

Software

Genline

Gary Shea takes a test drive of a new tool for those with Swedish roots.

For those lucky enough to be of Swedish descent, about one in twenty-five Americans, there is an exceptional on-line resource available. Genline is a Web-based application that provides access to digitized images of Swedish Church Records. If you have Swedish ancestors that emigrated to North America during the peak years between 1881 and 1890, you can theoretically and reasonably find 500 or more ancestors in these records.

Genline began with a trial project in 1993. Efforts to digitize the Swedish Church Records on microfilm began in earnest in 1995. Currently parish registers of six of Sweden's 24 counties are done (Kalmar, Östergötland, Värmland, Kronoberg, Göteborg & Bohuslän, and Jönköping). Four counties are in production (Malmöhus, Kristianstad, Blekinge, and Halland). The remaining counties are planned to be complete by mid-2005. As of December 2003, over seven million images are on-line.

Parish registers include recordings of births, confirmations, marriages, and deaths, church ledgers and household examination rolls. The Swedish Church Law of 1686 made it mandatory for the ministers in Sweden's 2500 parishes to keep these records.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints started microfilming records at the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm in the 1950s. Genline's Swedish Church Records archive consists of photographic

quality images scanned from the LDS microfilms of the original church records.

Parish registers are generally sufficient for productive genealogical research. Other records filmed by the LDS and not in the Genline archive include court, land, military, and census records. A researcher may go to these to overcome brick walls (e.g. parish registers were destroyed in a fire) or to fill in details on individuals.

By using the LDS microfilm as a source Genline is able to digitize at a healthy clip. Work done by the microfilmers, such as register table of contents is included in Genline and readily usable. If the microfilm version has a flaw, such as a missing page, it is propagated into the digitized version.



Genline is a novel Internet application. During a typical session a user may have up to four windows open. Some code (called FamilyFinder) must be downloaded and installed on the user's workstation. The easiest way to begin a session is to open a browser window (to any page) and start the "Log in to the

records" program from the Windows Start Menu. This will open up the FamilyFinder window. The browser window is where the images are displayed. The other two windows are Search Results and Settings. When you leave Genline in your browser window, the cute little FamilyFinder window goes away.

Navigation takes practice, but can be mastered in a sitting or two. Select the county and parish on the FamilyFinder window. Optionally select record types and a year range to narrow down the register choices. Click Search and then Results to get to the Search Results window. Select a register on the Search Results list. A list of the pages will be displayed. Then select a page and it will be presented in your Genline browser window. A dynamic thumbnail of the image is displayed in the FamilyFinder window (very slick). On the FamilyFinder window one can choose to zoom in and out on the image. Settings is most useful for adjusting the contrast and orientation of the viewed and printed image.

The application appears to be rigorously tested. There were no showstopper problems. The computer never froze. The Internet connection was never lost. Instructions are clear, even when on rare occasions a word or two in Swedish slips in. At no time was I unable to figure what to do.

The cost of a Genline subscription depends on how long you want to access it. Prices are quoted in Swedish krona. The most expensive option is access to all records for one year (about US\$353). The least expensive is a twenty-day trial (about US\$26).

The research can be challenging and time-consuming (such as a brute force page by page search of a Household Examination

register). Estimate how much time you need. Your objectives will play a role in picking a subscription option. Using Genline or microfilm at a Family History Center will garner the same results, but with Genline there is no waiting for microfilms, and the ability to search a number of parishes in minutes. Printed copies from Genline are as good as from those from microfilm and definitely easier to make. In short, results are much more quickly seen with Genline, if you have the time and patience to master the material.

Carl-Erik Johansson in the preface of his definitive reference work on Swedish genealogy, **Cradled in Sweden**, gives thanks "above all to the untold thousands of record keepers, who through the centuries so painstakingly filled page after page with careful notes about our progenitors." I would add that for those of us so fortunate as to have Swedish ancestry, we thank the LDS microfilers and Genline, AB, for their work in making the original sources widely available.

Gary Shea is a freelance writer residing in Bayside, Wisconsin. He has pursued genealogical research since 1996 and is a Director of the Irish Genealogical Society of Wisconsin. His family tree database called garytshea can be accessed at <http://worldconnect.genealogy.rootsweb.com/>.

©2004 Gary Shea. Permission granted to Genline, AB by author and Family Chronicle Magazine for electronic publication and limited printed use.