



The SwedGen Road Tour

PAGE 2

Visit Ellis Island

PAGE 5

Visit Allen County Public Library

PAGE 7

The Digital Race

PAGE 10

The Iron Industry in Sweden

PAGE 13



SwedGen Road Tour 2007 in Cambridge, Minnesota. From left: Olof Cronberg, Anna-Lena Hultman, Anneli Andersson, Kathy Meade (Genline), and Charlotte Börjesson

We found the Swedish roots

In May 2007 a group of four Swedish genealogists went on the Swedgen Road Tour visiting Minneapolis and Cambridge, Minnesota; Rockford, Illinois and Jamestown, New York.

At lectures and workshops, we showed how to find your Swedish roots. The possibilities to solve the research problems have improved in just a few years. We were able to help almost all attenders to the meetings. However, one important lesson is that it isn't enough to have access to the sources and to the databases. You need to know how to search the databases in order to find interesting matches. You also need to know how to interpret the result. We saw cases where researchers had followed the wrong track due to misinterpretation of the result. In this issue we will try to give some ideas how to do and how to avoid pitfalls.

Thank you for helping us

We would like to say thank you to all the local organizing committees who help us with arranging the workshops, to all the families that let us stay in your homes and to our sponsors, the DIS Society and Genline.

The SwedGen Road Tour group.

SwedGen Road Tour 2007

After a year of planning, in the end of April, the time had come for the SwedGen Road Tour 2007. The initiative had come from Anneli Andersson in Mellerud. She had inspired Anna-Lena Hultman in Hössna and Charlotte Börjesson i Göteborg to join.

–We have participated in SwedGen Tours before, but dreamed of doing a tour of our own in a low budget fashion. We are all crazy enough in United States to do a tour and to pay for it.

When Olof Cronberg in Växjö heard about the plans, he wanted to join too. He has also been participated in the earlier tours.

–We knew that we would work as a group, and have different skills, which is a key to a successful trip.

Visit new Swedish areas

What was the purpose with the trip?

We wanted to visit other Swedish areas, where the earlier SwedGen tours haven't been to. We wanted to get in contact with Swedish Americans in these areas and tell about the possibilities to look for your Swedish roots.

Anneli and Anna-Lena have a large experience about their parts of Sweden, and know where the emigrants went. Therefore, we choose to visit Minnesota,

Illinois, New York and Pennsylvania.

They also wanted to tie the bands between those who stayed and those who left.

There is a great interest among Swedish Americans to learn about their ancestors' neighborhood and why they left Sweden. We are interested in to learn what become of the immigrants in their new country. The historical knowledge is a part of the thrill with genealogy.

Contacts through genealogy

The mayor part of the planning was done through email correspondence with contacts in the US, who also helped us with publicity about the tour. Our contacts, we had learnt to know through genealogy assignments, earlier tours and our DIS members in the US.

Kathy Meade in Chicago, who is a representative for Genline in the US, participated in the Minnesota part of the tour. She helped with the planning of Minneapolis and Cambridge. In Rockford, Illinois, we had good help of Anneli's genealogy friend Karen Hammarberg. On our earlier tours, we had met Karen Livsey in Jamestown, NY. The visit to Kylertown and Grassflat, PA was more informally arrange by Jennifer Ertmer.

We flew to New York and stayed for a day to visit Ellis Island. Then we flew to Minneapolis and during two weeks went back to New York by rental car. In Minneapolis, we stayed by Tracy Baresh. The first day there, we went for sightseeing North of Minneapolis in the Swedish areas such as Scandia, Lindstrom, Stillwater, Chisago City, Taylor Falls and Forest Lake.

American Swedish Institute

The first presentation took place at the American Swedish Institute, Minneapolis. More than 125 had signed up for the day to listen, learn and get help with the genealogy. Many had come from far away such as California and Texas.

Kathy presented Genline and Olof showed Disbyt and Dispos and how they work in conjunction with Genline assisted by Charlotte at the computer. Anneli and Anna-Lena told about the emigration from Sweden, resources on the Internet and the CDs. Anneli told about the situation in Sweden in the end of the 1800s and about the difference between gårdar (farms), torp (small house) and backstugor (even smaller house). After lunch, we tried to help people one by one. Since they were so many some members of the Swedish Genealogical Society of Minnesota help us answering questions. A visitor was found to be a relative of Olof's. We really wished that we had had more time to help everyone a little more but hopefully almost all had some new useful piece of information.

Cambridge

The next day, we headed Northbound to Cambridge and Isanti County Historical Society Heritage Center. Here we had double presentation in the afternoon and in the evening. There were approximately 75 attendants. We had better time for the one-to-one session. We were able to help people to find there long searched link to Sweden. You need more than just access to databases. You need to know how to search and how to interpret the information.



The local TV station in Rockford is interviewing Anna-Lena about the Emigration from Sweden

Rockford

The next day, we traveled to Rockford, Illinois. Here, we were also able to stay with families. Charlotte had had a presentation at the Rockford Public Library some years ago. Here we had access to a lecture room and to a computer lab. The idea was that the 50 visitors should have some hands on access to the Swedish databases.

Before leaving Rockford, we were invited to brunch at the country club by the Lindberg family where Olof and Anna-Lena stayed. It appeared that Anna-Lena many years ago had done genealogy for a friend of the family, and this time she tracked down a relative that had been on the Titanic.

Then we continue our journey just passing by Chicago and then on to Fort Wayne, Indiana. Olof had suggested a visit to Allen County Public Library, which reopened in January. It is the second largest genealogy center in the States after the FHL in Salt Lake City.

Jamestown, NY

The next day, we went on to Jamestown, NY, where Karen Livsey met us at the Fenton History Center. Here we also stayed in families. We were invited for lunch and a visit to Falconer Public Library where we met Delbert Mee who had documented the tombstones of the area, including many "Swedish" tombstones.

Bob Alm, who was a host for the girls, didn't know anything about his origin. With a few keystrokes on her computer, Anneli soon found out that his ancestors were from Dalsland, and that he was related to the Ingvald Family, which also Anneli belongs to. The world is small and Bob was very touched.

The next day, we had our show at the Jamestown Community College with a similar schedule as in Minneapolis. We had 45 visitors, so we had more time to help.

Swedish traces in PA

Then we went through the forests of Pennsylvania, where the trees were bursting out. We stopped in Kylertown, Clearfield county, where a welcome committee was waiting, five ladies and a little girl, at the towns only motel. Anneli



Before starting the presentations at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis.

and Anna-Lena had done research for some of them and Charlotte had help one lady with a Disbyt submission. We visited this part of Pennsylvania because many emigrants from Dalsland ended up there. Anneli wanted to see the places: Arnot, Antrim, Grassflat, Peale and Wilburne. We visited several burial grounds and took photos of tombstones with Swedish names.

These small places were busy places one hundred years ago, when the coalmines were open. We were also invited to visit a coalmine of today. Instead of digging tunnels to get the coal out, at present, large dumpers moves the soil on top and then dig out the coal. We could see the remnants of wooden poles from earlier times, when the coal layer

and thus the tunnels was not more than a meter high.

Summary

Comparing with earlier tours, we were able to help more visitors. It is a large difference in five years. It was fun to see the joy in their faces, when they realized that we really had solved their problems. It was quite apparent that there are Swedish American areas outside of Minnesota – the tombstones spoke clearly. We were able to establish connections with Swedish American genealogy organizations.

THE SWEDGEN ROAD TOUR GROUP



The local organizing committee of Swedish Genealogical Society of Minnesota and the SwedGen Road Tour group at the end of a long day in Minneapolis



Zoe Norwood is introducing the SwedGen Road Tour in the computer lab at the Rockford Public Library

The Rockford Workshop

On Friday, May 4, 2007, a group of genealogists from Sweden arrived in Rockford, Illinois. Driving directly from Minneapolis, Minnesota, they came to the Public Library where they prepared for a full day of genealogy research on Saturday. On Friday evening a group of us took the “Swedes” to our famous Italian Restaurant, Maria’s. Mycket Mat!

Workshops

On Saturday, May 4, 2007 the sessions were held at 9:30 am – 11:30 am, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm, and 3:30 pm – 5:30 pm. Our sessions had 16 – 20 individuals in the presentations. The group presented us with information about how to use various resources for Swedish genealogical and historical research, online resources, Swedish genealogical CDs and Swedish emigration.

Puzzles solved

Participants left the presentations having had personal assistance in finding their families. As new doors were opened

and puzzles solved, tears trickled from participants, as they were so happy to find their ancestors. I am sure many letters were written to new and lost family members in Sweden. In addition to having access to Swedish online CD’s, we had access to the Dalsland project (7000 names from Dalsland including emigrants), index of names for the Swedish American churches and additional names of emigrants not yet included in the Emibas CD.

We were sad to see the SwedGen group leave. They were all so delightful and are welcome back to Rockford, IL any time. We would like to thank Anneli Andersson, Anna-Lena Hultman, Charlotte Börjesson and Olof Cronberg for their time, patience and knowledge. Please come again!

Special thanks to their hosts: Zoe Norwood, Jean Lythgoe, Wes & Sue Lindberg, Bo & Karen Hammarberg.

THE ROCKFORD COMMITTEE

Join the DIS Society

Are you still not a member of the DIS Society?

The DIS Society is the Computer Genealogy Society of Sweden and produces this e-zine Rooted in Sweden. As a member you will also get access to the DISBYT database with over 12 million records, which covers a third of the total population who lived in Sweden before 1907. You will also get access to DISPOS, which is a tool to make it easier to find indexes to sources. It also provides a fast link to the Genline records.

25,000 members

We are already more than 25,000 members. You are also welcome to join the DIS Society. Annual fee: USD 15,- incl e-zine Rooted in Sweden. USD 20,- incl the Swedish magazine Diskulogen.

www.dis.se/english/



Ellis Island

- where the emigrant became an immigrant

All Swedish Americans interested in family history should try to visit Ellis Island outside New York. The fort of Ellis Island and the exhibition about immigration to the States let you step on the same floor as your ancestors when they took their first steps on American soil. It is a powerful experience.

Ellis Island was the first station for immigrants between 1892 and 1954. 12 million immigrants passed through the island on their way into the United States. Before that, between 1855 and 1891, the boat passengers were received at Castle Garden at the South part of Manhattan, where Battery Park is today. Ellis Island opened in 1892, but the newly built main building burnt down in a fire in June 1897. A large part of the immigrant registers from 1855 were destroyed. At the end of 1900 a new impressive main building was ready and already on the first day 2,251 immigrants arrived.

The Atlantic steamships didn't anchor at the island, but anchored at the Hudson or East River piers, where the first and

second class passengers could disembark, pass the customs at the pier and continue the travel. The rest of the passengers were transported by ferry to Ellis Island, where they had to undergo medical examination, control of identity and papers. In best case, the procedure could take 3-4 hours. Sick passengers could stay on the sick ward for several months, then either be sent back to Europe or be accepted into the country. The exhibitions

tell about tragic lives where family members died after arrival and were buried on the island.

In 1954, Ellis Island was closed, and the buildings were not kept up for many years. The restoration was started in 1984, and is supposed to be the largest restoration in the States. The work has been done carefully, so you can still see traces on the walls and floors from the thousands and thousands of immigrants.



The exhibition shows in room after room the history of immigration. Many fantastic photos and also many other artifacts are shown. There is a mountain of trunks and chests. There are farm tools and household goods that people carried with them on the long trip. There are also letters and stories from the immigration period, and among the collection of passports you can also see Swedish names. You can walk around for hours in the large building and be moved by all the lives passing by.



Of course, many descendants of immigrants visit Ellis Island. To honor your immigrant ancestors, you may buy a plate and let your ancestors names be engraved. The plates are then placed on the Wall of Honor in the park.

To visit Ellis Island and at the same time take a look at the Statue of Liberty , takes almost a day. On sunny summer days you may have to queue to get a place on the ferries from Battery Park, Manhattan, but then the ferry tour is quick. From the water, you also get a nice view of New York. You can return to Manhattan when you want, but the risk is that you stay until the last ferry.

ANNA-LENA HULTMAN
SWEDGEN ROAD TOUR 2007

Some trunks and chests at the exhibition. Note that the sticker on the closest luggage is from Svenska Amerika Linien - Swedish American Line.



The welcome committee in Kylertown, PA



Allen County Public Library

We had half a day to spend at the library, and it proved to be much too short a time. I will try to describe some of the resources we found. If you pass Indiana it is well worth visiting, but be prepared to spend time to there.

When planning the SwedGen Road Tour, I suggested a stop in Fort Wayne and at the Allen County Public Library, since we were going to pass Indiana anyway on the tour between Illinois and New York. During the 90's, I had heard that it was a good genealogy library, but never visited it. It turned out to be the great surprise of the trip.

Genealogy Center

The Allen County Public Library is a modern library that reopened in 2003 after renovation. One complete floor is devoted to the Genealogy Center, which I believe is one of the largest

genealogical collections in the US. It holds a collection of more than 350,000 printed volumes and 513,000 items of microfilm or microfiche. Of course, there is also access to the major online databases as Ancestry, America's GenealogyBank, HeritageQuestOnline, NewEnglandAncestors, ProQuest Obituaries and more.

Swedish traces

On the bookshelves, there are more than 50,000 volumes of family history. I searched for Swedish names as Anderson and Swanson and found several volumes. See box. Some of the books were large volumes of 500 pages or more. Other books were rather small family histories. Some books were based on their own research, while other books were based on contacts with archives and other researchers. It was also apparent from a quick look in the books, that some of them seemed to be very accurate, while others contained old family history traditions we no longer believe in.

Most books with Swedish research were of American origin. In fact, the bookshelf with Swedish standard genealogical literature was rather small.

Large collections

The main focus of the library was Eastern US research. The library has microfilms of several censuses: all federal censuses 1790-1930, and also state censuses from 18 states. It has more than 50,000 R L Polk city directories 1964 to present. It has city directories from the 1800's from more than 240 cities on microfilm. Passenger lists from five major ports: Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, New York and Philadelphia. Military records from the Revolutionary War until the Vietnam War. There are also many other records available.

Local history

The library holds nearly 200,000 printed volumes of local history publications, for example county and town histories, vital, cemetery, church, court, land, probate and naturalization records. There are also significant collections of microfilmed local records.

Anna-Lena and Anneli were interested in cemetery records for counties where many Swedes settled down. They soon found several interesting books. There are good facilities to make photocopies of books or to print copies or scan to a file

from microfilm. You could also use your own digital camera to copy interesting pages.

The PERSI index

The Genealogy Center also has one of the largest English-language genealogy and local history periodical collections in the world. Currently, there are more than 5,100 subscriptions and the total number of titles is almost 10,000. All these periodicals are indexed by the staff at the library in the well known Periodical Source Index (PERSI).

Check the web

Before visiting the library, it is a good idea to check the library catalog on line at www.acpl.lib.in.us to know what to look for. At the counter, you will receive a map of the floor to navigate between the bookshelves.

We were all astounded by the size of the collections, and we would easily be able to stay several days strolling around the bookshelves. The library had good space and good light, except for the microfilm area, which was dark of course.

Is there a future?

In Sweden, the Genealogiska föreningen (Genealogical Society) has a large collection of family history, some directories, obituaries and so on. However, they have problems to keep their library open, because of few members of the society and few visitors. Genealogists don't seem to go to libraries any longer in Sweden. They sit at home doing research instead. I also have the feeling that fewer and fewer family books are published in Sweden. You publish your work on the web instead.

Will the Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library continue to flourish in the future? I don't know, but it is still worth a visit.

OLOF CRONBERG
SWEDGEN ROAD TOUR



Top: One of the halls with computers for online research and beside the computers research tables and lots of bookshelves. Below: Olof Cronberg is trying to find books with Swedish relatives.

Examples of books with Swedish origin

Lind, Marilyn: *Looking backward to Sweden*, 136 p., c1986. – The family came from Alsen and Åre, Jämtlands län.

Page, John Leroy: *Page-Ekstrom genealogy*, 115 p., c1985. – The family came from Böda and Fliseryd, Kalmar län.

Swanson, Earl Raymond: *Ancestors and descendants of Sven Larsson and Hanna Larsdotter of Svarte Hjerup, Uppåkra Parish, Skåne Province, Sweden*, 59 leaves, 1993.

Swanson, Ray W: *From Skåne with love*, 494 p., c2004.

Book review:

Touring Swedish America

If you are planning a tour in the States to visit Old Swede's homesteads, then this guide book will be a useful companion. The book was printed originally in 1995, but has now appeared in a revised and expanded issue. To write the new issue, Alan and Jessica Winqvist took a sabbatical year and went touring through 36 states in the hunt for old Swedish American traces.

The book is divided geographically, and begins in the Northeast part with the memories of the New Sweden colony. The journey then continues through Eastern and Western Midwest. Not surprising, Minnesota has a chapter of its own. Then the book heads southbound – the immigration to the South is often forgotten from a Swedish perspective – and eventually ends in the Western states.

Minnesota

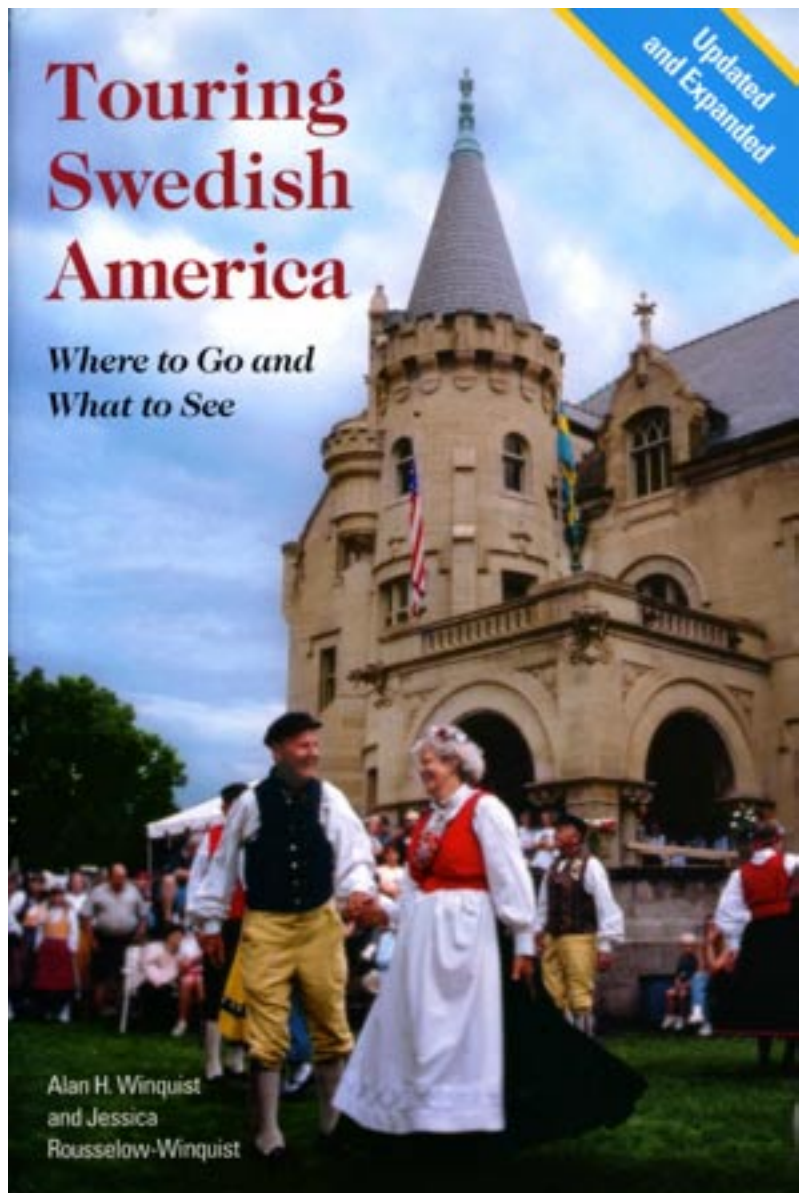
70 pages are devoted to Minnesota. All the places North of Minneapolis that we passed during our SwedGen Road Tour are described: Old log cabins, churches, monuments and burial places.

History and sites

About Rockford, Illinois, we get to learn that 30 Swedish immigrants settled down there in 1852. In the 30's, there were 10,000 inhabitants of Swedish origin or a quarter of the town. The Swedes were from Västergötland, Östergötland and Småland. The furniture industry was important. Another six pages describe what there is to see around Rockford.

Almost forgotten Swedish areas

The area around Kylertown, PA, which we also visited during the SwedGen Road Tour is presented on a half page under the headline Grassflat – Lanse. There is a road description to the churchyard with many tombstones for Swedish immigrants. With Anneli's interest for people from Dalsland, we dug even



deeper and found other “Swedish” burial grounds not listed, but even local people had difficulty telling us where they were.

Essential guidebook

All together, I find Touring Swedish America to be a very well written book with many Swedish historical monuments worth visiting. I recommend it to all who are going to the States. Take a chance and see the sites before it is to late.

OLOF CRONBERG

Touring Swedish America
Where to Go and What to See
Alan H. Winqvist and Jessica
Rousselow-Winqvist
Minnesota Historical Society Press
www.mhspress.org
ISBN 087351559-5
Price US\$ 25,-.

The Digital Race

At present, several organizations are competing over the Swedish church records. As we have told earlier Swedish National Archives, SVAR, are digitizing the microfilm in cooperation with the Genealogical Society of Utah.

Ancestry

In August, Ancestry launched a Swedish site. Ancestry has digitized the microfilm of Värmlands län and partly also Älvsborgs län. So far, they haven't got access to the other läns (counties). However, they have been able to make the Emihamn database available. The database consists of an index of passport lists of emigrants leaving Swedish

ports. Sometimes you get to know both the home parish and the destination, sometimes the information is limited. There are only birth years and not birth days as opposed to the Emibas CD, which is extracted from the parish records. The Emibas CD is not available on the internet so far.

ArkivDigital

The next player is ArkivDigital, a small Swedish company, which is taking new digital photos from the original sources. The advantages are that the digital photos are in color, you can use indexes produced after the microfilming, and they are digitizing more recent volumes. So far some läns (counties) are ready. They are

also digitizing other records useful for genealogists.

Digiarkiv

In Southern Sweden, there is a company, Digiarkiv, which also is taking new digital photos. So far, they are only selling the images on CD, but it wouldn't surprise me, if they also will offer online access in the future.

It will be interesting to see, how the race ends...

OLOF CRONBERG

Swedish Online Resources				
	SVAR	Genline	Ancestry	ArkivDigital
Church records -1860	Hallands, Kopparbergs, Södermanlands, Uppsala, Västmanlands and Örebro län. Partly Östergötlands län.	Complete	Värmlands län and partly Älvsborgs län	Göteborgs och Bohuslän, Jönköpings, Kalmar and Kronobergs län. Partly Skaraborgs, Älvsborgs and Östergötlands län
Church records 1860-95	Partly	Only SCB extracts, but complete for vital records Complete for husförhörslängder	Only husförhörslängder	Same län as above
Church records 1895-1905	Partly	---	---	
Taxation records 1642-1820	Complete	---	---	---
Census index	Partly (1860,1870,) 1880 Complete 1890,1900	---	---	---
Other records	Convicts, military records Indexes of seamen, vil-lages and farms, ...	---	Emihamn passenger lists	Court records, probate records, military records
Fee - lowest fee	50 kr (7,- USD) for 3 hours	75 kr (11,- USD) for 24 hours	Free to try, but 30,- USD for a month	135 kr (20,- USD) for a month
Fee - annual fee	895 kr (130,- USD)	1795 kr (260,- USD)	300,- USD	1195 kr (200,- USD)
Web address	www.svar.ra.se	www.genline.com	www.ancestry.com	www.arkivdigital.se

New edition of the Swedish Death Index

A new edition of the Swedish Death Index 1947-2006 is available. This time missing names are added and the database is now 99 % complete.

The CD is good to use if you are trying to identify people living in Sweden, that have died after 1947. Normally, you get the name, address, date and place of death and date and place of birth. The CD costs 495 SEK (Ca 80,- USD) for Dis members.

Order by sending an email to info@genealogi.se.



Your story is wanted!

As usual for e-zines like this, there is a need for new articles.

I would appreciate more submissions of articles to Rooted in Sweden. It could be your family story, how you solved a research problem, information about sources or anything else related to Swedish heritage research. One or two pages and some illustrations would be good.

Contact Olof Cronberg at editor@dis.se

DISBYT INFORMATION

When you add new data

When you want to add new data, please send in a new DISBYT extraction (Gedcom file) containing all the data you want to submit, including the data you have submitted before. Earlier submissions are always erased when new data arrives.

If you have separated your data to two or more files

The normal is that you have all your relatives in one extraction Gedcom file but if you have them separated you can submit them one by one. The databases for DISBYT uses your membership number (ex. 08350) for identify the information in the file. To separate your files in the database I do it with adding the alphabets letter, as 08350A, 08350B and so on.

How often shall I send an updated extraction?

You can send an extraction whenever you like, there is no limit. I suggest you do it when you have added several names, and you want to see if someone has these people in DISBYT. I also recommend that you regularly do this once a year because new data comes in all the time that can be of interest for you.

It is important that you note the county for a parish

A parish can be in two or more counties. If you note both the parish and its county there will not be any doubts. You can spell a country in your own language. The DISBYT database uses the Swedish spelling for a country and if you have spelled it in your own language it's no problem for me to change it.

Quality stars

Quality in research is important. We therefore now will show how good the basis for the information is. You will see stars after the each note. See table below!

If there is no stars, the reason could be that the data was submitted a long time ago. We have also had som problems with missing info. If you re-submit your data, it will be correct the next time.

Benefits if you submit more data

Benefits for those of you who have submitted more data If you have submitted info on at least 200 persons the last year, you will get a browsing function where you can browse between the same person submitted by different researchers. This function works if there are birth records. If you have submitted info on at least 1000 persons the last two years, you will be able to see an ancestor chart in four generations.

	Quality level
-	Only year exists
*	Date exists
**	Source reference exists
***	Source reference with volume number exists
****	Source reference with volume and page number exists



*The Alliance, from left: Fredrik Reinfeldt, Maud Olofsson, Jan Björklund and Göran Hägglund.
Photo: Erik Bratthall*

American heritage in Swedish politics

Since last fall, Sweden has a new government. After a decade of social democrat ruling, we now have a conservative government. Four parties are sharing the power and call themselves the Alliance. The prime minister is Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Conservative party (Moderaterna). Maud Olofsson of the Center party (long time ago the farmer party - Centerpartiet), Göran Hägglund of the Christ democrat party (Kristdemokraterna) and Jan Björklund of the Liberal party (Folkpartiet) are the party leaders of the Alliance.

During the last year, the Alliance has tried to reform both the employment politics as well as the tax politics. However, there has been a lot of fuss about the leading politicians not paying their television license, using help with the household without paying tax for the work, building houses without proper permits and earning money on Russian stocks while negotiating with the Russians. I think it is typical for Sweden, and perhaps wouldn't be such a big deal in other countries.

I can't help to see some resemblance with Seinfeld. It is easy to understand that Fredrik Reinfeldt would be Jerry Seinfeld. Maud Olofsson, the only woman of the party leaders resembles Elaine. Then I am little bit more insecure about who would be George Costanza and Cosmo Kramer, but I tend to think that Göran Hägglund would be Kramer.

Last summer, before the election, Ted Rosvall was asked by the Swedish television to do a family tree for Fredrik Reinfeldt. It appeared that the great grandfather of Fredrik Reinfeldt was born illegitimate. Ted didn't tell anything about that to Swedish television, but a month later the evening paper Aftonbladet (a social democrat paper) had found out the true story about the father to Fredrik's great grandfather.

His name was John Henry Hood and he was a American circus manager from New York. He stayed in Sweden between 1880 and 1884, and went then to England. He had a flee circus, showed a mermaid and other hokus pokus. With Emma Dorotea Reinfeldt, he had a son John Reinfeldt born 1882.

OLOF CRONBERG

John Hood in London, England 1885. Photo by Edward Sharp. Photo: Stockholms stadsmuseum



The Iron Industry in Sweden

While researching my genealogy, I found ancestors who had worked in the iron industry in Sweden. Many people told me stories to help me better understand the kinds of lives they had led, and I tried to understand Swedish language websites on it, but it was hard to find much written information in English on what the iron industry had been like in Sweden and what that had meant to my ancestors' lives. Hopefully this article, even with its many generalities, will help others who have also found they had ancestors in the iron industry and want to know more.

Sweden is a country rich in iron ore. For millennia, farmers used the ore found in bogs and lakes throughout Sweden to make iron for personal and local use and for trade. About a thousand years ago, ore also began to be mined, especially in the Bergslagen region in Dalarna.

Creating iron

To create iron, the ore is roasted and broken into pieces, then mixed with charcoal, made from slow-baked timber, and limestone and heated in a furnace (masugn) to bake out the impurities. This kind of iron is termed 'pig-iron' (tackjärn). Pig-iron has a very high percentage of coal, about 4%, and is very brittle and hard to work. The percentage of coal must be decreased to make it forgeable; this was done by reheating the pig iron and hammering out coal to harden the iron into 'bar iron' (stångjärn). This was shaped into a long bar that could be traded or from which

objects like nails, farm implements and anchors could be fabricated. Bar iron had about 0.5% coal and was quite malleable.

Seasonal process

During the medieval period and later, the iron-making process was seasonal. Charcoal was made in the autumn and mining done in the winter when the farmer's family members were not needed in the fields. Iron ore was gathered in the winter when the lakes were frozen; this was also the time when ore, charcoal and iron could be easily transported by sleigh across frozen lakes and land. The water that powered the bellows and hammers was most plentiful and powerful in the spring and autumn, so that was when iron was made. As ore and charcoal were precious resources, dependent on family labor, each family had only a small amount of each, and thus the smelting

furnaces (hytta) were only needed by each family for a few weeks each year. Neighbors often erected, maintained and shared the use of a furnace to save resources. These iron-making farmers were called bergsmän. Because the iron brought extra income to the family, bergsmän households often had more children and larger farmsteads than regular farmers.

Better control

Unregulated bergsmän-made pig iron and bar iron was of inconsistent quality, however. The Crown decided in the late 16th century/early 17th century to make better use of Sweden's iron resources by investing capital in the system and by better controlling iron production. It was thought that having more oversight of especially bar iron production, would increase the quality level the most.



The masugn in Åryd, Hemmesjö parish, Kronobergs län, just outside of Växjö.



The office building of Sävsjöströms bruk, Lenhovda parish, Kronobergs län.

Select nobles, high military officials and wealthy merchants were given the right to erect ironworks (järnbruks/bruks) and produce a fixed amount of bar iron; these ironworks owners were called 'brukspatron'. Almost 90% of the bar iron they produced was exported abroad, primarily to England and later America. Bergsmän were legally allowed to continue to make only pig iron, not bar iron; in reality, they continued to make both. These systems, the local and the 'proto-industrial ironworks' model, I'll call it, existed in parallel. However, through the 17th and early 18th centuries, many bergsmän became indebted to ironworks when unable to repay loans. They were forced to sell their iron-making rights to the ironworks, and their role in the system diminished.

Iron Working as a Trade

The roles and responsibilities of the proto-industrial iron workers were laid out in regulations set down by the Bergskollegium, an organization dedicated to the oversight and regulation of all aspects of the iron industry, from mining to production and sales, which was begun in 1637. The Bergskollegium also ran the 'Bergsting', a court that ruled on any disputes within the iron industry, including employment issues, ownership problems, and technical aspects of production. The Bergskollegium was in existence until 1857, though the 'Bergsting' ended in 1827.

The guild system

The trades were organized on the guild system, whereby boys entered the works as apprentices (lärling/dräng/lärodräng/köldräng) at age 12-15, worked their way up to journeyman (gesäll), then became assistants to the master (mästersven) and eventually masters (mästare). These roles were somewhat fluid, however, as a journeyman in one parish book could be an apprentice in another. One master worked with a team that included an assistant and several apprentices and journeymen. In a smithy, two masters and their teams could share a forge.

The masters

The master had the most prestige and the most responsibility. His elevated status can be seen in the records of his childrens' births, where the ironworks owner or the clerk of the works (bokhållare) were often noted as godparents. However, the quantity and quality of the iron and thus the long-term viability of the works sat directly on the master's shoulders. For instance, if the master of the blast furnace did not accurately gauge when the pig iron was ready to come out of the furnace, a week's worth of work for a team of men, as well as the ore and charcoal, etc. it took to make the iron, would all be lost. Masters were skilled craftsmen acting almost like good bakers, not just following a recipe, but understanding how to change the ingredients and conditions to make with the best product; they were thought to

also have a little magic. Good masters were highly valued, both by their peers and the ironworks' owners.

Long hours

Iron work was not year-round work. Supplies of raw materials and water-power were both limited. Some ironworks only made iron or worked bar iron 10-20 weeks per year, though others worked longer. When they were working, however, the men worked 6 days/week, 24 hours/day, on four, six or twelve hour shifts; heating the furnaces took a lot of charcoal, and it made no sense to let the furnaces cool down once they got going. The furnaces were extremely hot, so men often had two work smocks, one in which to work and to sweat, the other, a dry one, in which to rest. Work was accompanied by singing, which was also the way information about the iron-making and methods was passed on from one generation to the next.

Dangerous work

The forges and furnaces with their extremes of temperature and strenuous labor, were dangerous, and accidents were not uncommon. Additionally, the constant exposure to charcoal dust affected workers' lungs, and the pounding of the hammer often led to early deafness for blacksmiths. Men sometimes retired as early as their 40's, though others continued to work into their 60's.

When they retired, they sometimes stayed on at the bruk or moved to a small nearby farm (torp). Widows were paid a small amount by the iron workers' association (Bergskollegium), but it was never really enough. Elderly members of blacksmithing families were often noted in the parish records as poor (fattig).

The Iron Working Lifestyle

(Brukskultur)

Iron-working communities and families were separated in many ways from their agrarian neighbors. This separation evolved into a unique iron-working lifestyle, called 'Bruks kultur'. Many factors contributed to the separation, including their work schedule, their physically separate communities, their mobility of residence/workplace, their

surnames, and occasionally, their language.

The masugn

A bruk/masugn consisted of many buildings and functions, forming a semi-self-sufficient community, a campus of sorts: the blast furnace, if there was one; the hammersmithy; another smithy if the works forged the bar iron into knives or tools; a charcoal storage building; and a finished iron storage building. Additionally, depending on the size of the works, one could also find a mill and a bakery, a woodworking shop, a cobbler's, a tailor's, etc., and housing for the workers. Housing for unmarried apprentices was sometimes with the master and sometimes with the other single young men, barracks-style, depending on the size of the works and the era.

The higher one's position, the larger one's allotted amount of garden land, number of animals, and size of home. For instance, a master hammersmith's house had two rooms, a kitchen and a main room, as well as a storehouse, a small barn for cows with a hayloft, two cows and either land to grow hay for them or feedstuff for them, and a small amount of land for a garden.

The works owner typically had a manor house near the ironworks, and young daughters of the iron-workers often spent a year or two working there as



Single workers house at Lessebo bruk, Lessebo parish, Kronobergs län

a servant. Each works included farmland and woods surrounding it, whose tenant farmers often had to pay their annual rent in charcoal. As ironworks were heavy charcoal users, the works were purposefully located apart from each other to reduce the burden on the surrounding forests; the Crown did not want Sweden's forests to disappear.

Mobile workers

Iron workers were more mobile than the majority of Swedes, as they often traveled between bruks/masugns as apprentices and journeymen to gain experience. As assistants or masters, they moved to better their position or at the request of an ironworks owner, who often owned several works and needed one master's expertise at a different works that he owned. These bruks were sometimes close to each other but could also be in completely different parts of the country. There was even movement to and from the bruks/masugns in Finland, which was part of Sweden until 1809.

When a smith wanted to move to another works, he had to give notice in March and could only move on Saint Mikael's Day, September 29th. The master smiths often had debts to the ironworks for necessities he bought in the shop owned by the iron works. In order for the smith to move, the owner of his new works had to pay off this debt, and the smith started his new job with a debt to his new employer.

Essential to the nation

Another factor differentiating iron workers from farmers was freedom from military service; their work was deemed essential to the nation. However, they did not have any representation in Parliament, which the farmers had. Language in some instances kept the two groups separate, as well. In the early 1600's, the Crown invited protestant iron workers from southern Belgium/northern France, called Walloons (Valloner), to move to Sweden with their latest iron-working/making methods. Some works tended to remain 'Walloon' works, and French continued to be spoken at them through the 19th century.

Surname traditions

Surnames also differentiated iron-workers from farmers. Sometimes they took names handed down from iron-working or soldier fathers, and other times an iron-worker would choose a new surname when he became a master. Women in some locations and times used their father's surname as their own, while at other times women used only their patronym. Wives of highly respected masters could be called by their husband's surnames and titled Madam, though it was rare. The family surnames was often taken by illegitimate children of iron-workers' daughters, as well, to get around their lack of patronym.

The separation between ironworks and farm was strengthened by the fact that sons often inherited the trade from their father and passed it on to their

Further Information

Ecomuseum Bergslagen (English/Swedish/German):

<http://www.ekomuseum.se/english/index.html>

Historical information under 'Want to know more?'. Also information on many individual bruks and masugns in Bergslagen.

Järnriket (Swedish only):

<http://www.jarnriket.com/>

Many articles on iron-making history and culture with many images

Sweggate (English):

<http://www.sweggate.com>

Dictionary of iron-working terms

sons. There was movement into and out of the trade, of course. Soldiers and other landless men could often be found entering the works as day laborers or marrying into the trade; sons occasionally married landed farmers' daughters and left to farm; and more commonly, daughters of iron-workers married farmers and left the iron works. Usually, however, the sons of iron-workers married the daughters of iron-workers, keeping the trade and culture in the family.

Conclusion

Iron-making at masugns and bruks in Sweden was more than simply an industry. Thousands of men and their families spent their lives within the system of the bruks kultur for more than 300 years, proud of their abilities and passing their knowledge down from father to son. The iron industry in Sweden faded in the 19th century after England learned how to make high-quality iron from its own coal, and Sweden's iron lost its competitive edge. With it went not only an economic engine for the country but a way of life.

KELLY KEEGAN



Winter Time

The making of a magazine takes time. My ambition was that this issue should be ready by August, and now it is already Winter time. Although great ambitions, reality limits the day to 24 hours and the week to 7 days.

It would be nice to get some input from you as a reader. Should we try to produce a magazine with fewer pages more often? Should we use a simpler

layout? Do you want to help out with the work just for fun?

Are you satisfied with the content? If not, what should we write about? Do you want to write about something?

Please let us know what you think. Send an email to editor@dis.se

OLOF CRONBERG

DIS Society

Computer Genealogy Society of Sweden

The DIS SOCIETY was founded in 1980 to "to investigate methods and develop computer tools to support genealogy research, and in general stimulate Swedish genealogy". DIS is an abbreviation of *Datorhjälp i släktforskningen*, which means *Computer Aid in Genealogy*. The abbreviation DIS is used in the Scandinavian countries, where there are sister societies. The DIS SOCIETY is a non-profit organization. There are seven regional DIS Societies working actively throughout Sweden and arranging meetings about several topics in Computer Genealogy. We also have a force of sixty *faddrar*, which are members that are experts giving support and help in the use of different genealogical softwares.

Since 1980, the DIS SOCIETY has developed a genealogical software called DISGEN, which is the leading software in Sweden. The current version is 8.1. Currently, the software is only available in Swedish, but print-outs can be made in several languages including English. The software is easy-to-use and has a good support for source registration, producing print-outs and family books. It also has a unique possibility to link your data to a Swedish map.

Since 1989, the DISBYT database has been used to find connections and exchange data between genealogists. In 1998, the database appeared on the Internet, making it even easier to find relatives. With more than 5000 participants and over 12 million records, the DISBYT database covers a third of the total population who lived in Sweden before 1907.

The DIS SOCIETY publishes a quarterly magazine called DISKULOGEN in Swedish. From 2005, we have extended our efforts to also publish a newsletter in English called ROOTED IN SWEDEN, which is published as a pdf newsletter.

At present (April 2007), the DIS SOCIETY has more than 25,000 members. More than 600 are overseas members.

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Annual fee: USD 15,- incl Rooted in Sweden. USD 20,- incl the Swedish magazine Diskulogen.