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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.

Almost forgotten disaster in 1915

The sinking of the Eastland – America's forgotten tragedy, by Jay Bonansinga. Softcover, 280 pages. Published in 2004 by the Kensington Publishing Corporation. ISBN 0-8065-2648-3. Available at Amazon.com.

This book is not new, but new to me, who had never heard of this huge disaster. There were 844 lives lost, but not at all as famous as the sinking of the *Titanic*, which you can read about most days.

Perhaps that has to do with that some of the *Titanic* victims were “the rich and famous,” and the *Eastland* victims were ordinary workers and their families?

The author, Jay Bonansinga, is an American writer and director. He has written a number of fiction and nonfiction works. Among his nonfiction works is also mentioned *Pinkerton's War: The Civil War's Greatest Spy and the Birth of the U.S. Secret Service* (2012).

This event on 24 July 1915 was to be a treat for the workers of Western Electric, a company with a large workforce. At the Hawthorne works in the town of Cicero, west of Chicago, there had in 1911 been founded an entertainment club, the Hawthorne Club, that organized games, lectures, and outings for the employees and their families who had joined the club.

In 1912 the club organized the first cruise to Michigan City, and 3,500 workers took part in this event, which was a huge success. So many people wanted to be in the party that the organizers had to hire more ships, so everyone could join in the fun.

In 1915 the tickets cost 75 cents each,

and children under 5 years were free. But there was a rumor that the organizers expected everyone to buy multiple tickets, or otherwise their jobs could be in danger, due to the fact there had earlier been reduced working hours, because of the changing economics during World War I in Europe.

The *Eastland* was a huge ship, launched in 1903. It had four decks above the water, of which the main deck was the one closest to the water. It had five gangway doors on each side, not many inches above the water when fully loaded. Upstairs there was a bar and dining rooms. There were also 86 cabins for passengers.

At launching the ship almost rolled over on its side, but that was evidently not deemed important. Then there were other incidents that showed that the *Eastland* was not very stable. The amount of passengers was reduced from 3,300 to 2,800, but after adding more lifeboats, it was allowed to carry 2,907 passengers. In 1906 after another incident the number of passengers was lowered to 2,400.

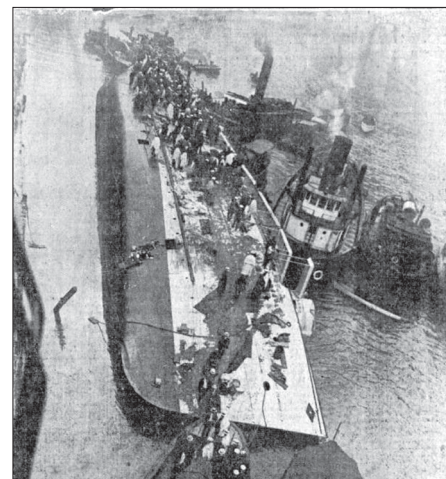
For the 1915 cruise the *Eastland* had 2,500 passengers on board around 7 o'clock in the morning, and many still waited on the docks to be admitted to this and other ships.

In the morning the chief engineer Joseph Erickson of the *Eastland* became worried about the balance of the ship, and ordered his men to trim the ship and pump the ballast tanks at the bottom of the ship so it would not list so much.

One of the passengers said “this boat feels top-heavy to me!” And soon afterwards the ship started to rock from one side to the other, but soon righted itself.

Then shortly before 7:30 the boat keeled over and lay on its side.

The passengers tried to get hold of anything stable. On the main deck, dishes slipped off pantry shelves, crashing to the



Picture from Svenska Amerikanaren Hemlandet 29 July 1915. Minnesota Historical Society.

floor. The stewards and the pantry men all made mad rushes for the companionway. The crew, knowing exactly how to get off the doomed vessel, left the stricken helpless passenger to fend for themselves.

On the docks the silence lasted, an eerie, horrifying lack of noise as the massive ship listed farther. Even as the boat keeled well over, and it was seen that the catastrophe could not be averted, the stillness remained intense.

Then a few passengers started to jump into the water, followed by hundreds of others, and some managed to swim, but others just disappeared.

Still many had not managed to reach an opening to get out, and died in the ship.

Some members of the crew loosened the life boats that they could get to, and others tossed all the life preservers (*livbälten*), they could find, but it was a huge chaos, with people all over crying for help. Many bystanders tried to help in various ways, and many were saved from the disaster, but still 844 victims died, men, women, and little children.

This is a fascinating, but horrible book.

Elisabeth Thorsell

Some victims are named on the next page!



Följande med nordiska namn uppgifvas vara bland de omkomnas antal (victims with Nordic names):

Anderson, inspektör vid Western Electric Co.; Minnie Anderson, 5424 Woodlawn ave.; miss Anderson, 1430 S. 58th ave., Cicero; miss Anna Anderson, 2346 S. 50th ave.; Alfred Anderson, 2301 S. Kolin ave.; Allen Anderson, 1406 Winona ave.; Catherine Anderson, La Grange; May Anderson, 2730 S. Sacramento ave.; mr Anderson, samma adress; Otto E. Anderson, 1618 N. Western ave.; Robert Anderson, 2649 S. Crawford ave.; Anna Anderson (hustru), samma adress; Morris Anderson (deras barn); David Ben-

son, 4222 W. 26th st.; Mrs Gertrude Berg, 1443 N. Lorel ave.; Irene Berg, samma adress; Myrtle Berglund, 2221 N. Kimball ave.; David A. Bergman, 922 N. Central Park ave.; Harry Bergquist, 220 W. Elm st.; Miss Margaret Christianson, 1730 S. Karlov ave.; Freda Christianson, samma adress; Ella och Anna Clausen, 4717 Dickens ave.; Jennie Erickson, 5106 W. 22nd place; 5133 W. 22nd place; Eddie Gunderson, 2343 S. Homan ave.; Gunder Gunderson, 1014 N. Rockwell st.; Gunderson, Hawthorne, Ill.; Inga Hammarstad, 3412 S. Wood st.; Gustave Hanson, 2905 Logan blvd.; Harold Hanson, 2117 S. Trumbull ave.; H. Hanson, 1809 Richmond st.; Pearl Hanson, 1810 Humboldt blvd.; G. Mary Hanson, 2905 Logan blvd.; Miss Carrie Hanson; Oscar Jacobson, 3335 Potomac ave.; A. Johnson, 5024 W. 24th place; Edward Johnson, 4710 W. Race ave.; Nels Peter Johnson, 3215 Southport ave.; Mrs Ida Johnson, 2212 N. Rockwell st.; Harry Johnson, 2748 W. 24th st.; Esther Johnson, 2212 N. Rockwell st.; Elizabeth Johnson, 2738 N. Albany ave.; Eva Johnson, 4100 W. 24th st.; Thomas Johnson, 1935 N. Kimball ave.; R. Johnson, 2743 W. 24th st.;

5133 W. 22nd place; Eddie Gunderson, 2343 S. Homan ave.; Gunder Gunderson, 1014 N. Rockwell st.; Gunderson, Hawthorne, Ill.; Inga Hammarstad, 3412 S. Wood st.; Gustave Hanson, 2905 Logan blvd.; Harold Hanson, 2117 S. Trumbull ave.; H. Hanson, 1809 Richmond st.; Pearl Hanson, 1810 Humboldt blvd.; G. Mary Hanson, 2905 Logan blvd.; Miss Carrie Hanson; Oscar Jacobson, 3335 Potomac ave.; A. Johnson, 5024 W. 24th place; Edward Johnson, 4710 W. Race ave.; Nels Peter Johnson, 3215 Southport ave.; Mrs Ida Johnson, 2212 N. Rockwell st.; Harry Johnson, 2748 W. 24th st.; Esther Johnson, 2212 N. Rockwell st.; Elizabeth Johnson, 2738 N. Albany ave.; Eva Johnson, 4100 W. 24th st.; Thomas Johnson, 1935 N. Kimball ave.; R. Johnson, 2743 W. 24th st.; Charles Johnson, 4100 24th place; Mammie Jungquist, 51st ave. och 23rd pl.; Frieda Kramberg, 3231 Armstrong ave.; Miss Ella Larson, 3536 S. Albany ave.; John Larson, 846 Aldine ave., 24 år, son till John och Sigrid Larson; Robert Magnuson, 3809 Wrightwood ave.; Irene Magnuson, samma adress; Inga Molin, 1024 S. St. Clair ave.; August Nelson, 900 Roscoe

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Book Reviews

A couple of books that might be of some interest, found at a large online bookstore

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

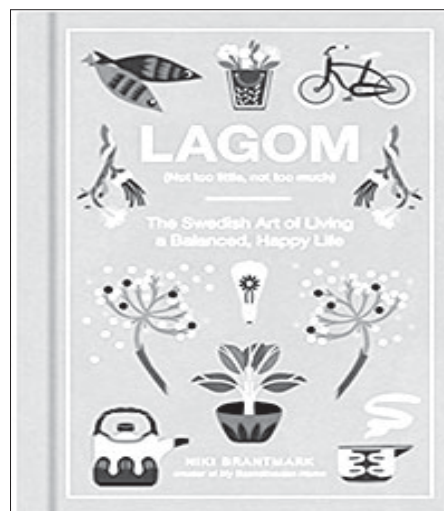
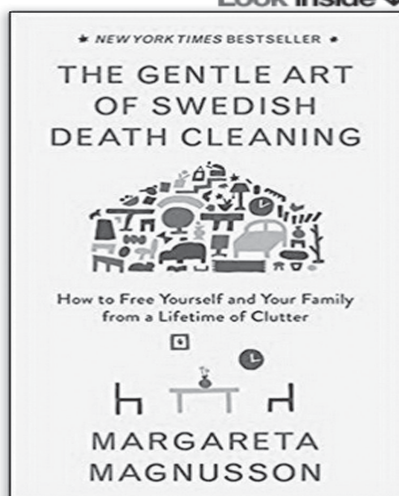
st., broder till skräddaren N. A. Nelson, 5052 N. Clark st., född i Svalby, Skåne, för 37 år sedan; Emil Nelson, 3031 S. Kildare ave.; Agnes Olson, 1929 S. 49th ave.; John Olson, 4851 W. 28th st., Cicero; John Olson, 1411 S. 48th ct.; Margaret Olson, 5026 Fulton st.; miss Olson, 2725 S. 58th ave.; John Olson, 1411 48th ct.; Chas. Peterson, 2236 Cromwell st.; Martha Peterson, 617 S. Waller ave.; Peterson, förman Western Electric Co.; Nels B. Peterson, 1423 S. 50th ave.; Peter Peterson, samma adress; Roy Peterson, samma adress; Ruth Peterson, 1111 Newport ave.; Minnie Söderström och sonen Stanley, 7609 Morgan st.; Arthur J. Swanson, 1445 N. Irving ave.; Margaret Swanson, 1528 Frink st.; John Swedin, 4121 W. 21st place, eller 1910 S. Samlin ave.; Ella elan, 2744 Clifton Park ave.

This list of names was found in the *Svenska Amerikanaren Hemlandet*, published in Chicago on 29 July 1915.

This journal was found among the many Swedish-American newspapers found at the following address:

<http://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/swedishamerican>

These newspapers are in Swedish, but try them anyway! Names can be searched.



The book *Swede Hollow* by Ola Larsmo has not yet appeared.

New and Noteworthy

The April 2018 issue of the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* has as usual a number of interesting articles. This time they are all based on a symposium on Gustaf Unonius and the St. Ansgarius church in Chicago, which he founded in 1849.

Philip J. Anderson writes about Gustaf Unonius, Immigrant and Religion 1841-1858. Mark Granquist writes about the Swedish-American Episcopalians. Maria Erling writes about Fredrika Bremer and her experiences of the settlement at Pine Lake, WI (see also *Swedish American Genealogist* 2014/1). Anita Olson Gustafsson writes about Jenny Lind and Chicago, and finally Anna-Kajsa Echague writes on the work to preserve and digitize the St. Ansgarius records (see also SAG 2016/2).

The May-June 2018 issue of *Family Tree Magazine* has many useful articles. Here is a photo tour of Ellis Island, with lots of information on how to use the resources there, by Diane Haddad. Another article, by Denise May Levenick, on how to handle the problem of what to do with all the heirlooms your children do not want. It is discussed in Sweden too, and one lady has started the concept of "Death Cleaning," which means that you do it yourself, not to burden the heirs with tossing away unwanted things. The State Research Guides in this issue is about Arkansas and Michigan. Many Swedes came to Michigan to work in the mines in the Upper Peninsula. Diahan Southard writes about how to understand your DNA results, something that can be very puzzling!