

Tips for Searching Ancestry's "Emigration Records from Swedish Church Books"

A companion reference guide to the video: <https://youtu.be/dWvNYGylADQ>

NB – This document often refers to the word “patronymic.” This is the practice, common in Sweden until the beginning of the 20th century, of naming a child after the first name of the father. For example, Anders son of Jon Svensson, is Anders Jonsson on Swedish records, daughter Anna would be Anna Jonsdotter.

I. Name

Names are often the most challenging search field. Spelling variations, transcription errors, Americanization, and changes in name usage can all affect search results. First, try possible Swedish spellings, use wildcards, or enable Ancestry's option to include similar names. **If a search fails, experiment with leaving one or the other of the search fields blank.**

Common Challenges with First Name Searches

- **An additional given name may have been adopted in America.** A person may appear with an extra middle name in U.S. records that does not appear in Swedish records. Search both with and without the additional name/initial.
- **A second Swedish given name may become the primary name in America.** For example, Johan Alfrid may appear as Alfred J. or simply Alfred in U.S. records.
- **Women's names are frequently shortened, translated, or replaced with nicknames.** Examples include Karin/Carrie, Elisabet/Lisa, and Margareta/Greta. Women's records often require more experimentation and multiple search strategies.
- **John is an especially difficult first name for men.** The Swedish variations include Johan, Jon, Jonas, Jan, Jöns, even John. Using the wild cards J*n and J*s should catch most variations.

Common Challenges with Surname Searches

- **In the case of men, a unique non-patronymic surname may have been adopted in the US.** Since it is impossible to know if a unique surname was adopted post-emigration, or already existed in Sweden, it is best to try spelling variations of the American name as well as leaving the surname blank.

- **Children who emigrated with parents almost always adopted the surname of the father after immigration** rather than continuing with their Swedish patronymic. So Kerstin, daughter of Anders Jonsson, becomes Christine Johnson in the US. But her emigration record from the Swedish church books will say Kerstin Andersdotter.
- **Women will always be listed by their birth name on Swedish records**, even after marriage, but in many cases that name will not be known or (correctly) recorded in the US. For this reason, **leaving the surname field blank is often the best option.**

II. Birth date

Use the exact birthdate if you have it, then experiment. If you are quite sure of the birthdate but not getting results, you can also try leaving both name fields blank. This will show anyone with that birthdate and might net someone with spelling differences you hadn't come up with.

- The accuracy of a birthdate found in US records will depend on what kind of record it is. Census records are least reliable and not exact, death records/obituaries possibly reliable, anything the person himself or herself supplied (draft registration, SS applications for example), or was recorded in a family Bible or other family records, most reliable.
- Mistakes could have been made in the Swedish records at any point during the person's life especially if they moved around a lot. So the birthdate the person remembers may not be the one in the indexed emigration record.

IV. Departure Date

Don't make it too wide, best to keep it within a year or two. You can play around with that as needed.

V. Departure Place

This field refers to the county where the person was living when they emigrated. In many cases this will not be known and can be left blank. Do not try to guess port of departure, that has no bearing on these records.

If you know where they were living when they left Sweden, then add it. Or experiment with different counties to see what comes up.

Always enter the county, not province. Best to leave out if unsure. (For example, Småland and Hälsingland are not counties). See the FamilySearch Research Wiki for information about the difference between provinces and counties.

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Provinces_of_Sweden

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Counties_of_Sweden

VI. Arrival Place

Best to leave blank and ignore the few that will come up who were not going to North America, or use Amerika. **Do not use US or USA.** Usually Ancestry will match those correctly with the Swedish records but not always.

VII. Final Notes

The success of these searches relies heavily on information you can gather from US records or family knowledge. While none of that information is guaranteed to be accurate, it still gives data points to work with.

There are scenarios where an emigration was either simply not recorded or not recorded accurately. The person left illegally leaving no paper trail, they registered as leaving a parish but didn't physically leave until later, their record was created after the fact of departure once their emigration was assumed and does not correspond to their actual departure. There are also some parishes that have not yet been indexed in Ancestry, though coverage is very good, and focuses on those areas of Sweden that saw the most emigration.