mysteries. Here she solves a mystery in Minnesota using research into a Swedish family. When her favorite aunt, Sissy, invites genealogist Victoria "Torie" O'Shea to come and spend some time with her in Minnesota, she piles her husband and her stepfather into the car.

Torie leaves her two daughters in the care of her wheel-chair bound mother back home in Missouri, and hits the road, looking forward to some relaxation and

some family bonding. Once at Sissy's, Torie finds out that her aunt's invitation was not so innocent: Sissy has uncovered a 150-year-old diary in the attic of her home and is dying to find out who wrote it, and where it came from. Torie is immediately engaged by the story of a young Swedish woman living with her family in 1850s rural Minnesota, who had fallen in love with a man she couldn't have. It's the tale of an unmarried 17-year-old mother who died in a fire where Aunt Sissy's farm now stands. The diary ends abruptly with hints of brutal violence. Torie becomes involved in a deadly mystery passed down through generations – that still has implications today.

- 2) *Witness in Bishop Hill*, by Sara Hoskinson Frommer. Published in 2003 by Thomas T. Beeler. 242 pages. ISBN 978-1574904697. The fifth of seven Joan Spencer mysteries.

Joan Spencer, the heroine, and her new husband, Lt. Fred Lundquist, finally take a long-delayed honeymoon with Joan's teenage son Andrew. She'll finally get to see the tiny historic Swedish-American community where Fred grew up, Bishop Hill, Illinois. A murder takes place during Bishop Hill's annual Lucia Nights, with only one witness: Fred's mother. She is far-

ther down the road to Alzheimer's than they had been led to believe, and dealing with her illness turns out to be a tough test for their new family. When Mrs. Lundquist witnesses a brutal murder, she is a little too disoriented to be clear in her description of the killer. Suddenly everyone in the small village is a suspect. The only person with the key to unlock the mystery is an elderly woman who floats in and out of clarity, often undetected. Joan will have to get close enough to her mother-in-law to figure out what really happened that night, and to protect her and her family from a killer, who is bound to strike again.

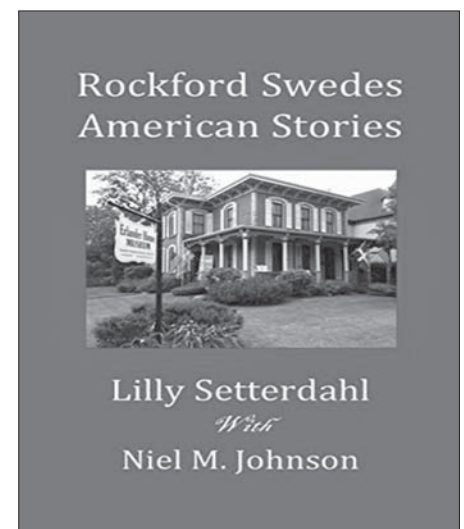
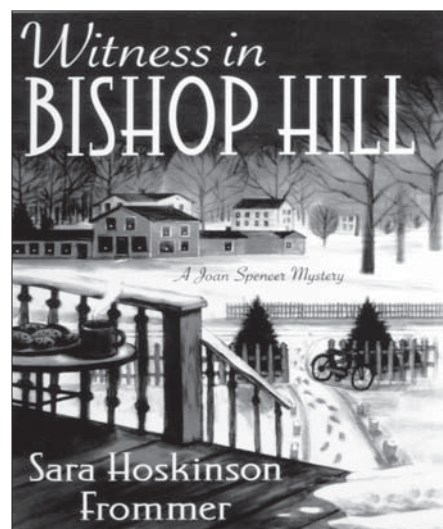
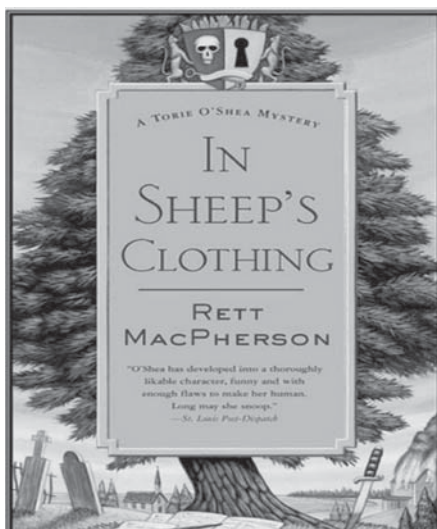
Both reviews by Janet Frye.

First published in *Tidningen*, Autumn 2016, Journal of The Swedish Genealogical Society of Minnesota.

Swedes in Rockford, Ill.

Rockford Swedes. American Stories, by Lilly Setterdahl and Niel M. Johnson. Kindle edition, available from Amazon.com, price \$5:99. 292 pages.

Rockford Swedes: American Stories contains the stories of 25 Swedish Americans, some of whom had strong connections to





Book Reviews

Rockford's prominent furniture industry. One person says that his father lost "a million and a half" in the Great Depression. While most seem to have had a happy family life, one woman describes her father as abusive. We learn about the "socialist Sunday school" that some children attended, and about the Swedish participation in city government.

The first edition of *Rockford Swedes* was published in 1993. Since then these voices have been silenced by death. Fortunately, thanks to the preserved recordings, they can still be heard on tapes at two archives,

one in the United States and one in Sweden. This volume also contains images of the storytellers and a complete guide to the more than 300 interviews that Lennart Setterdahl conducted with Rockford Swedes from 1985 until 1992.

Lilly Setterdahl has authored other books based on other interviews done by her husband Lennart Setterdahl. These books include *Swedes in Moline, Illinois 1847-2002* (2003), *Chicago Swedes: They spoke from their heart* (2010).

Elisabeth Thorsell

Vilhelm Moberg's country

Mobergs utvandrabygd och Amerikas Småland, by Ulf Beijbom. Published by Carlsson Publishing 2015.

307 pages, hardcover, illustrated, maps, name index. In **Swedish**. Can be purchased from Bokus.com Price 245 SEK+ postage.

Ulf Beijbom, the former director of the Swedish Emigrant Institute is an untiring writer. Now he has published a new version of an 1991 book, entitled *Vilhelm Moberg och utvandrabygden*, which he felt was due for an update.

The book is a "road movie" where he presents the Moberg family, and Moberg's growing up and becoming a writer. Next he leaves Moshultamåla and digresses with stories about the filming adventures, and Vilhelm Moberg's reactions to that. Not always favorable, as he found the "tourist business" quite awful. For instance, his sister complained about buses coming to her home just to look at her. Mr. Moberg also was not confident that "an

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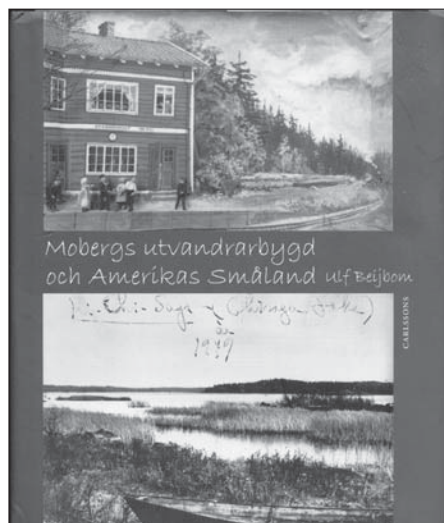
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historian from Uppsala” could properly understand the old immigrants and what they had to suffer to make their life in America. But eventually Mr. Moberg made his peace with Dr. Beijbom and became a staunch supporter of the newly founded Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö. Another article tells how researcher Dr. Agnes Wirén finally managed to find that a few



early emigrant ships did leave from Karlshamn in Blekinge.

Next Dr. Beijbom follows Mr. Moberg to America and tells stories about his time in Chisago Co. in Minnesota, and his research there and contacts with local old people.

Dr. Beijbom also mentions that author Astrid Lindgren was the first Swede to read Andrew Peterson’s diaries in the Minnesota Historical Society, before Moberg, but that she felt too shy to announce that fact later on, as Vilhelm Moberg was by then a much more famous author. In 1985 she published this in a Christmas greeting.

Dr. Beijbom is a great storyteller, and this book is not just about Vilhelm Moberg. We also get to know the airline captain Carl-Werner Pettersson, Ted Norelius, Hazel and Dennie Magnuson, proud owners of the Yesterfarm of Memories Museum (which I visited in 1989), Vince and Jane Videen, who before 1989 had fabricated Karl Oskar’s and Kristina’s grave behind his barn, as so many asked for it, and many more. At last we come to the organized travel tours, that are still taking Swedes to Nya Duvemåla and Ki-chi-saga. A rich and interesting book!

Elisabeth Thorsell

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 book and articles)

The *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* for July 2016 turned out to be a theme issue about Carl Olof Rosenius 1806–1868, the leader of the great religious awakening in Sweden during the nineteenth century. Rosenius’s influence on the Swedish people in both Sweden, and America was significant during that century and continues to this day.

Also found in this issue of SAHSQ is the following book notice: “New Book on Swedish-American Relations. A new book has been published (in **Swedish**) this year dealing with the relationships between Sweden and America. Edited by Erik Åsarp, the book was written by Dag Blanck, Ulf Jonas Björk, and Wilhelm Agrell. *Det blågula stjärnbaneret: USA:s närvaro och inflytande i Sverige* (The blue and yellow stars and stripes: The USA’s presence and influence in Sweden) (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2016) examines different aspects of the United States’ influence on Sweden. Parts of the book touch on Swedish immigration to America. Authors Dag Blanck and Ulf Jonas Björk have both written extensively in the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* and both have served or are serving on the Society’s board of directors. *See link on p. 26.*

The Family Tree magazine for July/August 2016 contains among other useful things an article by David Fryxell about how to start researching South American ancestors, including a little tool kit with useful web addresses. In the section called *TreeTalk* a Swedish-American lady from Duluth, MN, told the story on how she came to her ancestral area in Sweden, but had not made contact with her Swedish relatives beforehand, but just stumbled on them when having a meal in a local diner at Åsarp, near Falköping. Another article is giving ideas on how to trace people later than the 1940 U.S. Census.