

GENEALOGY IN SWEDEN

By **Analía Montórfano**

During August 2005, I had the opportunity to visit Sweden to attend the annual National Genealogy Congress as a special guest and to represent two genealogical societies- one from Argentina and one from Spain.

This experience allowed me to get acquainted with the way Sweden genealogical organizations are organized, its archives, societies and I even visited the headquarters of the Federation ("*Sveriges Släktforskarförbund*", the Genealogical Federation of Sweden.)

With this report I wish to show you how respectfully they maintain their patrimony (that is the content of the archives, and historical documents). In Argentina we are far from attaining such excellence in the organization and conservation of our archives but it is important to learn how others do it, so as to use that as an example.

The oldest known parish records appeared in Italy. In the XVI century, after the Concilium of Trento, mandatory inscription of people was established for Catholic churches throughout the world. In Sweden, the Church required such registrations in their parishes from 1608 onwards.

The Swedish Church (originally Catholic) became Protestant during the XVI century, coming under the authority of King Gustav Vasa and the State. The existence of other churches or religions was then prohibited. Since the beginning of the XVII century, some bishoprics started to keep a register of their population and, in 1686, the State decided that all bishoprics should do the same, acting as civil and fiscal registries.

This situation persisted until July 1st of 1991, when the Swedish Church (Evangelical Lutheran) separated completely from the State and registering became a function of the National Directory of Fiscal Affairs. In this way the State became secular and in charge of the registration of its citizens, having no further religious commitments.

From the time other religions were allowed in the country, people could opt for civil or religious marriages, since all religions (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, etc.) were given the right to act as official registers.

Given that civil registry was always considered the function of the State, when the responsibility of keeping records was no longer the churches', the original records were sent to the regional archives, with the parishes keeping a copy in microfiches.

Nowadays, one can request searches from the churches, but these are not necessarily required to fulfill those requests.

In Sweden there is a law about the "Right to know". Therefore, anyone has the right to request documents that go from 70 years ago to the present, as long as such access does not interfere with the privacy rights of others.

Microfiches cannot be requested or rented from libraries or genealogical societies, but they can be accessed in person in the Archives. These records can only be checked in the presence Archives staff, who must ensure that confidential or harmful information of others is not retrieved. Likewise, information about personal data of all living inhabitants, such as document numbers, addresses, and marital status can be freely searched for in the computers of the fiscal offices.

Swedish Archives

There are different types of archives throughout Sweden:

- **National Archive**, "*Riksarkivet*" founded October 16th · 1618 by the Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, upon separating it from the Royal Chancellery. It has headquarters in Stockholm and Arninge.
- **SVAR**, With headquarter in Ramsele.
- Regional Archives, "*Landsarkiven*", created early in the XX century, are located in Uppsala, Vadstena, Visby, Lund, Göteborg, Härnösand and Östersund. Also in Värmland, Stockholm.
- **Military Archive**, "*Krigsarkivet*", founded in 1805, with information gathered since the XVI century, located in Stockholm.
- **Emigrants' Institute**, "*Svenska Emigrantinstitutet*", in Växjö.
- **Topographical Archive**, "*Lantmäteriet*". The consulting center is located in Gävle, and there are offices in Karlskrona, Kiruna and Luleå.
- **Riddarhuset**, the "House of Knights" in Stockholm.

Microfilms of parish records up to the beginning of the 20th century were made available to the public libraries by the Swedish State through a free loan. These microfilms were made by the Mormons, who also had left copies at each parish that had their records microfilmed. In 1978, by initiative of the regional archive of Härnösand, a record center was created in Ramsele. A few years later, and given the interest of genealogists, a project was started, under the responsibility of the University of Umeå, to protect the parish books by avoiding direct handling during the searches.

In 1982, "*SVAR*" ("*Svensk Arkivinformation*") was founded, with the task of cataloguing and distributing microfilmed copies of Swedish parish records, whose originals are in the Regional Archives. In 1984 the responsibility went from the University to the National Archive. Later on SVAR decided to stop using microfilms, transferring the archives to microfiche format and also allowing borrowing, upon request, from the communal libraries. All this new activity was due to the fact that, up to that moment, there were only one or two Mormon CHF's in the entire country, which made it difficult for people who lived in far away places to consult these records.

The Ramsele records centre generated the first microfiches and is, at this time, the one in charge of making copies and creating the microfiches of the originals being generated. With this center being located in the forests near Lappland, where a large number of people have lost their jobs due to technological advances that made manual labor redundant, particularly in the forest industry, the making of these microfiches provides work for the unemployed. By doing so, not only are the archives preserved and the genealogists benefited, but also this fulfills a significant social function.

The headquarters of the "*Riksarkivet*", (the National Archive) is in Stockholm, and it has two other centers for genealogical investigation:

- The Arninge Center, in Täby, in the outskirts of Stockholm, where consultations are free and has 60 microfiche readers.
- the Kyrkhult Center, in Blekinge, which functions like a municipality and it is called "*The Genealogists' House*", of Leksand, (more about that later), with 22 microfiche readers, where the fee for viewing is 30 SEK an hour.

At the municipal libraries, one can obtain the catalogues of SVAR, which have 8 indexes with data to locate microfiches for further investigations. These include:

- 1- General information about SVAR.
- 2- Military archives.
- 3- General index: It contains cartographic, taxation and parliamentary archives
- 4- Court archives.
- 5- Parish archives.

With the data from these catalogues, requests are made, filling a form, through the municipal library. The reply comes via mail to the patron's private address. The cost of the rental is 20 SEK per volume and some libraries subsidize part of that.

Each envelope contains a volume, and may contain from one to 30 microfiches, which is the content of a whole volume. Each rental is for five weeks and then the material has to be returned, via mail, to the headquarters of SVAR in Ramsele.

Each municipality has the obligation of having a public library and every one of those must have space dedicated to genealogy, with documentation, books, microfiche readers and microfiches.

Description of other Archives

The "*Military Archive*", "*Krigsarkivet*", contains documents dating from the XVI century, corresponding to military personnel, drawings and description of all types of military equipment and buildings, maps, archives of military history, photographs and much more.

The "*Soenska Emigrantinstitutet*", or "*Emigrants' Swedish Institute*", located in Växjö, was created in 1965 with the purpose, originally, of keeping the archives and memories

corresponding to the period of the major Swedish emigration, between 1846 and 1930. With the growing influx of immigrants during the last decades, the Institute has extended its mission to include documentation of these new residents. In that way, it cooperates with the integration of those who are settling into their new country.

Its archive contains interviews, microfiches of manuscripts, population census, passenger lists, passports records, etc. In addition, it has a library, a museum and a research center. It sponsors conferences and seminars, as well as events, parties and temporary exhibitions on subjects such as emigration, migration and integration.

The "Topographic Archive", or "*Lantmäteriarkivet*", located in Gävle, contains geographic and land property registries in the form of maps, current and old ones (which are for sale in both paper and digital form), aerial photographs and satellite pictures. You can access several of these images from their web page.

Special mention should be made of the *Riddarhuset*; the "House of Knights", located in Stockholm. The headquarters was built by four different architects, between 1641 and 1674, in two wings which were united in 1870 to be used as the administrative and parliamentary seat of the Swedish nobility.

In 1975, with the reform of the Constitution, the right of the king to bestow nobility honors ceased to exist, and the nobility titles definitively ceased to have privileges on April 11, 2003. The last person on whom a title was bestowed, in 1902, was Sven Hedin, a prominent explorer. At this time, the Swedish nobility has approximately 26,200 members, belonging to 2,345 families.

Its members meet every three years and during each meeting they choose the directors for the next period. Each family has one vote, which is cast by its representative. The directors are responsible of administering the activities and properties of the *Riddarhuset*, including the funds earmarked for scholarships and concessions, plus two castles, large forests, and agricultural lands.

An important activity of the *Riddarhuset* is the genealogy department, directed by an in-house Genealogist. His/her responsibility includes putting together genealogical trees of the aristocratic families, which comprise more than half a million people, counting from the medieval era to the present.

This department also has a reference library, open to the public daily from 9AM. to 12.30 PM. This facility is visited every year by numerous historians and genealogists from all over the world. Among the bibliography available there is a large collection of biographies and original documents. Another duty of the genealogy department is to respond to inquiries from other countries about to noble Swedish families.

A new edition of their catalogue, called "*Sveriges Adelskalender*" ("Calendar of Swedish Nobles") is published every three years. Also, semiannually, 15,000 copies of a publication called "*Arte et Marte*" is distributed to the members throughout Sweden.

The Organization Of Genealogy In Sweden

Genealogy in Sweden is handled by the following organizations:

- Societies: groups of local members.
- Associations: organization of Societies.
- The Federation: organization that comprises Societies and Associations.

Societies

There are hundreds of family history societies in Sweden. Some focus on genealogical research of villages and its people. There is a national society that researches blacksmiths, and there are family societies that research the descendants of one person, or those who have the same surname, etc. All of those are legally constituted.

One of the oldest societies is the "*Genealogiska Föreningen*", that is the "Swedish Genealogical Society", founded in 1933, with headquarters in Stockholm. It currently has 2,045 members. It is a society of national relevance and it accepts very thorough articles, and very detailed investigations. At the beginning they investigated traditional, noble and bourgeois families but this concept has changed in the past 25 to 30 years, so the members also research families of neither public significance nor nobility, with the intention of recording all the families that have resided in a particular place.

There is one other much older society, the "*Personhistoriska Samfundet*" (Swedish Society for Personal History), that dates back to 1876, which has 400 members. It is a scientific society whose aim is to promote the study of biographical research. To that end, since 1879 it has produced a publication called "*Personhistorisk tidskrift*" which is published twice a year. Its articles reflect the Swedish society across the centuries, through the fate of individuals or of family groups. Although this is not an exclusively genealogical society, it utilizes this type of investigations as support to recreate the family history of a certain person. I decided to mention it given its age, even if it is not part of the scope of this monograph. That is, the societies affiliated to the "*Sveriges Släktforskarförbund*", the Genealogical Federation of Sweden.

Swedish genealogical societies have large numbers of members, given the great interest for genealogy throughout the country. As an example of a small one, we can mention the "*Ovansiljan*" society, from the province of Dalarna, which at this time has more than 270 members, in spite of representing two communes of low population: Mora, with 20,000 inhabitants, and Orsa, with 7,000 residents.

Among other societies, we can mention "*DIS: Föreningen Datorhjälp i Släktforskningen*" ("Computation Assistance in Genealogy"). It is not a genealogical society per se, but a group of genealogists whose objective is the exchange of experiences with computers. It has become the Swedish society with the largest number of members, with similar organizations sharing the same name, though independent of each other, in Norway and Denmark.

To be admitted in the Federation, the genealogical societies must be open to all those who wish to become members. Those societies of families that do not allow non-family members to join ("closed" societies), cannot become members of the Federation unless they allow membership to those outsiders who do research on those families.

The Boards of Directors are composed of President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer and other members who have specific assignments, such as being responsible for programs, IT, purchasing, etc.

Conferences take place in the Society's headquarters and the members receive a newsletter which is published two to four times a year. Once a year there is a celebration, "The Genealogist Day", with various exhibitions, especially of members' work. Genealogy courses can be taken, but those require the payment of an additional fee.

Each society charges their members a fee, which varies between 50 and 300 SEK a year. And, for each member, societies pay a fix amount of 7 SEK a year.

Associations

Another type of organizations affiliated to the Federation is the "Regional Association". Sweden has 25 provinces and almost all have genealogical societies which, in turn, are grouped in Associations. The one of the Scania province, "*Skånes Genealogiska Förbund*" has 19 affiliated societies. The seven major societies of Dalecarlia are affiliated to the "Dalarnas Släktforskarförbund" (the Genealogical Association of Dalecarlia or Dalarna). Smaller provinces do not have an Association, given that they only have one Society, or even none, to represent them.

The Presidents of each member society meet twice a year. They have no specific tasks but function as contact forums.

Associations also pay the Federation 7 SEK a year for each of the Societies they represent.

The Federation

The Genealogical Federation of Sweden was founded in 1986, and is the kingpin of the genealogical movement in the country. It has a full agenda of activities to promote the knowledge of genealogy as a cultural factor, idealist movement and historical science. It currently has 159 affiliated Societies, with new ones joining every year and it joins together more than 60,000 people, who are members through their respective institutions. The original founders were 20 Societies. The majority of the current societies were created prior to the Federation, with the oldest Societies at the time of affiliation being the "*Genealogiska Föreningen*" (founded in 1933) and the "*Skånes Genealogiska Förbund*" (Scania Genealogical Society), founded in 1937. This last one is, in fact, an Association of the province of Scania and comprises 19 societies.

To belong to the Federation, societies must present their statutes in accordance to what the Federation requires. Some of the requirements are that Societies must be open to all who want to join in, without restrictions, and be exclusively genealogical.

Its most important objectives are:

- . To protect the interests of genealogists, above all concerning actions of the government, or archival and library authorities, whether national or regional.
- . To support and to provide information to affiliated entities.
- . To promote genealogical education.
- . To publish high quality genealogical literature.
- . To promote the development of technical devices and other means, such as publications or genealogical programs, by means of subsidies or legal or technical support.
- . To keep in touch and cooperate with equivalent organizations, both inside and outside the country.

The Federation distributes to each society a yearbook which contains genealogical studies, heraldic articles, etc., a bimonthly publication, the "*Släkthistoriskt Forum*", and the pamphlet "*Svenska Antavlor*", which is published twice a year.

From its web page one can access "*Rötter*" (Roots), a virtual journal, and general portal to all specialized sections, and "*Anbytarforum*" (Ancestry Exchange Forum), a forum with 150 to 250 daily exchanges. Both services are open for consultations, and are free of charge.

In the virtual store of the same web page, one can buy books, CDs / DVDs, genealogical tables, and computer programs to store documents. Members of the affiliated entities get a discount.

Among other services available to the associated members are those that cover travel expenses above 300 SEK, of each representative who must attend the annual meeting.

Between entities and the Federation, hundreds of activities are organized throughout the year, all over the country.

Activities And Projects

Annual Meeting - Genealogy days.

The meeting of the Federation takes place once a year in August, in a rented exhibition hall, within the frame of a Fair, and a Genealogic Congress. The attendance is about 7,000 visitors.

Every society that belongs to the Federation sends one delegate for every 300 members, two if they have 600 members and three if the membership is larger than that. The travel and boarding expenses are covered by the Societies. If the transportation expense is above 300 SEK, the Federation covers the difference. The attendance is of about 200 to 300 representatives.

Three or four years in advance, the Societies interested in organizing this event present their projects. The decision regarding the location is made two years before the event. In 2005 it took place in Goteborg and in 2006 it will be organized by the Swedish Genealogic Society, in Stockholm, in celebration of the 20th anniversary of its creation.

The talks and conferences have to deal with different subjects every year. These have been the ones chosen in the past few years:

2001: From the old traveling salesmen to current catalog buying.

2002: The importance of immigration to Sweden.

2003: Land and sea. Farmers, sailors, fishermen, stonecutters.

2004: Diversity - Open themes.

2005: The door to the West (about Goteborg's history)

There are exhibitors stands from different companies and organizations, manufacturers of microfiches, microfiche readers, genealogy and computer programs in general.

There are representatives of the Mormons, the National Archive, regional archives, societies from all over the country and also from neighbouring countries, who sell their publications, posters on how to put together genealogy trees, etc. Each stand pays a very low fee to rent the space.

A numbered catalogue is available for sale to the visitors. That catalogue number allows them to participate in a drawing.

Roughly, a program for these events looks as follows:

Fridays: Meeting of Presidents, webmasters, publications editors and teachers. Excursion for non member guests. Informal dinner for Presidents.

Saturday: Meeting and Fair inauguration. Conferences open to the public, according to subject. In the afternoon, representatives assembly and excursion for non member guests. Formal dinner for the Assembly (requires payment). In 2002 the inauguration was presided by Theodor Kallifatides, a Greek-Swedish author. In 2003, that was done by the Minister of Culture, Leif Pagrotsky.

Sunday: Closing of the Fair, conferences, raffles and a show to close the Meeting.

Other Meetings

An Encounter of Functionaries usually takes place during March. About 70 people attend it. The representatives of the Genealogical Societies are not necessarily their Presidents.

There, subjects that were not brought up during the Annual Assembly are discussed. For example, in 2005 these were about the standards for the review of the parish records, archives, etc. created by each society.

The Genealogists' House

In 1992, four of the five communes that belong to the province of Dalecarlia: Leksand, Mora, Rättvik and Älvdalen, plus the Dalfolk Society, formed a union with the idea of creating a source of work for the unemployed and for those with mild disabilities. These communes, which are located around Lake Siljan (the 5th commune, which did not join the project, is Orsa) granted a subsidy of several million kronas to create a foundation.

With that money they bought the fiches that contain the microfilms done by the Mormons who, as previously mentioned, had given a copy to the State .

The Board of Directors is comprised of one representative from each commune plus a representative of the society that had the original idea for the union, that is the "*Dalfolk*" one. (Genealogic Society of Leksand and Rättvik). Each communal representative is chosen by its parliament.

This Society does not belong to the Federation for two reasons: The project is municipal and it is closed (it doesn't allow other members than the existing ones: the four communes and the Dalfolk Society.)

The access is open. Any person can use the facilities for the purpose of investigation, paying a fee of 50 SEK/hour or 150 SEK for 4 hours.

Some Publications

Swedish Societies publish magazines and books, and produce CDs, etc.

1 - Magazines: These societies publish their genealogical studies, short articles, didactic advice, stories, genealogical programs and other subjects of interest to genealogists. These are some examples of magazines:

- a- Dalicardia's province has seven major societies and each one publishes its own magazine, as follows:

- 1- Folkare Genealogical Society (South of the province. It's composed of three municipalities) Magazine *Ansiktet*.
 - 2- Västerbergslagens Genealogical Society (West, composed of three municipalities) Magazine *Släktforskaren*
 - 3- Genealogical Society of Släkt & Bygd (Center of the province. Municipality of Borlänge) . Magazine *Tunarötter*.
 - 4- Falun Genealogical Society (It is the capital, East of the province) Magazine *Fahlu Släktforskarblad*
 - 5- Genealogical Society of Dalfolk (Corresponding to Leksand and Rättvik, South of the lake) Magazine *Dalfolk*.
 - 6- Ovensiljans Genealogical Society (North, communes of Mora and Orsa) Magazine *Genklang* (meaning Echo).
 - 7- Genealogical Society of Gagnef (Center of the province, municipality of Gagnef) founded in 2004. They do not have a magazine yet.
- b- The descendants of Finnish immigrant have their own society, the "Finnsam Society". They publish the Magazine *Finnsam*, which is not exclusively genealogical.

All these magazines can only be purchased from the societies that publish them.

2 - Books: There are many publications in book format, which serve as complement to the genealogists.

These are some of the books published recently:

Släktforska steg för steg, by Per Clemensson and Kjell Andersson. *Searching genealogies, step by step*.

Släktforskning - vägen till den egen historia av Elisabeth Thorsell. *Genealogy - Road to your history. Läsebok för släktforskare*, by Henrik Anderö och Elisabeth Thorsell. *Reading book for Genealogists* (includes paleography)..

Latin för släktforskare, by Jorge Lintrup. *Latin for Genealogists*.

Släktforskningens mysterium, by Ewa Johansson. *The mysteries of the genealogy*.

Prästens lilla kråka. Tio praktikfall för släktforskare, by Kjell Lindblom och Elisabeth Thorsell. Brief notes from the Pastor. *Ten practical cases for genealogists*.

3- CDs: No doubt this is the major achievement of the Swedish publications. They include documentation of deaths, census, emigrants, Town Hall archives, by neighborhoods, of Stockholm. These allow for searches in various fields. Some of these are:

Sveriges befolkning 1890/1900. Registry of dwellings, with data of about 10 million people.

Sveriges befolkning 1970: census, with data of about 8 million people..

Sveriges befolkning 1980, with data of about 8.3 million people.

Sveriges dödbok 1947-2003, Deaths in Sweden, of about 5 million people.

Emibas, registry of emigrants between 1840 and 1939, of about 1.1 million people.

Rosenberg, topographic registry of all Sweden in 1893

Moraskivoan, deaths and marriages in Mora, Dalecarlia, from 1650 to 1930, 82,000 people.

Släktdata, Various registries sent by genealogists, mainly from the Southwest of Sweden.

Internet Searches

Records

Swedish genealogy also offers various services and information via the Web. The most important ones are:

Genline, databases of parish books scanned up to 1890 all around the country. At this time 14.5 million pages are available from almost all the parishes. It is expected that the information will be completed next year. A fee is charged for searches.

SVAR: census of 1890/1900, records of freed prisoners with photographs from the XIX century, records of merchant marines, etc. There is a fee, by subscription, to search those, but access to the guides to church, military and judicial records is free.

Rötter: records of those sentenced to death (link "Avrättade"), of tombstones more than 50 years old (link "Gravstenar") of people from Lappland, of the entire country. There is also a catalogue of genealogists (link "Forskarkatalogen",) where anybody can register. All the searches are free.

Central Registry of Soldiers, comprises 24 entities (museums, Societies, physical persons, etc.) that work compiling data on the recruitment lists of the army, navy. It includes information about their families, work, housing, etc., with the object of creating a complete register of the lives and situation of each soldier (not officers), until the beginning of the XX century. The search for names is free and open, but there is a fee for the complete microfiche.

Archive of antique photographs, in the web page of Rötter (link "Porträttfynd"). There is an archive of 50,000 portraits, type "carte de visit"¹ and "cabinet"² which are published with the purpose of being identified, or for free consultations by other interested parties. These are sorted by provinces, villages and photographers.

At the National Archive and the regional archives one can access free of charge all the archives that have a fee when accessed on-line.

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Resumé

<http://www.apellidositalianos.com.ar/curriculum.htm>

¹ End of XIX century format (10.7 x 6.3 cm)

² After the "carte de visit" (10.5 x 16.5 cms)

Bibliography:

Riksarkivet (The National Archives)

<http://www.ra.se/>

SVAR - "Svensk Arkivinformation"

<http://www.svar.ra.se/>

Krigsarkivet (The Military Archives of Sweden)

<http://www.ra.se/KRA/english.html>

Svenska Emigrantinstitutet, Växjö (The Swedish Emigrant Institute)

<http://www.swemi.nu/eng/>

Lantmäteriet (Topographic Archive)

<http://www.lantmateriet.se/>

Riddarhuset (The House of Nobility)

<http://www.riddarhuset.se/>

Genealogiska Föreningen (Sweden Genealogical Society)

<http://www.genealogi.net/>

Personhistoriska Samfundet (The Swedish Society for Personal History)

<http://www.personhistoriskasamfundet.se/>

Skånes Genealogiska Förbund (Genealogical Society of Scania)

<http://www.sgf.m.se/english/>

Släktforskarnas Hus (The House of Genealogy)

<http://www.genhouse-sweden.com/sidor/indexe.html>

Dalarnas Släktforskarförbund (Genealogy Association of Dalarna)

<http://www.genealogi.se/dalarna/welcome.htm>

Sveriges Släktforskarförbund (Federation of Swedish Genealogical Societies)

<http://www.genealogi.se/>

Genline

<http://www.genline.se/>

(The Central Soldiers Register)

<http://soldat.dis.se/>

DIS: Föreningen Datorhjälp i Släktforskningen (Computer Genealogy Society of Sweden)

<http://www.dis.se/denindex.htm>

The Federation's Bookstore

<http://www.genealogi.se/forbund/bokhandeln/>

<http://www.genealogi.se/dalarna/latin1.htm>