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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.

Fascinating immigration research

Årsskrift 2017 (Yearbook 2017) published by Vimmerby Stadsmuseum *Näktergalen*.) In Swedish. (Cultural History Museum in the middle of Vimmerby. The museum is housed in an early 18th century building with original and typical Baroque paintings on the ceilings and walls).

A family story of the highest literary level has been published in the Vimmerby City Museum's *Näktergalen* annual yearbook for 2017: *The Great Vessel. The Story of Relatives' Life Travels in Småland and North America.* Per Helge is an experienced writer capable of putting literary, even poetic, wings on historical source material. Relatives in immigrants' tracks can hardly find anything more exciting and easy to read!

Based on his own roots in Locknevi, a few miles northwest of Vimmerby, Helge begins to follow the traces of the brothers Emanuel and August Johansson's emigration in 1886 and 1888, respectively, from

the village of Rangelbo. They traveled with their wives Lena and Christina and their children, a total of twelve youngsters. The family tree that dug its roots in America gained a new boost between 1900 and 1905 when stay-at-home brother Adolf's children Johan, Anna, and Emil traveled to Illinois and the "Swedish" city of Chicago. With the help of all the computerized tools currently available, and not least several transatlantic research journeys and contacts with more or less engaged American relatives, Helge has unraveled countless hidden threads for what has otherwise remained *The unknown family*.

Interestingly, but not uncommonly, the family migration pioneer Emanuel had lived in America between 1869 and 1874, thus using his experience in the final emigration decision from the poor agricultural existence in northeastern Småland. Nevertheless, Emanuel's family ended up in one of our emigration's most notorious places, Swede Hollow, around a brook leading to the Mississippi River on the outskirts of St Paul, MN. Here there was permanent misery for immigrants from different countries, but the Swedes just this time were sufficiently many to name the gorge in the steep hill below the railroad, the large brewery, and other industries that demanded cheap labor. Like so many other busy people, Swede Hollow was only a rest stop, in the case of Emanuel and Lena, on the way to the new development at Rush City in Karl Oskar and Kristina's and countless other *smålänningar's* Chisago County. A plat book reveals where they registered their farm shortly after arriving in late 1887. When August arrived with his family a year later, he acquired farmland in the same area, only the country road lay between the brothers' properties. The now reunited families counted eleven children in addition to their parents. Two of August and Christina's children had died during

the trip. In the emerging "Swedish" countryside it was easy to grow roots. Emanuel's property came to 420 acres or four times more than Rangelbo's homestead. At least six of the brothers' sons obtained their own farms, and most daughters married farmers. At the same time, the contacts with the homeland were weakened. When Helge visited the Calvary Church cemetery, many of the pioneers were forgotten and several tombs covered with weeds of oblivion.

While the story of Emanuel and August for the readers recalls The Karl Oskar Story and reveals a typical social pattern, for the later immigration in the research of the emigrating children of the stay-at-home brother Adolf shows a different pattern. Here the farm life is overshadowed by the city, industry, railways, forests, and Canada. Siblings Johan (John), Anna, and Emil Adolfsson endured longer or shorter periods in the foremost "Swedish" city. Here they established themselves in Chicago's typical professions. John and Emil are recorded as carpenters in the 1910 census, while Anna becomes one of the city's countless "Swedish maids." She marries a countryman, has children, and stays for the rest of her life in the big "Swedish" city.

The brothers, on the other hand, went on to forestry and railroad work in Canada; in Emil's case also as a farmhand on a farm in an Indian reserve north of Butte, MT. In most of John and Emil's places, Helge has been digging out documents and people that could tell stories. Thus he has clarified how it came that both John and Emil were enlisted as soldiers in World War I. John listened to the British call during his time as a forest worker in British Columbia. This was his bad luck – in the fall of 1916 he was killed in the huge battle of the Somme in France. A year later, when the United States entered the war, Emil accepted Uncle Sam's call, but was lucky enough never to have to ship to Europe. Yet

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Book Reviews

Memories from Sweden, Brooklyn and other places

he was considered a war veteran.

During the remainder of his life, he seems to have worked for different hospitals in Minneapolis – according to a census assignment as an elevator attendant – until his death in 1962. The sister Anna in Chicago became the lifeline for the loner, with the exchange of letters weekly. The contacts with the home country were sporadic, and no home trip was ever made.

The only one of the four siblings who did not emigrate was to become Per Helge's paternal grandmother and thus the starting point and end of transatlantic genealogy. Elin Sigfrida Adolfsdotter, born in Elsebörke, Locknevi, in 1879, can thus be regarded as the muse behind this brilliant family chronicle. Too bad that the author did not illustrate the story with the wealth of photographs he discovered during his extensive research.

Ulf Beijbom



Author Per Helge and his newly found 3rd cousin in Swede Hollow.

Editor's note:

Emanuel and August were sons of farmer Johan Michael Carlsson and his wife Maja Stina Johansdotter in Rangelbo.

Their brother Fredrik *Adolf* Johansson, farmer at Elsebörke and Hällorum, both in Locknevi, and his wife Anna Lovisa Nilsdotter were the parents of John, Anna, and Emil.

Across the Brooklyn Bridge, by John Eric Lundin, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, North Charleston, SC 2017.

Paperback: 490 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1537308869. Amazon.com.

Across the Brooklyn Bridge does not begin in the United States but many, many years earlier in Sweden where the author's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had been born and where they lived. Then because of world events – two World Wars, travel by steamships, airplanes, and all the upgrading in communications, John Eric Lundin was able to not only learn about his Swedish roots but actually visit and see first-hand their birthplaces. History, genealogy, romance, biography, geography, adventure, and drama are included in this book and maybe more. As you read his story, you will live your own experiences as you recall your own first discoveries about your own family and then bring to mind other stories and anecdotes that you may have forgotten.

John Eric Lundin, the author, traces his Swedish family roots when his father asked him to do so as John was assigned to the American Embassy in Copenhagen in 1978. This adventure began with a trip to Östhammar, (Uppl.) Sweden, by train and boat just before Christmas. He learned that his grandfather's whereabouts had been unknown and he was thought to have been missing at sea since WW I, when he in reality was living in the U.S.

His great-grandfather was a carpenter named Eric Lundin, born in 1838, and his great-grandmother was Anna Karin Andersdotter, born in 1843 in Börstil (Uppl.). His great-grandfather was a “master car-

pent” – a fine furniture maker. The excitement of finding out all this is apparent and even more so with the help that he received from people who knew or knew of the Lundins in Östhammar.

When great-great-grandfather Erik Mattson married in 1837 in Hökhuvud (Uppl.), he took the name of Lundin which may have been because he had been born in Alunda (Uppl.).

John E. by this time was becoming very familiar with the ins and outs of searching among all the records and how to seek help from the community.

He learned that his grandfather Erik Wilhelm (William) (b. in 1882) had been a seaman and perhaps became a sailor at the young age of 15 in 1898. His father had saved the books which detail many of the ports of call for this young man all over Europe and even Egypt. It was in 1903 that he became a sailor on a ship from Liverpool to the United States.

Because he felt responsible for his sister Maria in Östhammar, as their parents had died, he sent for her to come to Liverpool and then Philadelphia where she immigrated in 1905. Tragically, Maria died from typhoid fever a few months later leaving William very desolate.

After a trip out west to visit relatives, William returned to New York and married Hattie Josephine Pearson in 1909, whose parents had come from Göteborg.

William worked as a carpenter and later for the largest construction company in New York City. The author does mention that his grandfather maintained his love of the sea, and fishing was a part of his leisure time.

John Eric's father, John Arthur Lundin (b. ca 1922) grew up in Brooklyn in the 20's and 30's. His diaries record his life in detail, how many families lived in those years – especially during the Depression. His schooling, his need for work, looking for dates, his friends, and how he felt about what was happening in everyday life are part of diary. The attention to detail is impressive. Perhaps, when he mentions movies, radio programs, school plays and all the rest, it will bring a smile and a nod.

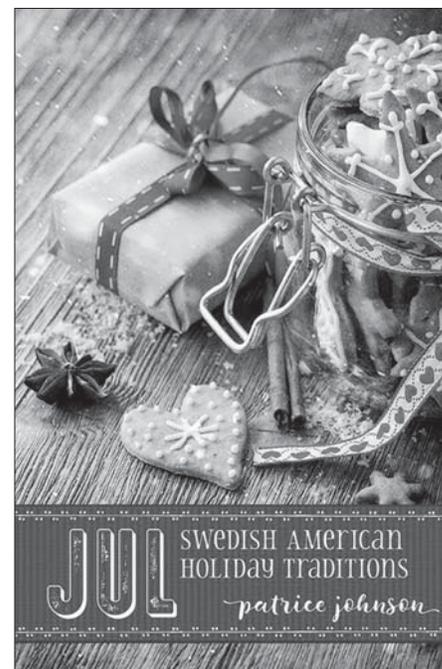
Book Reviews

For next year!

Jul: Swedish American Holiday Traditions, by Patrice Johnson.
 Hardcover: 256 pages, publisher: Minnesota Historical Society Press (November 1, 2017).
 ISBN-13: 978-1681340432
 Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.5 x 10 inches. Amazon.com

Christmas traditions, particularly those involving food, often honor our ancestors. Throughout the Midwest where Swedish immigrants settled, the dishes placed on the *julbord* (Christmas table) tell stories about who we are, where we come from, and where we are heading.

In exploring these holiday customs, Patrice Johnson begins with her own family's Christmas Eve gathering, which involves a combination of culinary traditions: allspice-scented meatballs, Norwegian *lefse* served Swedish style (warm with butter), and the American interloper, macaroni and cheese. Just as she tracks down the meanings behind why her family celebrates as it does, she reaches into the lives and histories of other Swedish-Americans with their own stories, their own versions of traditional recipes, their own joys of the season. The result is a fas-



John did end up in the Philippines for some time and it was there that he met the love of his life. He was not permitted to marry Perpe by his commanding officer which caused both of them much anguish. As the war winds down and he is sent back to the States, he must leave her and their son in the Philippines. John's longing to bring them to the States reveal his character. John had persistence, determination, and doggedness to unite with his family. He accomplished this against great odds. In fact, uniting with them did not happen until July 1947. While waiting for his wife and son, he had a few tasks to complete. One was to inform his parents of his wife – she was not Swedish – then complete his college education and jump the hurdles of bureaucracy to have them arrive in time with the proper papers. It did happen – just barely.

There is so much more that I did not touch upon that is important to the “story,” particularly the conditions of the troops and the firsthand account of the war. In addition and on a lighter note, John gives an exact accounting of the cost of food, rent, movies, and his hourly wages. Going back and seeing how things were back then and what they are today is mind-boggling. A book well worth reading.

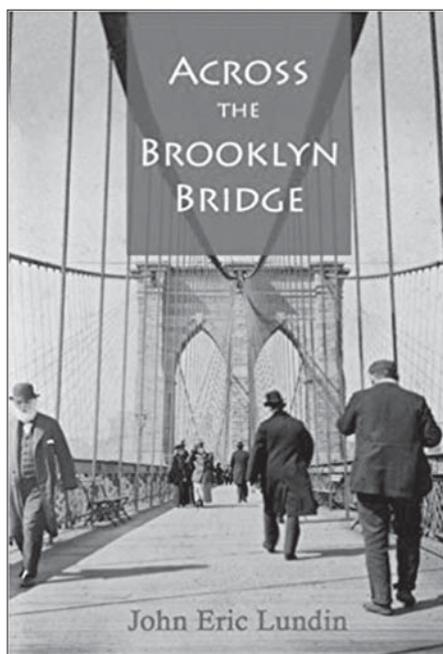
I might add that perhaps the author will write another book about his mother's background. John Eric Lundin is one of five siblings born to his parents but his mother was a widow with four children. These children decided to remain in the Philippines and not come to the States.

Alice Johnson



Most interesting is how John A. was able to get into the Army. His eyesight was 20/20 only with glasses and he was told not to “waste your time and ours” when trying to enlist in the Army. But because of his skill and aptitude in engineering (although he had not done well his first year in college), he applied to the Army Reserve Corps as a civilian. Eventually, he became an enlisted man and did his basic training at Fort Dix in New Jersey, his first post of many, in May of 1943. These excellent records of his earlier teen days and especially, his war years in the South Pacific and World War II are vividly portrayed. Also, the social mores of the times, prejudices, cultural differences, and customs are all a part of the adventure in his father's story.

Part Four titled *Going to War* gives a comprehensive picture of the South Pacific and the morale of his unit as the fighting was ongoing. He was stationed both on land and on sea – with the Navy, all the while with his duties in communications.



Book Reviews



A Viking Woman

The Far Traveler: Voyages of a Viking Woman, by Nancy Marie Brown. Softcover, 292 pages, 2008. Published by Harvest Book, Harcourt, Inc.
ISBN: 978-0-15-603397-8 (pbk.).

cinating exploration of the Swedish holiday calendar and its American translation.

Featured dishes include yellow pea soup (*ärtsoppa*) and Swedish pancakes (*svenska plättar*); assorted Swedish cookies like *pepparkakor*, rosettes (*struvor*), and meringues; meatballs with pickled cucumber (*ättiksgurka*); the *julhög*, (a breakfast pyramid of bread, cheese, fruit, and cookies); and so much more. Come, raise a glass of *punsch*, hear tell of holidays past, snack on cardamom bread, and celebrate *jul* the midwestern way.

(Text borrowed from Amazon.com).

While searching the Scandinavian Room at a local Farmer's Market, I spied this book. Without really looking at it, I bought it thinking that it would be a biography of a long-ago Viking woman. It was, and it wasn't. Guidrid Thorbjarnardottir was an Icelandic woman from the 11th century who appears in many of the Icelandic sagas including those about Eric the Red and Leif Ericsson. Ms. Brown used these sagas and others to create a fascinating look at life in the 11th century. The interesting twist to this book is that she gives you a few facts

about Guidrid and then moves to the present day taking you to various archeological digs that pertain to the story being told.

The book begins with the author looking over the remains of a longhouse excavation in Northern Iceland. She envisions this as Guidrid's final home even though there is no concrete evidence to prove this. In her imagination she sees Guidrid standing at the door of the sod home and looking over her land at Glaumbaer and dreaming of new adventures to come for her. This home in the north of Iceland was the only home that Guidrid truly owned according to the sagas.

It was while working at the dig in Glaumbaer that Ms. Brown learned to comb, spin, and weave sheep's wool in much the same fashion that Guidrid would have done. She describes it in great detail including the use of reconstructed whorls or spindles that were copies of those found in Hedeby, Denmark. This process is central to Guidrid's story as all Viking women

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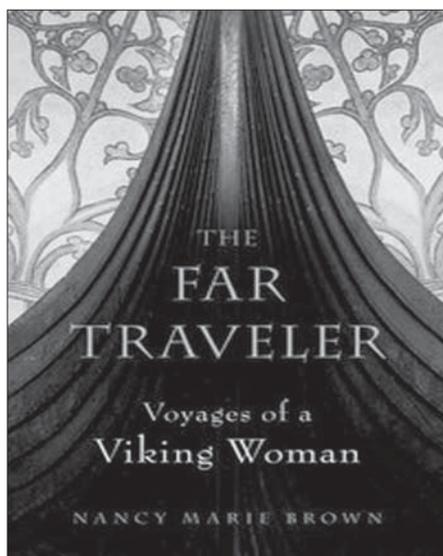


Book Reviews



produced cloth both for their household and for export. Cloth was the primary export from Iceland for at least 200 years.

Guidrid earned the name Far Traveler because she not only crossed the North Atlantic eight times, she also made a pilgrimage to Rome in her later years. She was born in Norway, the daughter of a chieftain who took her to Greenland when she was about 17. At some time after this, she marries Leif Ericsson's brother who dies soon after. She then marries a mer-



chant from Greenland and they set out together to establish a settlement in Vinland. We know this settlement as L'Anse aux Meadows. Ms. Brown not only tells the story of Guidrid's life there including the birth of her son Snorri, she also shares many details about the archeological dig that led to our realization that the Vikings did indeed come to the Americas long before Christopher Columbus.

As you read this book you can visualize the settings for the stories from Guidrid's time as well as the various archeological digs. Ms. Brown is very good at including descriptions of minute details such as the tools used to dig at the sites. Her descriptions of the people that she worked with at the various sites adds another layer of enjoyment. She also spends a great deal of time describing the lifestyle of the people from Guidrid's day including various theories as to what they ate and why.

Guidrid became a Christian early in life and this is woven into the narrative with some information regarding the interweaving of the Christian faith with the older pagan practices. It is obvious that Ms. Brown did a great deal of research into the sagas that tell of Guidrid's life and the culture of the time.

As I said earlier, I thought that I was going to be reading a story of one woman from the 11th century. What I ended up reading was a fascinating picture of that time period embellished with scientific research that greatly widened my knowledge of the Viking culture. Enjoy!

Janet Wahlberg

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 (Oct.-Nov 2017) has an interesting article for DNA newbies on which family members should be tested after yourself to get as much new information as possible. It really depends on what you want to know. Do you want to try to solve some old family problem, or do you just want to find out as much as possible as far back as possible?

The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly (Oct. 2017) has two interesting articles in this issue. One is by Anders Bo Rasmussen (2016 Olsson Scholar) about "The States' Readmission Puts an End to All Civil and Political Questions:" Scandinavian Immigrants and Debates over Racial Equality During the Impeachment of President Andrew Johnson.

The other is a number of translations by John Norton from *Stora Kopparbergs Läns Tidning* in 1845. The article is called "Contemporary Views of Eric Janssonism and the revival-Temperance Movements." (Editor's note: Stora Kopparberg's *län*, or just Kopparberg's *län* is the modern county of Dalarna).

In this issue is also found the *Swedish-American Bibliography 2016*, compiled by Ulf Jonas Björk and Susanne Titus. The bibliography contains 95 items. The compilers are happy to receive information on more publications. E-mail to jbjork@iupui.edu