

# Beginning Swedish Genealogy

**Gary Shea outlines a basic strategy for jumpstarting your Swedish family history research.**

A REAL DICHOTOMY in Swedish genealogy is the abundance of records that exist and the challenge of using those records. The purpose of this short primer on Swedish genealogy is to provide you with an approach to discover heretofore-unidentified ancestors and relatives. Along the way you will see how additional information beyond the vital statistics can be learned.

**The Basics of Swedish Records** It is assumed that you have determined which parish in Sweden your ancestors or research targets came from and when they were born. Our focus will be on using Swedish Church parish records. By law from 1686 until 1 July 1991, the Church had the responsibility of keeping Sweden's official vital records.

Swedish names are patronymic - a great term to know, as it may win you some money on a quiz show. When talking with non-genealogists, it's an interesting term that's fun to explain, like "twice removed" or "fourth cousin". One dictionary says patronymic refers to a name derived from the name of one's father or a paternal ancestor usually by the addition of an affix. In Sweden it's the father's first name in possessive form and the affix of either "son" or "dotter" that becomes the surname. In the records we will examine, August Svensson is a son of Sven Danielsson. His siblings include Gustaf Peter Svensson and Ida Sofia Svensdotter.

There are 2,500 parishes in Sweden. Parishes are parts of districts and districts

are parts of counties. There are 24 counties, such as Jönköping, Kalmar and Malmöhus. Within parishes are smaller units: villages, farms, communities, estates and fishing villages. They may vary in population and size but their names are found in the records.

Records are cataloged by county, then by parish. The general term in Swedish for a parish register is *kyrkobok*. A parish register may contain many individual volumes of births (*Födde* or *Födelselängd*), marriages (*Vigde* or *Vigsellängd*), deaths (*Dödd* or *Dödslängd*) and household examination records (*Husförhörlängd*).

Every year everyone was quizzed on his or her religious knowledge. Their grades were recorded in the parish register. Hence the household examination records and an elegant, straightforward, and productive research methodology.

Swedish Church parish records are readily available at Genline ([www.genline.com](http://www.genline.com)) for many areas of Sweden (see "Genline", *Family Chronicle*, March/April 2004). The records are also available at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' Family History Centers (on microfilm), through the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, and in Sweden at the National Archives in Stockholm and Municipal and Provincial Archives.

**Birth and Christening Records** Shown in the accompanying figure is the birth and christening record of Adelina Sophia Danielsdotter. She was born on 19 July

1858 in Högsby parish, Kalmar county, to Daniel Svensson and Christina Charlotta Magnidotter (*dotter* is abbreviated “dr.”). The record tells that Daniel was a farmer (*Bond*) and that he and his wife (*och del hustru*) resided in Lilla Klobo. Charlotta was 30 years old when Adelina was born. The four witnesses (or godparents) were farmer Sven Danielsson and his wife (*hustru* is abbreviated “h.”) of Lilla Klobo (Lilla is abbreviated “L.”), farm servant (*drang* abbreviated “Dr.”) Carl Johan Svensson also of Lilla Klobo (as indicated by “ibm”) and servant (*piga* abbreviated “Pig.”) Helena Svensdotter. The handwriting in this example is absolutely beautiful and in my experience, about as good as it gets.

Birth Day	Bapt. Day	Male #	Fem. #	Names First and middle
19.	22.	-	60.	Adelina Sophia

Parents	Age of Mother
Bond Daniel Svensson i Lilla Klobo och del h- stus Christina Charlotta Magni dr.	30.

Witnesses
Bond Sven Danielsson i Lilla Klobo och del h. Anna Lisa Nils dr. Dr. Carl Johan Svensson ibm och sig. Helena Svensdotter

Högsby, Kalmar, Births (Födde), July 1858

**A birth and christening record shows that Adelina Sophia Danielsdotter was born in Högsby parish, Kalmar on 19 July 1858 and baptized three days later.**

**Household Examination Records** The place name Lilla Klobo is a good find. We can search the index of place names of the household examination volume for the time period of the birth for it. There may not always be such an index to household examination records. If one exists, it may be at the start or end of the volume. Sometimes it was created when the register was maintained. Sometimes the LDS filmers created an index. Spelling and use of abbreviations in place names may vary in the records and indices.

There is an index for the household examination records of Högsby parish kept in the early 1850s. It directs us to page 17 where we find some relevant entries reproduced here for No. 2 Lilla Klobo (presumably a group of farms).

The top entry is the family of Sven Danielss[on], Anna Lisa Nils[dotter], and as subsequently verified by birth records, eight of their children. In household examination records, individuals' names or entire families may be crossed out or lined through. This practice usually indicates that the person or persons moved or the person died.

In the case of Johanna Christina Svensdotter, the cross and date tells she died on 22 June 1854. There may be information about movement right in the record (under columns labeled *Flyttad*). It may say when the individual came to this location and have information about where they came from, such as a register page reference, or a place name. It may say when they went and where with a register page reference or place name. The ultimate find is the destination “N. Amerika” with a date of departure from the parish.



feature case studies, workshops, and queries will be helpful, inspirational and interesting.

6. A Swedish-English/English-Swedish dictionary is essential for translating. Mine is by *Prisma's Abridged* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995, ISBN: 0816627347). Be aware that they cover modern Swedish, which is different from the Swedish of 1900, and earlier, when spelling was not standardized and some letters were used differently.

Using the basic and readily available Swedish Church parish records, you can find ancestors back to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. In addition, you can begin building a well-rounded understanding of your subjects' lives: where they lived, what they did, when they moved from place to place, and even how well they knew their catechism.

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