

# Swedish Roots in Oregon

## An Immigration Research Project



June 2017 Newsletter

Editor: Rhonda Erlandson

Volume 35

### Homecomings

by Rhonda Erlandson



[Swedishrootsinoregon.org](http://Swedishrootsinoregon.org)

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SRIO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Your donation is tax deductible and supports research into the lives and history of Swedish immigrants in Oregon.

*Glad midsommar!* As you enjoy this year's midsummer festivities at Oaks Park, I will be enroute to Sweden, traveling with my dear friend and former SRIO board member, Ingeborg Dean. We will begin our journey up north just a little ways below the Arctic Circle in the small city of Lycksele. In this area I have many cousins and friends I've not seen since my last trip to Sweden in 1981! This will be a genuine homecoming for me. From there, we will travel to the core region of the nation where Ingeborg grew up. On Midsummer Day, we will celebrate in the *gammalgård* of the historic city of Borlänge, Ingeborg's hometown in the heart of Dalarna. Our time in Sweden will also include a pilgrimage to Strångsjö about an hour's drive from Katrineholm in Södermanland. Here we will visit the ancestral home of C. J. Larson who is the protagonist of SRIO's latest book, ***Across Sixteen Countries*** (copies available today at SRIO's Midsummer table and always on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com))

At the moment however I'm still here in Portland anticipating my upcoming trip and beginning to think seriously about packing. What are the things I should take with me? Certainly, I want to travel light. As I contemplate which items will travel along with me, I can't help but wonder how my grandparents and my father chose what to take along when they emigrated from Sweden in 1948. What were the things that would give them some sense of *hemma* in the new land so far from home? Among the household goods that crossed the Atlantic in the simple wooden trunk my grandfather built for the journey, were some rather improbable objects that must have had enormous sentimental value. One of these was an ordinary, inexpensive vase that my father had given to his mother as a gift when he was a little boy. Who knows what the occasion was, but obviously my grandmother could not part with it. I still have that vase in my home today. Another object was a cast iron bell forged in Mora that hung around the neck of a beloved horse that would stay behind on the family's small farm in Vägsele. That bell hung in my own home until recently when I donated it to the collection of artifacts at Fogelbo, Ross Fogelquist's historic home located adjacent to Nordia House.

This June, I will reunite briefly with another Erlandson family treasure that was made in Sweden by my grandfather's brother, Gottner, just as WWII was coming to an end. The item is a charming little sewing chest that Gottner made for his mother, Karin Erlandsson (my great grandmother). The chest stands about 3 feet tall on skillfully scrolled legs and is painted in the quintessential Nordic rosemaling style. Lifting the chest's lid reveals Karin's name lovingly painted in fine script and dated 1945. This treasure traveled to America in the 1960's, and returned to its original home in Norrland almost 50 years later.

I originally met the sewing chest when I was 16 years old and traveling to Sweden for the first time with my great aunt Ruth and her husband Clarence Ellison. I spent the summer in the old house where my father was born, and in my little room upstairs under the eaves sat this lovely little piece of serviceable furniture that had belonged to my great grandmother. Curious, I looked through its little drawers and nooks and crannies and found another treasure: a postcard to Grandmother Karin written by my father when he was about my age at the time, a teenager on his way to a new home in America. The post card featured a photo of *Kungliga Slottet* in Stockholm where my father had already traveled further than he ever dreamed. In the last hours in his homeland, he was thinking of his *farmor* in Norrland and sending her his love and farewell. What struck me was that only a week before, when I had arrived in Stockholm so many years after my father had departed the city, I sent a postcard to Dad and Mom depicting the very same view of the royal palace! The postcard my father had sent to his grandmother was in black and white. The one I sent to my parents was in color. Many changes had occurred over the years, yet here we were coming around full-circle.

As that summer of my first visit to Sweden came to a close, my aunt Ruth decided to take the little sewing chest back to America with her where, for several years, she enjoyed it in her beautiful home in Warren, OR. When she passed away in 1987, the chest was given to me. For many years I cherished it in my own home until recently I felt compelled to send it back to its true home. Thanks to the generosity of Lars Nordstrom who made room for it in his shipping container when he remigrated to Sweden in 2015, the little chest is back home in the same northern village where Karin lived and raised her six children, three of whom would eventually emigrate to the United States. Although Karin has many great grandchildren today (and even a great-great-great baby granddaughter !), her only primary grandchildren still living are my father and his cousin Britta.

By the time you read this, I will be with Britta and Great Grandmother Karin's sewing chest one more time. No doubt Britta and I will reminisce together and wonder about the things that travel with us and the homecomings so dear to our hearts.



***Britta Wikström reunited with her grandmother's sewing chest in her home near Lycksele, Sweden***







# THE GENEALOGY CORNER

## THREE SWEDISH GENEALOGY FREE SOURCES

### Available in Swedish and English

by Ann Stuller


**DDSS**  
Demographical Database for Southern Sweden

  
Print 

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### Demographical Database for Southern Sweden

Our long-range aim is that all churchrecords concerning birth, marriage and death from Skåne, Blekinge and Halland will be registered and free of charge to search on the Internet. To a large extent the churchrecords covers the years 1650-1900.



Halland  
Blekinge  
Skåne

Which parishes are registered?  
Click on the map!

**The dumb accommodated man Måns Håkansson**  
Had, according to the preast, a bound toungue that could not discover the thoughts of his heart, in spite of this, his heart spoked by gentle expressions and acts, and he meant well and lovedboth God and people.  
[Read more](#)

Records in database: **1 592 282**  
Photographed churches: **394**  
[Curiosities from the database \\*](#)  
[Corrections received \\*](#)

Principal: [The Swedish National Archives](#), [Archives in Lund](#)

Website last updated: 2016-12-20  
Contact us: [ddss@riksarkivet.se](mailto:ddss@riksarkivet.se)

[www.ddss.nu](http://www.ddss.nu) consists of birth, marriage, and death records for Swedes living in Halland, Blekinge, and Skåne between 1650 and 1900. The database is a work in progress with over one and a half million records. A nice addition to this site is a collection of over 300 photos of local churches. The homepage opens in Swedish but clicking on the British flag in the upper right hand corner brings up an English version should that be necessary.

# ANNO 1890

## The Swedish Census 1890

- Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Västernorrland, Jämtland and  
Värmland counties



Produced by **The National Archives/SVAR** and **The Research Archives in Umeå**

More than 22.400.000 documents have been fetched from this site since march 1998

[About Anno 1890](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Västerbotten](#)

[Norrbotten](#)

[Jämtland](#)

[Västernorrland](#)

[Värmland](#)

[Svensk version](#)

The Swedish Census 1890  
<http://www.foark.umu.se/census>

The Research Archives, Umeå University Library  
<http://www.foark.umu.se>

[www.foark.umu.se](http://www.foark.umu.se) gives access to the 1890 Swedish census in the northern part of the country: Västerbotten, Norrbotten, Jämtland, and Västernorrland. Also included is Värmland. This database is made available through the University of Umeå. Should you need census information from other years or other regions, SRIIO genealogists may be able to assist:

[genealogy@swedishrootsinoregon.org](mailto:genealogy@swedishrootsinoregon.org)

## Centrala Soldatregistret

Soldiers name		Family name	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Birth year	Death year	Enlisted	Discharged
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Regiment		Company	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
File		Parish	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
<input type="button" value="Search"/>		<input type="button" value="Clear"/>	

Search Tips



[www.soldatreg.se](http://www.soldatreg.se) is a database of soldiers from 1682 to 1901. It is a registry which is a combined effort of volunteers and Linköping University. It, too, is a work in progress and is being constantly updated.

***Happy hunting!***

## Do you enjoy genealogy and appreciate its value for Oregon's Swedish heritage?

If so, please consider volunteering for SRIO's database project. We are currently working through the 1940 census, extracting vital family information on Swedish immigrants to Oregon and entering that data into the Swedish American Heritage Online database (SweAme).

Go to **SwedishRootsinOregon.org** and click on Genealogy. There you'll find a link to **SweAme-Oregon** as well as an email address for contacting SRIO's genealogists.

# MEET DAVID BORG

## Founder of

# Swedish American Heritage Online

by David Anderson



The databases for Swedish Roots in Oregon consists of three trees, or databases. They are found on the Swedish America Heritage Online website: <http://www.sweame.org/gateway/gateway.html> The goal of the website is for educational and historical research and digitally preserved data and images of the ancestors and descendants of Swedish American emigrants. These are lofty goals, but then David Borg does not shy away from projects put before him. In October 2006 he attended a Swedish VASA club meeting in Austin, Texas and came across a book published in 1994 about Swedes in Texas. He began to scan the book in order to make it available on CDs. After scanning 1200 pages he thought why not share the book on the internet and so began his search for appropriate software. In May 2007 he uploaded *The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding* onto Simply Hosting Internet Services in Chicago. What began as a website devoted to Swedes in Texas recording 5200 individuals has grown into databases recording over 1.2 million people!

In November 2010 David founded SweAme (Swedish America Heritage Online) a non-profit company that oversees the database and now translation services!



David's two grandfathers were Swedish immigrants, and in total 14 of his Swedish ancestors settled in Texas where he was born in 1942 in Taylor, TX. When he was a youngster his family moved to Austin where he attended public schools and attended a Swedish American church, the First Evangelical Free Church. After high school he joined the US Air Force and eventually worked with radar systems. After release from the Air Force in January 1965 he began work with McDonnell Aircraft Company as a computer programmer. In August 1970 he graduated from the University of Southern Illinois, Edwardsville, and eventually worked with EDS (Electronic Data Systems) where he retired in 2000.

David became interested in genealogy in 1990 when his mother collected data on his Borg and Carlson ancestors. His third trip to Sweden is in June 2017!

I have had the pleasure of working directly with David for several years now as a result of adding information to SRIO's databases. He even went so far as to locate and photograph my Grandfather's grave in Texas County, Missouri! We had the pleasure of finally meeting in person in my home town of Ferndale in May 2017.



***David Borg***

***Read David's blog posts at <http://sweame.blogspot.com/>***

## **DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?**

If you have a story about your Swedish ancestors' journey to settle in Oregon,  
we would love to hear it!

Go to [SwedishRootsinOregon.org](http://SwedishRootsinOregon.org) and click on the **Stories tab**.  
There you'll see many fascinating stories SRIO has collected to share  
with the greater Swedish community in Oregon.

# ***Hemma***

*by Ingeborg Dean*



***Ingeborg with her brother Tord Nygren and sister Anita Anderson  
at Tord's home near Gnesta, Södermanland.***

It is now 2017 and fifty-three years have gone by since I emigrated to America. I arrived in New York on a June morning in 1964 onboard the ship *Queen Elizabeth*. It had been a five-day, thoroughly enjoyable voyage on calm waters from Southampton, England, and I was fortunate to have become part of a group of twelve young people from as many countries, who spontaneously decided to spend our time on the Atlantic together. However, after five days on the ocean everybody longed to see land again, and my new friends and I congregated on deck in the early hours of the morning with the other passengers to watch the *Queen Elizabeth* glide under the Staten Island Bridge and on to the emotionally charged view of the Statue of Liberty! For a moment we could sense a little of what that sight had elicited in the millions of immigrants who had chosen to build new lives in America. Very likely some of those immigrants were relatives of ours. In my case I knew of two great uncles and a great aunt, and there were several others also. In my childhood there would be visitors from America many summers, and oh, did those people seem special! In the 1960's we travelers on the *Queen Elizabeth* were latecomers and immigrants with a much less demanding set of plans. One decisive difference was that we all knew we could easily go back to our home country whenever longing (*hemlängtan*) became too hard to live with.

I had all of \$200 in my purse when I arrived in America! It was no doubt a lot more than my relatives had when they came around sixty years earlier, but is a frightening thought now. After disembarking and having my travel documents checked and approved, I somehow found my way to a Greyhound bus station and from there continued south to Washington, D.C., where I wanted



to live. One of the reasons for that decision was that I was in love with a young American, who attended a nearby university. Another reason was that I had a friend in Washington who had moved there from San Francisco, where I had worked a year earlier as an *au pair*/nanny. My friend was a young African-American woman and in the mid 1960's, Washington was a heavily segregated city. There certainly was a lot for me to learn. In 1964, my friend was surprised to see a black bus driver park across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. In 2008, Barack Obama became president and, very likely, most bus drivers in Washington, D.C. were black men and women.

About four years after settling in Washington D.C. I had saved enough money to go back to Sweden for a visit. I remember carrying a coat for my mother to alter and a realistic looking toy rifle for my nephew!! What I never did carry, though, were plans for returning to Sweden permanently, and my later visits to Sweden have been just that, visits. However, saying good-bye to my parents was always something intensely painful, and the memory of hugging my crying mother at home and my father at the train station will always haunt me and has come back many times in dreams. Perhaps this is why I have always tended to say when in Sweden that "I am going back to America" rather than "I am going home to America." I have ascribed this to not wanting to hurt my family's feelings but have come to realize that the truth lies much deeper than that.

There is something else that I have never forgotten. I had just arrived back home in Borlänge (an industrial town in Dalarna), perhaps for that first return visit, and needing Swedish *kronor*, I went to a bank with the dollars I had brought. As I stood in line waiting, two elderly couples came up behind me, and I noticed right away that they were carrying green American government checks. That peaked my interest, of course, and I began to listen in on their

conversation. Suddenly one of the women said: "*Jag undrar hur vädret är hemma nu. Det är säkert hett.*" (I wonder what the weather is like back home now. I'm sure it's hot.) "*Hemma*", her using that word really surprised me at the time and expressed so much beyond the simple statement. No doubt these two couples had emigrated to America, lived their active lives here, all along dreaming of Sweden and returning there when they retired. Now they were back "*hemma*", the place they had always thought of and referred to as their true home and where they felt all their sweetest memories originated. However, that summer morning in line at a bank in Borlänge, they wondered about the weather "*hemma*", i.e. where they had lived in America. Probably their "*hemma*" had now become a place in the American mid-west, based on their assumption that the weather was hot. They had also, maybe subconsciously, discovered that the word "*hemma*" described something more complicated than the Sweden they had left many years earlier. The fact is that "*hemma*" for most of us emigrants eventually becomes a place that we can only find in our minds. We remember, often with a tinge of sadness, how it FELT to live there. For the two couples in line behind me at the bank in Borlänge so long ago, perhaps the Sweden they had spent years longing for had changed as much by the 1960's as has mine from 53 years ago. It is no longer OUR "*hemma*". That "*hemma*," apart from where our birth family is, has rather become a mix of fleeting early memories: hopscotch and tadpoles in the spring, biking to school, finding wild strawberries, the white groundcover of wood-anemones on Walpurgis Night, and for me, the Sunday trips in a rowboat across the Dalälven to visit mormor; mamma, my sister and I in Sunday dresses and our handsome father rowing in his dark blue "America

suit." Pappa had returned from Worcester, MA some years earlier, and we grew up hearing the phrase: "When I was in America". He had wanted to return there, but my Mother was against it. For my father, I think his emigrant "*hemma*" became Massachusetts, but he never went back. Thus his "*hemma*" did not change but stayed exciting and beautiful in his mind, and in a way became part of our lives too. Pappa never stopped singing and whistling emigrant songs, he even wrote one himself and we heard it often.

My great aunt Alma, who ended up living most of her life in Portland, OR., says in a letter she wrote in 1919 to her mother that it took four months to communicate with family in Sweden: two months for her letter to reach them there and another two months for a reply to reach her. I don't know where Alma's "*hemma*" was and being known as extremely frugal, she would probably not have spent her closely guarded dollars on reliving old memories, which were, by any standards, shaped by extreme poverty. Her brothers did not return either, the one living in Worcester not wanting to and the other being killed in WWI.

And here I am, fifty-three years after disembarking in New York that summer morning. America is where my "*hemma*" has been all these years, and I have been an American citizen since 2003. Giving up my Swedish passport then was emotional, but the feeling passed quickly. After all, we don't need legal documents to tell us where our roots are. I have always taken pride in my heritage, in my Swedish "*hemma*." I feel enriched to also have another "*hemma*," America. When I miss my family in Sweden it takes no four months anymore to communicate with them, let alone four minutes. I have talked to my brother three times in the past 24 hours! I still see the color combination blue and yellow out of the corner of my eye, and memories of lingon berry picking with my parents are some of the sweetest ones I have. Sweden is now, more than anything, my treasure. I am always being asked about my accent and so enjoy telling people where I was born.



***hem kära hem***

# BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM SWEDISH ROOTS IN OREGON PRESS

