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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.

The story of a 20th Century Swedish girl

Katrin Almost American, by Lilly Setterdahl. Paperback, 308 pages. Publisher: Nordstjernan-Swedish News, Inc (May 1, 2017). ISBN-10: 0996846034.

The book *KATRIN Almost American* starts in the early 20th century with the young Katrin in Sweden. It takes you through World War I, and later World War II, and Katrin's desire to move to the unknown: America. It does not spare on hardship in America, and it is very illustrative in describing the Chicago area of her settlement. The book is easy to read and follow as it covers Katrin, her family, her love stories, and also the return to Sweden and her own establishment of a family. Her life as a spouse, parent, and business owner comes together with interesting and educational geographical, and historical descriptions, intermingled with love, children, family, and travel. Happiness, worries, and sorrows describes a classic family. Her detailed explanations are thorough and colorful, especially if you are familiar with

the settings in Sweden as well as the Midwest in America as I personally am. The clever start of the book at the entrance to heaven, the story, and then reuniting with her love at the end makes it a true love story as well as a source of information.

As many of you may know, Lilly Setterdahl is very special to us. Lilly is a long-time member of the Vasa Order. Lilly was born, raised, and married in Sweden before she moved from Frändefors (Dals.) to the U.S.A. in 1959 to join her husband who had come over before her.

This book is of course not the only one written by Lilly Setterdahl. She is a pro at this and has written 20 books. Most notable *Not my time to die – Titanic and the Swedes on board*. Her books can be found on Amazon.com.

Liza Ekstrand
Editor of *Vasa Star*

Finding relatives on the Net

Emigrantforskning på nätet, by Ted Rosvall and Anna-Lena Hultman. In Swedish. Hardcover, 176 pages, size 22 centimeters x 28 centimeters. Illustrated. Published by the Federation of Swedish Genealogical Societies 2017. Handbook #15. <https://www.rotterbokhandeln.se/>

In 2009 experienced immigrant researchers *Ted Rosvall* and *Anna-Lena Hultman* published the first Handbook in the Federation series. It was called *Emigrantforskning* and was mostly about the history of the great exodus from Sweden, and how to find and trace the family members that left Sweden.

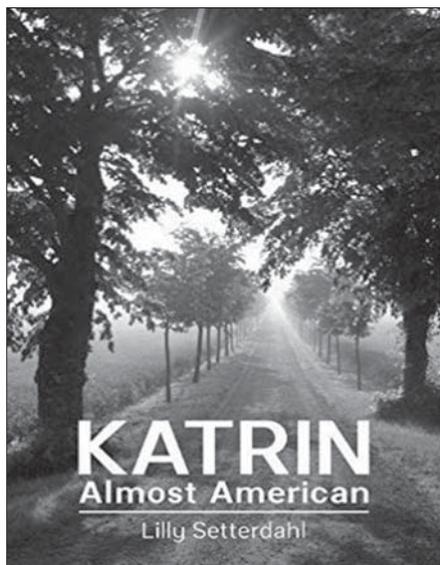
In these days 8 years is a long time, and many new resources have appeared that now are described in this book.

The authors tell about how to get started, with first identifying the emigrant in the church records and other documents in Sweden. It is not enough to just know that "grandfather had a cousin that went to America,". You need to know his full name, maybe parents and siblings, where he moved, and then the exact date he left his home. That will help to find him in the passenger lists, where you may find his destination.

This book is aimed at the immigration to the U.S. and Canada, as that was so much more numerous than other places that the Swedes left for.

The book starts with a presentation of the organizations *FamilySearch*, *Ancestry*, *MyHeritage*, and Swedish *EmiWeb*, and how to use them in the best way.

Another chapter mentions the necessity to search estate inventories (*bouppteckningar*) in Sweden for parents, siblings,



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Book Reviews

unmarried cousins that might yield an address at a certain date in America, and the American name of the person, which might not be possible to guess (even if we all now know that names were not changed at Ellis Island). One way of finding that information in America might be to search the new Swedish-American newspapers online.

Passenger lists for people travelling to America are well-known. But what about those that came back to Sweden?

There are no lists of incoming people to the Swedish ports. But the clergy had to register all persons that came to Sweden from foreign countries from 1875 for each year. Those “immigrations lists” are available on Ancestry.com. There is also a database of the passengers on the Swedish American Line for the years 1915 to 1950, but they are mixed, so you can not see if they are travelling to Sweden or leaving the country. This database “Emisal” is also found at Ancestry.com. They, in cooperation with British Findmypast, also have a huge database for the years 1878–1960

of incoming passengers to the United Kingdom.

Many Swedish sailors jumped ship in America, but hopefully they had registered in the Swedish Seamen’s Registry (*Sjömanshuset*) before they left. Those institutions date back to the middle 1700s until the last one closed in 1961. They kept very detailed records about the sailors, their origins, their wages, and the ships they were working on. Each sailor had a small record book, (*sjömansbok*) with some of that information, which is a treasure trove if it has been preserved in the family. The original records are kept in the regional archives, but some of them have also been digitized. You can find 42 of them on *Arkiv Digital*. The database “Emisjör” (on Ancestry.com) lists some 17,000 sailors from western Sweden.

One chapter discusses the *U.S. Voter Registrations*, that can somewhat help bridge the gap from the 1880 U.S. Census to the 1900 one. The ones for Chicago have been digitized for the years 1888, 1890, and 1892 by Ancestry.com. The Swedes, who lived in the city in 1888 have their own book *Swedish Voters in Chicago*, compiled by the eminent scholar Nils William Olsson, published in 1999 (see ad on the previous page!) In this book he listed almost 5,000 Swedes who had the right to vote. Many of them have also been identified with their correct Swedish names and more details in 135 pages. There is also a surname and a place names index.

Next, the authors discuss the usefulness of city directories, a type of records that is not common in Sweden. It is though of great value in U.S. research, especially for the difficult period from 1941 to this date, when trying to find living relatives. They can be found at Ancestry.com, but also many have been digitized by local re-

sources, and can often be found by a search online for the desired place. The same applies to school yearbooks.

The authors give numerous tips on how to find vital records which is a very uneven undertaking. Some U.S. states have digitized records, that you can find for free on FamilySearch.org, or with a subscription to Ancestry.com, while other states keep their records to themselves, if you are not a close relative.

Then one of the more important record groups is discussed, the records of all the Swedish-American churches, which hopefully give the link to the place of origin in Sweden. Most of them are available on microfilm at the Swenson Center in Rock Island, IL, and at Växjö, and Karlstad in Sweden. But lately *Arkiv Digital* has photographed some of the records in color, as has the *SwedGen* group. Discussions are ongoing on putting all the old microfilms online.

A couple of shorter chapters discuss the Swedish immigration to Canada, various newspaper databases, including the Swedish-American newspapers, military records, graves, citizenships, DNA research, and social media (*Facebook*).

As can be seen above this is a rich and useful book, mostly for Swedes, but perhaps also for American researchers.

At the end of the book Ted Rosvall tells some of his stories about his own immigrants and their fates. It would have been interesting if Anna-Lena Hultman also would have told some of her stories.

However, I would very much have liked an index to all the internet resources that are mentioned. It does not matter much if the web address is changed, as long as the site retains its original name, and can be found by a search engine.

Elisabeth Thorsell



Swedish Voters in Chicago 1888		102					
No.	Name	Address	Prec.	Ward	Residence	Naturalization	Court
4784.	Johnson, Frank A.	1025 Sheffield	2	5	7,20,20	1875	B
4785.	Johnson, Fred	1731 York Pl.	2	3	2m,8,16	1876	E
4786.	Johnson, Fritz N.	1556 Otto	2	5	2,20,20	-----	--
4787.	Johnson, G.A.	39 Hall	2	3	1,14,20	1876	E
4788.	Johnson, Gustav	44 Oak Pl.	2	5	2m,8 1/2,8 1/2	1888	D
4789.	Johnson, John	9 Oak Pl.	2	5	6,18,18	1874	B
4790.	Johnson, John	451 Racine	3	1	6m,17,17	1884	A

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Hard life of women

Augusta's Daughter. Life in Nineteenth Century Sweden, by Judit Martin. Paperback, 238 pages. Publisher: Penfield Books (2012). ISBN-10: 1932043810

This is a book that I have read with mixed feelings, both as a Swede and a genealogist. The author, who is an American, but for many years living in Sweden, tells the sad story of a poor woman, Augusta, living in an unspecified area of Sweden, not

too far from Norway. Augusta seems to have been born around 1834, and about 1850 she starts working as a *piga* at the local manor Ekefors, owned by the baron Ekefors and his wife. Their son Erling also works as a farmhand and falls in love with Augusta, and becomes secretly engaged to her. It is, however, very unlikely that the baron's son works as a farmhand, He was probably at one of the universities and lived the life of a rich man. I also do not believe that the baron and his wife slept in the kitchen of the manor with their staff during winter.

In the story the young couple goes with the other people from the manor to the winter market in the nearest town, which is described in detail. What is not mentioned is that those markets were where *drängar* and *pigor* could find new employers.

Next, Augusta gets pregnant, and Erling's indignant father sends him off to

Norway. Augusta is forced to marry the farmhand Olov (unusual spelling then!) and soon gives birth to her child, which Olov thinks is his. This deception later leads to tragedy. Anyway, the child is called Elsa-Carolina (no hyphens in names during the 1800s), often shorted to Elsalina. Augusta and Olov have more children. Then Erling, who had joined the army as a private, dies in an accident, and is brought home to be buried. All workers at the manor have to come to the funeral. Somebody remembers seeing Augusta and Erling being close, gossip starts, and Olov understands that Augusta has never told him the truth. He abuses her, but they still live together. Olov is very harsh to live with and treats little Elsa as a *piga*. A sister of Augusta's, Tilda, has joined one of the new reader (*läsare*) movements, and she tries to follow their rules, but Olov does not accept that, and life is very difficult. Then Augusta has another child (now we are in the early 1860s)

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Book Reviews

and the child dies within an hour. Soon after the birth, two local men come and take Augusta in custody, accusing her of having killed the child, and takes her to prison in Göteborg. There she is never heard from again; later she is said to have been executed.

That was not the way a case of infanticide was handled then; there would have been an inquest, then a local court case, and then a prison sentence. After 1830 nobody was executed, and in 1861 the death penalty for this was abolished.

Little Elsa is told to go to her grandfather in the next parish but he can not take her in. Instead she becomes a ward of the parish, and is sold to the lowest bidder, who wants her as a slave.

The famine around 1868 is a part of the tale. Elsa then lives with a family where the father takes his skis and goes to Norway to buy grain for food. It is a fact that those years was the starting point of the exodus of Swedes to America after the Civil War.

Then Elsa is made pregnant by the local clergyman, where she works as a *piga*. She has to leave her child with a rich family, and does not see her for 70 years. Elsa decides to leave her home area and walk to Stockholm to find work. During this long walk (there were railroads then, but Elsa had no money) she meets with a group of people from Dalarna, who take care of her and help her find work. By a coincidence she meets again with a young man from her parish, and they marry. And then they work to save money to travel to the U.S. with his family, where they settled in South Dakota.

Last comes a chapter that tells about Elsa-Carolina's travel to Sweden with her great-granddaughter in 1948, and how she experiences all the changes since the 1870s. The country had changed from a very poor country to one of the most prosperous in the world, a fact due to Sweden having escaped both WWI and WWII, and also having no revolution.

The author has appended a list of books she has used to get her facts from, but did not understand the information correctly. She has a very dim view of the clergymen of the state church, and also of the local people as being mostly gossips and harsh and being very unkind to the poorest.

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 books and articles)

Family Tree Magazine for September 2017 has a good article, *Setting Sail*, by Melody Amsel Arieli, in which she discusses why and how the immigrants left their homelands. It was not an easy thing to do. It is often described as to be the result of *pull* and *push* factors. *Pull* factors could have included religious and political freedom, educational and cultural opportunities, cheap land, high wages, favorable climates, in total the idea that the streets were paved with gold. However, many immigrants found that they were the ones that had to pave them. *Push* factors were poverty, too little land, strict laws, fear of military conscription, no voting rights, little religious freedom, and a quickly growing population causing unemployment. This article is accompanied by a list of books and websites about several European countries. Sadly enough they have not listed the Swedish resources, just the Finnish ones.

Recently I found that there is some information on Swedes coming to Vermont, which is an unusual destination. It seems that immigrants were recruited, as the government of Vermont feared that too many French-Canadians were going to settle in the state. The government might have heard about the successful settlement of New Sweden, ME, a few decades earlier. According to the statistics in Lars Ljungmark's book *Swedish Exodus* (1996) there were in 1890 just 1,012 Swedes in the state, and in 1910 there were 2,421 individuals. Professor Paul Searls in 2006 published *Two Vermonts: Geography and Identity, 1865-1910 (Revisiting New England)*, in which he tells the story of Vermont, including the Swedes. He has also published an article online, called "Major Valentine's Swedes." "It is the story of the state program to recruit Scandinavians to take over available Vermont farms in 1890 has much to say about the political, social, and ethnic dynamics of Vermont in the Gilded Age. Major Valentine's Swedes became Vermonters, sure enough, but not in the way that he had predicted." *Available as a pdf, see link on p.26.*