

Introduction to Swedish Church Books

Introduction

The Swedish church books are usually the first Swedish records that one uses when tracing one's Swedish roots. These records are a "gold mine" because they are so complete and contain such detailed information. While it is not known for certain when the Swedish Church began keeping the records, records from the 1500's have been preserved. A Church Law of 1686 required the clergy to keep records of births, christenings, marriages, deaths and burials in the parish as well as records of persons moving in and moving out of the parish. By this time, many dioceses were already keeping church records. In many cases, one can trace a person's life in the church books from birth to death or birth to emigration.

Swedish Church Books

The Swedish Church Books include the following record types:

- Birth and Christening (födelse- och dopbok)
- Banns and Marriage (lysnings- och vigselbok)
- Death and Burial (död- och begravningsbok)
- Moving in and out (In- och utflyttningslängd)
- Household and congregation (husförhörslängd och församlingsbok)
- Church accounts

Birth and Christening

The content of the birth and christening records varies by parish and by time period. If you know the name of your ancestor, the birth date and birth parish, you should be able to find the birth record. Below is the information that you will find most often in these records:

- Child's Name
- Birth date and baptismal date
- Names of parents
- Name of the farm, village or place where family lives in the parish
- Names of baptismal witnesses
- Mother's age
- In many birth books after 1860, you will find the page number of the corresponding household or congregation book that contains information about the household.

TIPS

- Birth records are in chronological order
- In the early books, sometimes only the baptismal date is given
- Some books contain multiple types of records. It is recommended to check the front of the book and look for a table of contents that gives the page number for the beginning of the birth record section.
- Note down the place name in the birth record. You will need the place name in order to find the family in the household examination book.

Banns and Marriage

You will typically find the following information in the banns and marriage books:

- Dates of the banns and marriage
- Names of the bride and groom
- Name of the place where the bride and groom lived
- Name of the minister
- In some books, mostly after 1860 the page number in the corresponding household or congregation book

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TIPS

- The banns and marriage records are in chronological order.
- The marriage was usually performed in the bride's parish.

Death and Burial

You will typically find the following information in the death and burial books:

- Name of deceased
- Dates of death and burial
- Place in parish where deceased lived
- Age at death
- Cause of death
- In some books, mostly after 1860 the page number in the corresponding household or congregation book

TIP

- The death and burial records are in chronological order.

Moving In and Out

Each parish minister was required to keep a record of all persons moving in and out of the parish. In the moving in records, you will usually see the name of the person moving in, date, place where he/she came from and the moving to place in the parish. Often the page in the corresponding household or congregation record is noted as a cross-reference.

The moving out records contain the person's name, place moved from and sometimes a reference to the page in the household examination or congregation book as well as the moving to place. If the person moved out of the country, usually only the name of the country is noted. For emigrants moving to America, the entry is usually North America (*Nord Amerika*).

Household and Congregation

The household examination records are unique to Sweden and Finland. Each pastor was required to take a yearly accounting of all members in his parish and test them for their religious understanding. In order to do this accounting, the minister made lists of all the people living in the parish, household by household. These records were kept in large books and each volume covers a series of years. You will see some that cover five years and many that cover ten years. This varies by parish and time. Most of these books begin in the mid-1700's but they do exist earlier for some parishes.

In 1895, the household books were replaced by the congregation books. In these books all the parish members were registered but the religious examinations were no longer required so the information about religious examination results and receiving Holy Communion was no longer entered in the books.

You will generally find the following information in the household and congregation books:

- Name of place such as farm, village or address in city
- Names of all members in household
- Birth date and birth place for each individual
- Occupation for head of household
- Marriage date for head of household
- Vaccination information for smallpox
- Religious examination results (up to 1894)

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- Death date if person has died during the period the book covers (There will also be a death record in the death book.)
- Moving in and out information
- Sometimes notes in the special remarks column about the person

TIP

- The household and congregation books are organized by place. This is why it is important to note the name of the place where the family lives as is noted in the birth, marriage or death record. There is usually an index of place names in the front of the household and congregation books that gives the starting page number for a place. There are a few books that do have person name indexes but most are organized by place names.

Tracing your Ancestry using the Swedish Church Books

In order to trace your ancestry within the Swedish church books, you usually begin with one ancestor and you will need to know (1) his/her Swedish name, (2) parish of origin, and (3) a significant date such as birth date, emigration date, death date or marriage date.

This case study will demonstrate

1. A methodology starting with a birth book and showing how one can use the church books to trace one's family backwards and forward using the household examination books.
2. The demonstration will show the searching features within ArkivDigital online

Case

1. Known information
 - a. Samuel August Eriksson
 - b. Birth date 5th January 1875
 - c. Birth Place – Pelarne parish in Kalmar county

Search for Birth Record

1. Access ArkivDigital Online
2. Select Archive search
3. Search for the parish, Pelarne
 - a. You can enter, Pelarne, in the search box and click search,
 - b. Or, search by county, Kalmar
4. If you click by county, all the parishes and archives that are available for that parish will be displayed.
5. Scroll down and click on Pelarne
6. When you click on the selected archive, the info box will give additional information about the parish such as if the name has changed or if it belonged to a group of parishes and it was an annex or mother parish. The names of the *stift* (diocese) and *härad* (judicial district) that the parish belongs to are shown. Also, you will find a link to "Show on the map".
7. In the right side of the search box, all the books that are available for that parish are displayed.
8. Look for the book that contains births for the year 1875
 - a. Birth and christening records 1869-1883
9. Click on the volume to open the book.
10. Look in the first pages to see if the book has a table of contents. Some books have multiple types of records.
11. If no table of contents, look for births for the year 1875. The birth records are organized in chronological order.
12. You will find Samuel August's birth record on image 26¹.
13. The birth record shows the following information:
 - a. *Inskriftnings nummer* (Entry number) 1

¹ Pelarne CI:5 (1869-1883) Image 26 (AID: v40595.b26, NAD: SE/VALA/00295)

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- b. *Födelse* (Birth date) – Jan (January) 5
- c. *Döpelse* (Baptismal date) – Jan (January) 17
- d. Sex (*kön*) 1 in the column for male noting male child
- e. *Dopnamn* (Child's Baptismal Name) – Samuel August (Note – the number 3 following the child's name indicates the child is the third child.)
- f. *Föräldrarnes* (Parent's Names) – Home owner, Samuel Johan August Ericsson and Ida Emilia Kristina Ingeström – Note number 5 indicates the number of years the parents have been married.
- g. **Residence – Hamphorfva. pag. 30 or page 30 in the corresponding household examination book.** Note down this information. You will need the place name to find the family in the corresponding household examination book. Many birth books published after 1860 will include the page number in the household examination but prior to that date, only the name of the place appears.
- h. *Tillhör adel* (Belongs to the nobility) – No entry thus doesn't belong to nobility
- i. *Modrens ålder* (Mother's age) – 24. This record also shows the father's age as 29.
- j. *Döpvitnen* (Baptismal Witnesses) – Home owner Sven Peter Nilsson and wife Fredrika Abrahamsdotter in Kaselarp; farmhand Anders Johan Konstans Ingeström in Sjurstorp and young maid Josefina Karolina Jonsdotter in Hamphorfva.
- k. *Kyrkotagning* – Date mother reintroduced to church after birth – February 14
- l. *Serskilda Anteckningar* - Special remarks – baptized by C. Eriksson

Search for Household Examination Record

The household examination records include information about everyone living in the household such as birth information, name of the farm or village and movements within in and out of Sweden. These books were updated annually and if one is lucky, one can trace an individual from birth to death or birth to emigration using these records.

1. Go back to the Pelarne archive
2. Search for household records and search for one that includes the year 1875.
3. Click on the household examination volume AI:10 (1871-75)
4. The household examination book is organized by place. You will normally find a place index in the beginning of the book. In this case, we have a page number, page 30, that we can go directly to. If we didn't have a page number, then one goes to the place index and looks for the place, Hamphorfva. The index will give you the beginning page number for the place.
5. Go to page 30²
6. You will find the family information. The chart below shows the family members:
- 7.

NAME	BIRTH DATE	BIRTH PLACE
Samuel Johan August Eriksson	1 Oct 1845	Södra Vi
H. Wife Ida Emilia Christina Ingeström	1 Jan 1851	Rumskulla
S. Johan Victor	1 Aug 1870	Pelarne
S. Eric Linnert	26 Mar 1872	ditto
S. Samuel August	5 Jan 1875	ditto

8. On the top of the page, you will see the place name, Hamphorfva and lines, 1 through 5, list the names of the family members with birth place and birth dates. The record gives the parent's marriage date as 21 June 1869. If this information is correct, then we should find the father, Samuel Johan August Eriksson's birth record in the birth book for Södra Vi and the birth record for the mother in the birth book for Rumskulla.
9. Since the household examination record gives the birth place and birth date for Samuel Johan August Eriksson, we can go the birth book for Södra Vi and search for the birth record.

² Pelarne AI:10 (1871-1875) Image 39 / page 30 (AID: v23771.b39.s30, NAD: SE/VALA/00295)

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Search for Birth Record in Södra Vi

1. Go back to search archive and search for Södra Vi archive.
2. Search for birth book that contains the year 1845 and look for birth on October 1, 1845.
3. You will find no birth record for that date.
4. There may be a mistake about the birth information in the household examination book so this is why it is important to trace backwards in the household examination books to see if you can discover the error.

Search Previous Household Examination Book

1. Go back to the Pelarne archive.
2. Search for household records and search for one that precedes the year 1871.
3. Double click on the household examination volume AI:9(1867-70).
4. Go to place index and look for Hamphorfva.
5. The index entry shows Hamphorfva with page 26. This is the beginning page number for the place.
6. Go to page 26 and browse forward until you find the family. You will find the family on page 27.³
7. You will find the family beginning on line 16.

LINE#	NAME	BIRTH DATE	BIRTH PLACE	MARRIAGE DATE	MOVING INFORMATION
16	Sam. Aug. Joh. Eriksson	1 Oct 1845	Södra Vi	21 June 1869	From Rumskulla in 1869 – Moving in # 15
17	H. Ida Emilia Christina Ingeström	1 Jan 1851	Rumskulla	21 June 1869	ditto
18	S. Johan Victor	1 Aug 1870	Pelarne		

8. Here we see that both Samuel Johan August and his wife moved here from Rumskulla in 1869. The moving in number (15) is a cross reference to the moving in record in the moving in book.

Search for Moving In Book

1. Go back to Pelarne archive
2. Search for moving in book that includes the year 1869. You will see a book titled “Moving in and out records – 1869 and 1883” and that the records are found in volume Pelarne: CI:5. Volumes beginning with C include birth records. The moving in and out records are in a book with multiple types of records.
3. Open the book. First, search for the section of the book that contains moving in records.
4. Search for a table of contents in the beginning of the book and also at the end of the book. Many books will contain a table of contents detailing the page number where each set of records begins. This book doesn't have one.
5. Open the drop-down window. Sometimes, there will be a blank space between record sections. In this case, there is not.
6. Often the moving records are at the back of the book. But remember this doesn't hold true in all cases.
7. You will find the moving in record for 1869 on image 106.⁴

³ Pelarne AI:9 (1867-1870) Image 35 / page 27 (AID: v23770.b35.s27, NAD: SE/VALA/00295)

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8. Look for Entry #15. That was the number shown in the household examination record.
9. You will find entry #15 with the following information:
 - a. *Inskriftningsdag* (Moving in Date) 8 Nov 1869
 - b. *Folio uti husförhörsboken* (Page in household examination book) 27
 - c. *De inflyttades namn* (Moving in persons' names) Home owner Sam. Johan August Eriksson och *Hustru* (and wife)
 - d. *Ort hvarifrån* (Place where from) Rumskulla
 - e. *Ställe hvarthän* (Place moved to) Hamphorfva
 - f. *Mankön* – Number of men in group – 1
 - g. *Qvinkön* – Number of females in group - 1

Search for Moving out book in Rumskulla

1. Search for parish Rumskulla.
2. Search for moving out book for 1869. You will find a book "Moving in and out records 1866–1870".
3. Open the book by double clicking on the entry. First, search for the section of the book that contains moving in records.
4. Search for a table of contents in the beginning of the book and also at the end of the book. Many books will contain a table of contents detailing the page number where each set of records begins. This book doesn't have one.
5. Open the drop-down window. Sometimes, there will be a blank space between record sections. In this case, there is one at image 67.
6. Browse forward and look for moving out (*utflyttning*) for 1869.
7. The beginning page for moving out records for 1869 is on image 76 page 149⁵
8. Look for moving out records prior to November 8, 1869 (date the couple moved into Pelarne)
9. You will find moving out record #40 and you will see the following information:
 - a. *Attestens datum* (Certificate date) 25 October 1869
 - b. *Folio uti husförhörsboken* (Page in household examination book) 51 and 192
 - c. *Namn* Name of moving out – Home Owner Sam. Aug. Joh. Eriksson med fru (wife)
 - d. *Ställe hvarifrån* - Place from – Kåremåla and Tjurstorps
 - e. *Mankön* – Number of men in group – 1
 - f. *Qvinkön* – Number of females in group - 1

Search for Household Examination Book in Rumskulla

1. Search for household examination book that contains year 1869.
2. Go to page 51 and look for Samuel August.
3. You will find Samuel August on line 4. His name is crossed out and on the far right you will see a note that he moved to Pelarne on the 25th of October 1869.⁶
4. The record gives his birth date, 1 October 1845, but there is no entry for his birth place.
5. Sometimes, when there is no birth place noted; the birth place is the same place as where the household examination.

Search for Birth Record in Rumskulla

1. Search for birth book that contains year 1845.
2. You will find his birth record on Image 56 page 107.⁷
3. Thus, his correct birth parish is Rumskulla and not Södra Vi.

⁴ Pelarne CI:5 (1869-1883) Image 106 (AID: v40595.b106, NAD: SE/VALA/00295)

⁵ Rumskulla C:9 (1866-1870) Image 76 / page 149 (AID: v41009.b76.s149, NAD: SE/VALA/00309)

⁶ Rumskulla AI:15 (1866-1870) Image 61 / page 51 (AID: v23845.b61.s51, NAD: SE/VALA/00309)

⁷ Rumskulla C:6 (1836-1861) Image 56 / page 107 (AID: v41006.b56.s107, NAD: SE/VALA/00309)

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Search for Marriage Record in Rumskulla

1. Search for marriage record in Rumskulla archive.
2. Look for marriage book that contains year 1869.
3. You will find Banns and Marriage records 1866-1870 and that the records are found in the volume Rumskulla C:9. These records are contained in a book that contains multiple types of records.
4. Please note volume C indicates a birth book and it may have multiple types of records within the book. Look in the first few pages and check for a table of contents. This book does not have one and the marriages happen to be the first set of records in the book, **Caution** – you may need to search in the book to find the section with the type of records that interest you.
5. The marriage records are arranged in chronological order based on the dates for the banns. Banns of marriage are the announcement of a marriage between two persons and the announcements are usually made three times before the marriage.
6. You will find the marriage record on page 9.⁸

Additional Resources

Online Sources – Church Record Examples

1. Arkivdigital.net – Click on Right side for *Swedish genealogy*. Here you will find articles about the church records plus examples of the various record types with column heading translations
 - a. <http://arkivdigital.net/swedish-genealogy>
2. Swedish Historical Dictionary
 - a. <http://swedishgenealogyguide.com/>
3. Family Search Word Guide
 - a. https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Swedish_Genealogical_Word_List

⁸ Rumskulla C:9 (1866-1870) Image 8 / page 9 (AID: v41009.b8.s9, NAD: SE/VALA/00309)