

## Learning to Read the Scandinavian Gothic Alphabet

Reading hand-written records can be difficult particularly when the alphabet used is somewhat different from the Latin alphabet that we are used to. This is one of the challenges of Scandinavian research. The Gothic alphabet, used by Scandinavian writers in earlier centuries, has some letters that are similar to the Latin alphabet, but other letters are quite different.

The clerks in Scandinavia generally used the Gothic alphabet before the mid-1700s and then gradually began switching to the Latin style, with the Latin alphabet predominating by the late 1800s. Thus, if you begin your research in the 1800s and move backwards, you will find that the letters change from Latin to Gothic gradually and the documents may be quite easy to read.

The best way to learn to read Gothic script is to practice writing it. Once you know how the letters are supposed to be formed, it is easier to read each clerk's individual handwriting. When you find something you cannot read, look for examples in other places in the document. Make your own writing guide by copying unusual letters into a notebook for later reference. Practice writing these letters.

Marks above the letters have special meaning. Danish and Swedish have three letters that English does not have: Swedish å ä ö, Danish aa or å, œ ø. In Swedish handwriting the two dots are often written with a squiggly line, and the Danish ø is often written with two dots or a line. Also a line is written above a *u* to distinguish it from an *n*.

Å å Ö ö Æ æ Ø ø u u

A straight vertical line above a consonant, often an *n* or *m* indicates that the letter is doubled.

hanna = Hanna    Annicka = Annicka    Hemming = Hemming

A hyphen at the end of a line is indicated by two vertical lines = . This is also the ditto sign, or the word *ditto* may be abbreviated as *do*. The Latin word *ibidem*, usually abbreviated as *Ibid* is also used.

Nilf:      Lurf:      Ton      slottur      barn  
 slottur      fon      =      do      ybid

A colon at the end of the word or name indicates that the word or name is abbreviated.

Andl: = Anders    Olß: = Olsson    rbr: = dräng    zig: = pigan

The word *den* which means *the* is often abbreviated as *d* and may be written with a fancy tail.

d: d

## The Gothic Alphabet as Used In Sweden, Denmark, Norway

A <i>A A A</i>	a <i>a a a</i>	S <i>S S S</i>	s <i>s s s</i>
B <i>B B B</i>	b <i>b</i>	T <i>T T T</i>	t <i>t t t</i>
C <i>C C C</i>	c <i>c</i>	U <i>U U</i>	u <i>u u</i>
D <i>D D D</i>	d <i>d</i>	V <i>V V</i>	v <i>v v</i>
E <i>E E</i>	e <i>e</i>	W <i>W W</i>	w <i>w w</i>
F <i>F F</i>	f <i>f</i>	X <i>X X</i>	x <i>x x</i>
G <i>G G G</i>	g <i>g</i>	Y <i>Y Y</i>	y <i>y y y</i>
H <i>H H H</i>	h <i>h</i>	Z <i>Z Z</i>	z <i>z z</i>
I J <i>I J I J I J</i>	ij <i>ij ij</i>	Ø <i>Ø Ø Ø</i>	ø <i>ø ø ø</i>
K <i>K K K</i>	k <i>k k k</i>	Æ <i>Æ Æ</i>	œ <i>œ œ œ</i>
L <i>L L L</i>	l <i>l</i>	Å <i>Å Å</i>	å <i>å å</i>
M <i>M M M</i>	m <i>m</i>	Ä <i>Ä Ä</i>	ä <i>ä ä</i>
N <i>N N</i>	n <i>n</i>	Ö <i>Ö Ö</i>	ö <i>ö ö</i>
O <i>O O O</i>	o <i>o</i>	St <i>St St St</i>	st <i>st st st</i>
P <i>P P P</i>	p <i>p</i>	Ch <i>Ch Ch Ch</i>	ch <i>ch ch ch</i>
Q <i>Q Q Q</i>	q <i>q</i>	ss <i>ss ss ss</i>	ss <i>ss ss ss</i>
R <i>R R R</i>	r <i>r r r</i>	ff <i>ff ff</i>	ft <i>ft ft ft</i>

## Swedish Research Simplified: Using Indexes and Adding Sources

### Indexes

The most important primary source records for Swedish research are the vital records (Births, Deaths, Marriages) the Moving in and out records, and the *Husförhörslängder*, (Household Records, Household Examination Books). These records are available on the internet on these sites: FamilySearch, Riksarkivet, Arkiv Digital, My Heritage, and Ancestry. Several of these sites have indexes and easy ways to add sources. We will be focusing on using three of these sites to do research and add sources for your ancestors who lived in the 1800s.

#### Indexes for Household Records:

FamilySearch. Free, need to sign in.

1. Go to the source section of the person you are interested in, and see if anyone has added sources for household records. If the source is relatively recent, you should be able to click on a link that will take you to the page in the household book.
2. If there are no recent sources, go to the person page and look at the hints with the blue icon on the right. Click on "Sweden, Household Examination Books, 1880-1930". It will take you to a transcription of the information about your person in the household book. Scroll down to the link to the page in the household record.

ArkivDigital. Free at the FamilySearch Center. Go to FamilySearch portal.

1. Click on "index search". In the top box, click on "Index source" and scroll to "BiS (Population of Sweden 1800-1947)". Skip "Simple Search". Click on "Name" under "Advanced Search". Type the first name. Skip "Gender". Click on "Birth". Type the entire birth date such as 1850-10-23. Scroll down and click on the Blue "Search" button. If you get too many hints, add the name of the birth parish. If you do not get any hints, try a different spelling for the name, use only the day and year in the birth section, or search for a parent or sibling. You should get a list of records. Click on a record to see a transcription of the entry. Click on "Source" to view the page in the household record.

#### Indexes for Birth, Marriage, and Death Records

Family Search. You might find a source or a hint that says "Swedish baptisms", but it will usually link to an extracted record. A box that says, "Check Image Availability" will state that you can browse the records. You can do this in FamilySearch, but it is easier to find the record in Riksarkivet.

Riksarkivet. Sponsored by the Swedish government, this site is free for everyone. You need a free account to see records less than 110 years old.

This site has an index for almost all parishes according to year. Type "Riksarkivet" in your browser, click on "Digital Research Room" then "Databases" then "Church archives". Type in the name of your parish, using the Swedish ö,ä,å if necessary. Scroll down to *Födelse- och dopböcker*, (Birth and marriage books) *Lysnings och vigselböcker*, (Banns and marriage books) or *Död-och begravningsböcker*. (Death and burial books). Find the right year range and click on "Image". You will see "CONTENTS" at the top left corner with the name of the parish below. (Or you may see two little arrows with "CONTENTS" written vertically. Click on the arrows.) Click on the + by the name of the parish, and you will see *Födelse...* and/or *Lysnings...* etc. Click on the + and you will see a list of years.

## Adding Sources

### Adding Sources for Many People at a Time (Household Records):

FamilySearch. Look at the household record that you have found. Write down the volume number in the source description. Click on the image and write down the page and image number. Open another window in FamilySearch. Click on "Search". Click "Records" in the drop-down menu. In the "Collection Title" box below the picture, write the name of the *lan* (state or county) where your parish is located. Click on "BROWSE ALL (number) IMAGES". Click on the name of your parish. Click on "A I Husförhörslängder". Click on the volume number. The image number may be helpful in finding the right page, or you may need to browse to get to the right page. Click the blue box at the right, "Attach to Family Tree". Change the Source Title to something more simple, such as "Karlskoga, Örebro, Sweden, Household Records AI:48 (1870-1880), page 347, Brickegården". Describe what was found in the record. Click "Next, Select Person". Add the name of one of the family members and follow the instructions.

### Adding Sources for One Person at a Time (Birth, Death, or Marriage Records):

Find a record in Riksarkivet. Look at the right side of the screen. Hold your cursor over "Link" (Swedish Länk). A little box will appear that you can click to copy the page. Paste the link to wherever you want to put it.

### Changes During the 1800s that Affected Genealogical Record Keeping.

Many changes occurred during the 1800s.

1. People no longer used the patronymic system, in which a child's last name was the father's first name with "son" or "dotter" added. People could choose any name they wanted. Some froze their patronymic name, changing the "dotter" to "son", some took their father's military name, some chose a totally different name. Brothers and sisters could take different names. Some children had a patronymic name such as Olsson when they were young, but changed it to a surname, such as Lindqvist, when they became an adult. Sometimes both names were recorded: Nils Andersson Strömberg.
2. Women began using their husband's last name. In many records both the woman's maiden name and husband's name were recorded, with the maiden name preceded by "f" such as Anna Björnström f. Persdotter.
3. The spelling of names was standardized. The name Per Janson would always be written Per Jansson, and not Pehr or Petter Johansson or Janson.
4. Children were often given two or three names, such as Anna Amilia, or Karl Måns Henrik.
5. Many people moved from the country to cities, to the far north where a large mining area was developing, and especially to America.
6. The writing system changed from Gothic to Latin. This was a gradual change. Sometimes the name of people would be written in Latin, while the rest of the entry was in Gothic. Sometimes words or names would be mixed with some Gothic and some Latin letters.