

Have Swedish Roots and don't know how to get started?

The two biggest challenges for descendants of Swedish emigrants are locating the ancestor's parish of origin and identifying the ancestor's original Swedish name. You will need your ancestor's Swedish name, the parish where your ancestor lived, and a date such as birth, marriage, death, or emigration date before you can begin research in the Swedish records.

Get started

Study Swedish research guides (You will find the guides on page 6 in the handout).

What do I need to know before I begin my Swedish research?

- *Become familiar with the Swedish alphabet.*
 - Three additional letters at the end of the alphabet – å, ä, ö.
 - Flexible spelling: letters are often interchanged like k and q, v and f, e and ä.

- *Naming Conventions*
 - The **patronymic naming system was commonly used in Sweden until the end of the 19th century**. Between 90 and 95% of the population used the patronymic naming system. A child was the son of or the daughter of the father. Thus, if the father's name is Sven Johansson, his son's name might be Anders Svensson or Anders, the son of Sven. Likewise, a daughter might be named Anna Svendsdotter or Anna, the daughter of Sven. When a woman married, she did not adopt her husband's name but kept her patronymic.
 - During the 19th century, many townspersons who didn't want to be considered poor farmers adopted family names often called "**nature names**." These "nature names" consist of two parts, like Dalberg. *Dal* is the Swedish word for valley, and *berg* means mountain.
 - Soldiers received unique names while in the military. One could not have fifty Johan Anderssons in a military unit, so each person was assigned a **military name**. Military names sometimes represented a personal quality like Rapp (quick), a military term, or an association with the place where the person served. When leaving the military service, some soldiers did keep their military name, while many reverted to using their patronymic name.
 - **Farm names** are not as common in Sweden as in Norway, but they are sometimes used in some parts of Sweden, primarily Dalarna.
 - Many Swedish emigrants changed their name while in Sweden and often changed their name again after they emigrated. Some kept the patronymic but usually dropped the second "s" in the name. "Andersson" became "Anderson." Other names were changed to an Anglicized form; Karl or Carl in Swedish often became Charles in the New World. Some names were partially translated into English. Sjöberg became Seaberg. Once in the new county, some emigrants changed their names: "New country, new name."

- *Geography*
 - The key to Swedish research is to know the parish in Sweden where your ancestor resided because the church records are organized by parish. There are several important geographical terms to become familiar with: province (*landskap*), county (*län*), and parish (*socken*).
 - Sweden was created in the 11th century by the unification of local kingdoms that local leaders ruled. These kingdoms became the 24 provinces (*landskap*) of Sweden. In 1634, the Swedish kingdom was reorganized, and the provinces gave way to the new county (*län*) structure. Some provinces were identical to the new county. Other provinces were subdivided into two

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or three counties. These county boundaries remained unchanged until about 1970 when some boundaries changed, or counties merged.

- It is important to understand the difference between province (landskap) and county (län). While the provinces have no administrative functions, they retain cultural-historical significance and have defined geographical borders. The counties (*län*) remained administrative units where the records were kept. The county (*län*) is divided into parishes (*socken*). The local parish kept the church records, and the church was responsible for maintaining all vital records up until 1991.

The Hunt Begins

➤ *Search personal sources*

- The first step is to begin with yourself and your family. First, gather all the information from personal sources about your Swedish ancestor who emigrated. Personal sources include interviews with family members, the family Bible, old letters, postcards, and diaries. These sources may include names of family members and place names in Sweden. Old photographs may have the name of the photo studio that took the picture, providing a clue to the place of origin. Old letters and diaries might provide names of siblings and parents who might give links to tracing your ancestors. Remember, spellings of place names may be phonetic or anglicized, but gather this information.

➤ *Search public sources*

- Marriage and death certificates may provide age information. U.S. Census and state census records can provide information such as age, birth year, and emigration year. Applications for naturalization often have detailed information, including the place within Sweden where the emigrant resided. World War I and World War II draft registration records will provide a birth date, and the World War II draft registration records often will show the place in Sweden where the person had resided. Obituaries often provide the name of the place in Sweden of origin and siblings or relatives within Sweden. Tombstones will often have the birth date and death date. These records can provide additional clues to the hunt. Many of these records are now online. Many are available on subscription sites like www.ancestry.com or free sites like www.familysearch.org.

➤ *Search Swedish-American Church Books*

- Many Swedish immigrants joined Swedish-American churches, primarily Lutheran, but also other denominations such as Baptist, Swedish Covenant, and Methodist. These churches kept very detailed records, including the name of the parish in Sweden where the person was born. Many Swedish-American church records have been microfilmed and are available at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center in Rock Island, Illinois. The link to the Swenson Center is <https://www.swensoncenter.org/genealogy>. You can find digitized images of the microfilms of Swedish-American churches for the United States and Canada on <https://www.ancestry.com/> for the following denominations: Evangelical Lutheran, Evangelical Covenant, and Evangelical Free Church. Within ArkivDigital (<https://www.arkivdigital.net>), you will find newly photographed images of Swedish American churches, mainly from Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and a few additional Midwestern states. The amount of information will vary depending on the individual congregation. Still, if the information is complete, you can often find in these records the date and place of birth and baptism, date received as a church member, and arrival year in America.

➤ *Search Swedish-American Newspapers*

- Over 300,000 digitized newspaper pages from 39 different Swedish-American newspaper titles published across the United States between 1859 and 2007 are now available online at

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the Minnesota Historical Society's website:

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

- The Swenson Center also has many Swedish-American newspapers on microfilm that have not yet been digitalized. Many obituaries can be found in these newspapers. For a list of newspapers that are on microfilm, go to: <https://www.swensoncenter.org/newspapers>

➤ *Search Passenger Ship Lists*

- Two out-of-print books that give detailed information about Swedish passenger arrivals between 1820 and 1850 in U.S. ports, both written by Nils William Olsson. One is titled *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in U.S. Ports 1820-1850*, and the other is *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820-1850*.
- Most Swedes traveled from Gothenburg (Göteborg) via an English port to New York, but some ships also landed in Boston, Philadelphia, Portland, Maine, Halifax, Montreal, and Quebec. For New York arrivals, you should check Castle Garden records and, after 1892, Ellis Island records.
- You can find indexes and manifests for passengers leaving Swedish ports on Ancestry's World Edition <http://www.ancestry.com> in the section Emigration Records from Sweden and ArkivDigital (<https://www.arkivdigital.net/>). These collections include the names of about 1.4 million persons leaving Swedish ports between 1869 and 1951.
- Many Swedes emigrated from Norwegian ports, especially from Dalsland, Värmland and Jämtland. The Norwegian passenger ship lists are available on Digitalarkivet <http://arkivverket.no/Digitalarkivet>. Click on English for the English version and then select emigrants. The Swedes mostly emigrated from Oslo and Trondheim.
- You can find Swedes who left from Danish ports at <http://www.udvanderarkivet.dk/udvanderprotokollerne>. This database includes persons leaving between the years 1868 and 1920.

➤ *Search Emigration Records*

- There are two sets of Swedish records listing emigrants: *utflyttning* records in the church books and the annual emigrant list sent from each parish to the Central Bureau of Statistics (*Statistiska Centralbyrån*). The latter set of records begins in 1860.
- Emibas is a CD with 1.1 million names of persons who left Sweden between 1845 and 1930 and is 75 percent complete. The source for the database is the moving out (*utflyttning*) records from the church books. This is one of the most powerful tools because it is searchable on many parameters such as birth date, emigration date, name, parish, county, and other data. The CD is no longer being produced, but Emibas's contents are now available on the subscription site www.emiweb.se, and <https://www.ancestry.com/>
- The emigration extracts or SCB emigrants are available on the National Swedish Archives subscription site (<http://sok.riksarkivet.se/>); some are listed on Emiweb (www.emiweb.se).

➤ *Search Swedish Census Records*

- Other tools are the Swedish Census records. You can find census records on the Swedish National Archive site at <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/>. 1880, 1890, 1900, and 1910 Swedish Censuses are complete, and 1930 is in progress. The census records are searchable by name. Censuses on CDs are also available for 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2002. These censuses can be helpful in more recent research or assistance in looking for living relatives. On ArkivDigital <https://www.arkivdigital.net/>, you will find censuses for the years 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1990.

What are the Swedish Records?

➤ *Swedish Church Books*

- The Swedish Church Records are a treasure for the Swedish genealogist because there are so many records, and they are so complete. While it is not known when the Swedish Church began keeping the records, some records from the 1500s have been preserved. A Church Law of 1686 required the clergy to keep records of births, christenings, marriages, deaths, and

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burials in the parish and records of persons moving in and moving out of the parish. The Swedish Church was responsible for maintaining vital records up to 1991.

- The Swedish Church Records include fourteen record types. The most commonly used by the genealogist are the birth (*födelse*), marriage (*vigsel*), death (*död*), moving in/moving out (*inflyttning och utflyttning*), and household examination records (*husförhörslängd*).
- The household examination records (*husförhörslängd*) are wonderful sources for reconstructing one's family history. Each year, the minister was required to take a spiritual and physical accounting of all who lived within the parish. The ministers recorded this information in large books, usually one spread (similar to an accounting spreadsheet) per household. They were updated each year for about five or ten years, and then a new volume was created. These books are usually organized by farm, village, or place in alphabetical or geographical order. Many books include village indexes in the volume's front or back. For each household, the minister recorded name, birthdates, birthplace, marriage date, moving in or moving out information, and notations on each person's religious knowledge. The household examination records allow one to trace a person from birth to death or birth to emigration. In many cases, it is possible to know precisely where a person resided each year of this life. ArkivDigital (<https://www.arkivdigital.net/>) has indexed all the household/congregation books for all of Sweden between 1800 and 1947.
- *SCB Records*
 - These are transcripts of birth, marriage, and death records kept by the government agency, Central Bureau of Statistics (*Statistiska Centralbyrån*). These records cover the years 1860 to 1949.
- *Estate Inventories (Bouppteckning)*
 - These are inventories of the deceased's assets and debts, somewhat similar to a probate record. The estate inventories consist of the ingress or preamble and the inventory. The preamble gives information about the deceased and names the heirs. Estate inventories can help prove genealogical relationships and solve genealogical mysteries.
- *Tax/Population Registers (Mantal)*
 - Tax/population registers that were created annually. These records are not as detailed as the household examination records but can be helpful in cases where the church records have been destroyed or when the household records don't go as far back in time as the tax records.
- *Other Records*
 - There are many other records that one can use to further research one's Swedish heritage. Among the many records include court records, military records, prison records, land records, orphanages, hospitals, schools, and much more. Many of these records are now becoming accessible online.

Where are the records?

- *Original records*
 - Regional Archives in Sweden
- *Online sites*
 - www.arkivdigital.net \$Subscription site.
 - Swedish National Archives <http://sok.riksarkivet.se/> Free
 - www.ancestry.com World Edition \$Subscription site.
 - www.familysearch.org – Indexes are available to all, but the images are only available at Family Search Centers and the Family Search Library for most people.
 - www.myheritage.com \$Subscription site Household examination records 1800-1947 for parts of Sweden

Research Guides

Family Search Wiki	https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Sweden_Genealogy
Swedish Roots – Federation of Sweden’s Genealogical Societies	https://www.rotter.se/swedish-roots
Swedish Genealogy Guide	http://swedishgenealogyguide.com/

Dictionaries

Swedish Genealogy Guide	http://swedishgenealogyguide.com/ Click on dictionaries.
Family Search Wiki	https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Sweden_Genealogy Click on Swedish Word List under Swedish Research Tools, and you can download a PDF file.

Maps

Historical Maps	http://www.lantmateriet.se/en/ Click on historical maps.
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Swedish American Resources (Churches and Newspapers)

Swenson Center –	https://www.swensoncenter.org/genealogy A list of Swedish-American churches' microfilms and newspapers is available at the Swenson Center. You can call to set up a research appointment or order research.
Swedish American church records online - Ancestry	https://www.ancestry.com/ Subscription U.S., Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Swedish American Church Records, 1800-1946 U.S., Evangelical Free Church of America, Swedish American Church Records, 1800-1946 U.S., Evangelical Covenant Church, Swedish American Church Records, 1868-1970 U.S., Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Church Records, 1826-1945
Swedish American church records online - ArkivDigital	https://app.arkivdigital.se/ - Subscription Newly photographed images of Swedish American parishes primarily in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota and some in Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin
St. Ansgarius Episcopal Church Records –	http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/npu_ansgar The first church in Chicago was founded for Swedish immigrants – Church established in 1849. The records were saved while the church was destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871. The online site is free.
Swedish American Newspapers	http://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/swedishamerican Free site

Emigration Records

Moving out Records in Church Books – <i>Ancestry and Emiweb</i> – both are subscription sites	https://www.ancestry.com/ \$ Sweden, Emigrants Register in Church Books 1783 -1991 https://www.emiweb.se/ \$ Emigrants in Swedish Church records
<i>SCB Records</i> – Source Statistics Sweden Census accounts beginning after 1860 <i>Emiweb and National Swedish Archives</i> - Both are subscription sites	https://www.emiweb.se/ \$ SCB Emigrants collection https://sok.riksarkivet.se/svar-digitala-forskarsalen Free site Select subject -emigration Select - <i>summariska folkmängdsredogörelse</i> (summary of population movement)
Swedish Passenger Ship Manifests	https://www.ancestry.com \$ Searchable name indexes plus manifests from Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Malmö, and Stockholm. https://app.arkivdigital.se/ \$ Manifests for Gothenburg, Malmö, Norrköping, Helsingborg, and Stockholm in police archives – Searchable under name index: Emigrants https://www.emiweb.se/ \$ Passenger lists for Swedish ports https://sok.riksarkivet.se/digitala-forskarsalen Passenger lists for Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm – not indexed by name
Danish Passenger List	http://www.udvandrearkivet.dk/udvandreprotokollerne/

Swedish Census Records

1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, Complete 1860 and 1870 selected counties 1930 – in progress	National Swedish Archives - free https://sok.riksarkivet.se/
1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1990 - Swedish Census	ArkivDigital Subscription \$ https://www.arkivdigital.net
Census of Stockholm 1945	ArkivDigital Subscription \$ https://www.arkivdigital.net

Swedish Records – Online Sites

COMPANY	URL
ArkivDigital - \$ subscription	https://www.arkivdigital.net
Ancestry (World Edition) - \$ subscription	https://www.ancestry.com
National Swedish Archives Free	https://sok.riksarkivet.se/
Family Search images available at Family History Centers and Family History Library - Free	http://www.familysearch.org
MyHeritage \$ Subscription (1800-1947 household records)	http://www.myheritage.com ArkivDigital images
Stockholm City Archives Free	https://stadsarkivet.stockholm

Transcription Sites

Släktdata - The site is free	http://blog.slaktdata.org/ Transcriptions of birth, marriage, and death records mostly in Western Sweden Click on <i>registersökning</i> and then <i>registerlista</i> . Note this index has now been added to ArkivDigital's birth, marriage, and deaths parts of Sweden with a link to the original record. https://www.arkivdigital.net Subscription site
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Connect with other researchers – Social Networking

DISBYT – FIND OTHER SWEDES	https://www.dis.se/ SUBSCRIPTION SITE
FACEBOOK GROUP	HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/SWEDISHHEARTGENEALOGY
FACEBOOK GROUP SWEDISH GENEALOGY	HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/239433885078
FACEBOOK GROUP	HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/1437307716567758
MESSAGE BOARD	http://forum.genealogi.se/ SWEDISH GENEALOGY SOCIETY IN SWEDEN (IN SWEDISH BUT CAN WRITE QUERIES IN ENGLISH)

Directories

http://www.eniro.se/
http://www.birthday.se
https://www.hitte.se/

Swedish Military Research

Central Soldier's Register	https://www.soldatreg.se/ Click on Sök soldat, then select <i>databasen</i>
Hans Högman Genealogy & History Site	http://www.hhogman.se/military.htm Scroll down and search military – an excellent Swedish military history and genealogy site.

Swedish Graves

Search in Stockholm's cemeteries	https://etjanster.stockholm.se/Hittagraven/home
Search in selected parishes in Sweden	http://gravar.se (English version)
Search in Swedish cemeteries	https://grav.rotter.se/Gravsoklist.php?cmd=reset
Search in 32 cemetery management areas	http://svenskagravar.se

Swedish Genealogical Societies and Research Centers in North America

American Swedish Historical Museum of Philadelphia	https://www.americanswedish.org/ The museum has a genealogy group.
Lindborg Old Mill & Swedish Historical Museum	https://www.oldmillmuseum.org/
Nordic Museum Seattle, WA	https://www.nordicmuseum.org/ Check the website for genealogy events
Nordic Genealogy Society of Northern California	http://nordicgenealogy.org/
Swedish Ancestry Research Association (SARA) Worcester, MA	

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Swedish Genealogical Society of Colorado	http://swedgensoc.org/
Swedish Genealogical Society of Minnesota	http://sgsmn.org/
Swedish Genealogical Society of the Swedish American Museum in Chicago	http://www.swedishamericanmuseum.org/genealogy/
Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Rock Island, IL	http://www.augustana.edu/swenson

Swedish Archives in Sweden

ARCHIVE	URL
National Archives (Riksarkivet)	http://riksarkivet.se/startpage
Regional Archive Göteborg	http://riksarkivet.se/goteborg
Regional Archive Härnösand	http://riksarkivet.se/harnosand
Regional Archive Lund	http://riksarkivet.se/lund
Regional Archive Uppsala	http://riksarkivet.se/upsala
Regional Archive Vadstena	http://riksarkivet.se/vadstena
Regional Archive Visby	http://riksarkivet.se/visby
Regional Archive Östersund	http://riksarkivet.se/ostersund
Stockholm City Archives	http://www.ssa.stockholm.se
Malmö City Archives	http://www.malmo.se/stadsarkivet#
Värmland Archives	https://arkivcentrumvarmland.se/welcome/
Military Archives	http://riksarkivet.se/krigsarkivet
National Archives Database	http://sok.riksarkivet.se/nad

Swedish Genealogy CDs

CATEGORY	NAME	WHERE TO PURCHASE
<i>Death Index</i>	1815-2022	https://www.rotterbokhandeln.se/

Swedish Genealogy Books

Barr, Elinor. <i>Swedes in Canada: Invisible Immigrants</i> . Toronto, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2015.
Clemensson, Per & Kjell Andersson. <i>Your Swedish Roots</i> . Provo, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2004.
Hällgren, Bengt. <i>The world of Cajsa Andersdotter: A close-up view of Sweden in the 18th and 19th century</i> . CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.
Johansson, Carl-Erik. <i>Cradled in Sweden</i> . Sandy, Utah: Everton Publishers, 2002. (Out of print) Sometimes, you can find copies on Amazon or other online shops. Most libraries have a copy. Also, you can download it for free at familysearch.org. Select books and enter Cradled in Sweden in the Search box.
Johnson, Robert W., and Gomell, Elizabeth Williams. <i>Husförhörslängder, Swedish Household Examination Records: Framing the Solutions to Your Swedish Ancestry Puzzles</i> . Minneapolis, MN, 2020.
Morris, Geoffrey Fröberg. <i>A Practical Guide to Swedish Church Records for Genealogy and Family History</i> . Salt Lake City, Utah: Swedish Genealogy Guide, LLC, 2020.
Olsson, Nils William. <i>Swedish Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820-1850</i> . Chicago, Illinois: The Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1967. (Out of Print)
Skogsjö, Håkan. <i>Explore Your Swedish Heritage</i> . Lyrestad, Sweden: ArkivDigital AD AB, 2020.