

Swedish and Finnish Genealogical Records

Until the late twentieth century, the Lutheran Church, which was the Swedish state church, kept all the birth, death, and marriage records. Until the 1800s all people in Sweden belonged to the Lutheran Church. After that time the Lutheran Church continued to keep track of “dissenters” who joined other churches. Thus, there are no state vital records in Sweden, but only parish records.

Because Finland was part of Sweden for many years, most Finnish records are the same as Swedish records and were often written in Swedish.

Sweden does not have national census records, although some early tax records are called census records, and an index of people living in Sweden in 1890 and 1900 is called a census record. Instead the Lutheran parish ministers kept a record unique to Sweden and Finland called *Husförhörslängd* (clerical survey record or house examination roll). This record is somewhat like a census, but is more detailed. The parish minister visited each member of the parish and recorded whether the person could read and write, knew the Lutheran catechism, and attended Holy Communion. He recorded the names of all household members, and their relationship to the head of the house. In early records that is often the only information given, and very young children were sometimes not recorded. Later records often give birth, marriage, and death dates, the place of birth, when and where people moved, and whether they were vaccinated for smallpox. The record was updated each year and recopied about every five years.

Parish and clerical survey records are on microfilm and can be ordered from the Family History Library. Several companies are publishing these and other Swedish records on the Internet. To see what records are offered and the price to subscribe, go to these websites:

Genline: www.genline.com

SVAR www.svar.ra.se

ArkivDigital www.arkivdigital.se

Ancestry www.ancestry.com.

Genline is available free at Church family history centers.

Because there are no national censuses, and because so many people in Sweden have the same names, you must know the name of your ancestor’s parish in order to do Swedish research. To find this you need to search US and family sources. Old photographs often give clues, since these generally have the name and address of the photography studio. Swedish emigration records are also helpful. Two databases, *Emibas*, and *Emigranten*, with indexes and information about Swedish emigrants are available for purchase on CD. (The Family History Library in Salt Lake City has copies of these. Ask for them at the Scandinavian reference desk.)

After you have located the parish where your ancestor came from, the main records to use are the clerical survey and the birth, death, and marriage records. Follow these steps:

1. Find your ancestor’s birth record. Note the parents’ names and the name of the farm or village where they were living.
2. Using the index at the front or back of the clerical survey record, find the page number of the farm where your ancestors lived and turn to that page. (You may need to search page by page if there is no index.)
3. Find your ancestor’s family by searching all the pages for the farm or village and note the information. The head of the house is listed first and below are household members with their names and relationships to the head.

4. Search for more information in earlier and later clerical survey records.
5. Find family members in the birth, death, and marriage records.
6. Even if you find complete birth information in the clerical survey records, you should search the birth records since the clerical survey record may have copying errors. Also search the birth records for children who may have died in infancy. They are often not found in the clerical survey record.
7. If the family moved from the parish, see if you can find them in the moving in and moving out records (*inflyttningslängder, utflyttningslängder*).
8. If your ancestor was a soldier, he would have been given a soldier name in addition to his patronymic name. His children usually did not take his soldier name. If one soldier died or was discharged, the soldier succeeding him often was given the same soldier name. Therefore, if you find two soldiers named Lindqvist, they likely are not related.

In some parishes, particularly in southern Sweden, early clerical survey records are missing. In that case you may need to use other records, such as the *mantalslängder* (census or tax records) and the *boupppteckningar* (probate records.) Look in the Family History Library Catalog to see whether the probate records for your area are indexed. The *mantals* tax was a head tax that began in the 1600s. The tax records generally list the head of the household, and list by category all the other people in the household who were taxed, generally those who were between the ages of 16 and 63.

Resources for Swedish and Finnish Research

Family History Library, “Finding Records of Your Ancestors, Sweden” and “Finland”
 Johansson, Carl-Erik, *Cradled in Sweden*. The standard guide on how to do Swedish research.
 Thomson, Finn, *Genealogical Guidebook and Atlas of Sweden*. Only parishes are listed on the maps making them easy to locate.

Internet Sources

LDS Scandinavian pioneers: <http://www.xmission.com/~nelsonb/scand.htm>
 Swedish Genealogy from the World Genweb: www.swegate.com/
 DISBYT Swedish Computer Genealogical Society: <http://frigg.abc.se/~disbyt/english/>
 Demografisk Database for Southern Sweden: www.ddss.nu/
 Swedish Roots: www.genealogi.se/roots/
 Swedish-English Dictionary: <http://lexin.nada.kth.se/swe-eng.html>
 Swedish naming practices: http://www.algonet.se/~hogman/Naming%20practice_eng.htm
 Jerry Longstrom’s Links to Swedish and Norwegian Sites: <http://longstrom.com/>
 Links to local historical societies in Sweden: <http://www.hembygd.se/index.asp?lev=1033>

Family Search: www.familysearch.org has many useful sites for Swedish research.
Research Helps has excellent “how to” information about Swedish research. *Vital Records Index* and *International Genealogical Index* have many birth and marriage records extracted from parish registers. The *Family History Library Catalog* has information about records available for each area. You can also find a list of all the parishes in a province by clicking on the name of the province and *View Related Places*.

Some individuals and societies have put indexes to Swedish records and information about local areas on the Internet. Find these by searching for the name of your parish or county.

Some of these are free. Many are listed on www.sweggate.com. You may find others by using a search engine with the name of your parish and a Swedish word such as *genealogi* or *födde*. There are also excellent local sites. Find these by doing a search for your parish or county.

These are useful guides, but you still need to search the original records to make sure that you have found the right ancestor.

Using Anbytarforum

Anbytarforum, part of the Swedish Roots site, is the most important message board for Swedish genealogy. The roots website www.genealogi.se/roots/ has instructions in English. Click <http://genealogi.aland.net/discus/> to go directly to Anbytarforum. Click on *Instructions* to learn how to use this site. You will find *Discussions in English* as one topic; however, this is a general site covering all of Sweden. You will find more pertinent information by going to the parish where your ancestors came from. Do this by clicking on *Landskap*, where you will find instructions in English, and then clicking on the place where your parish is located. Click on *soknar* for discussions on specific parishes. If you are trying to find out where a small place is located, click on *Var ligger platsen*. You can write your question in English and people will respond in English. You can also use the search feature to search the entire message board. Read the English *Instructions* to find out how to do this.