

# Introduction to the Swedish Estate Inventory Records

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## Introduction

When a Swedish genealogist jumps the pond, the first set of records one usually looks at are the Swedish church books. These records are so complete and contain much information. However, other sources can provide a deeper look into an ancestor's life.

The estate inventory records provide both genealogical information and information that can deepen this understanding. The estate inventory is a detailed listing of the deceased person's assets and debts. The estate inventory names the deceased heirs. The estate inventory can answer questions about property ownership, household possessions, valuables such as gold or silver, books, farm animals, debts, and other items.

## Historical Background

A law was enacted in 1734 that required an estate inventory to be taken after one's death and registered with the court. In many cases where the deceased had little or no assets, no inventory was performed. In some cases, for married couples, the inventory was only performed for one spouse, but it was required before the surviving spouse remarried. In cases where the deceased had no assets, a relative may have applied for the waiver of the performance of the estate inventory. In these cases, a certificate of poverty or *fattigbevis* was issued. In ArkivDigital, you will find certificates of poverty (*fattigbevis*) for Stockholm City.

## Process

Upon the death of an individual, the parish minister recorded the death and burial in the church book. The surviving spouse or heirs would request that an estate inventory be performed. Then on an assigned date, the heirs, along with court-appointed appraisers (*värderingsmän*), would meet at the deceased's house, conduct an inventory of the estate, and assign a value to all items in the estate so it could be properly divided among the heirs. The inventory would be submitted to the court for probate. The court then determined the estate's distribution, recorded in a document called the "*arvskifte*."

The probate was performed by the *häradsrätt* (district court) for rural parishes and *rådhusrätt* (city court) for city parishes. For persons belonging to the nobility, the probate was conducted by the Court of Appeals between 1737 and 1916.

## Where are the estate inventories?

| PERIOD              | ORIGINAL     | DIGITIZED  | COMMENTS   |
|---------------------|--------------|--|--|
| Oldest to 1960      | Riksarkivet  | ArkivDigital (All)<br>Riksarkivet<br>(Parts)<br>Family Search<br>(Parts) | (AD) 6,222,438 searchable name indexes<br>(RA) Some searchable indexes<br><a href="https://sok.riksarkivet.se/bouppteckningar">https://sok.riksarkivet.se/bouppteckningar</a>  |
| 1961-1979           | Riksarkivet  | AD – some in<br>Gotland county<br>RA - None                              | Order from Riksarkivet<br><a href="https://riksarkivet.se/bouppteckning">https://riksarkivet.se/bouppteckning</a><br>Delivery time may be a few weeks.   |
| 1980 -<br>6/30/2001 | Riksarkivet  | Riksarkivet (All)  | Order from Riksarkivet<br><a href="https://riksarkivet.se/bouppteckning-skannad">https://riksarkivet.se/bouppteckning-skannad</a><br>(If one has a complete person number and name,<br>one will get a scanned copy in an hour by email.) |
| 7/1/2001 -<br>Today | Skatteverket | Skatteverket (All)   | Order from Skatteverket <a href="https://skatteverket.se/">https://skatteverket.se/</a><br>(If one has a complete person number and name,<br>one will get a scanned copy within 10 to 15<br>minutes by email.)                           |

ArkivDigital (<https://app.arkivdigital.se/>) provides access to newly photographed color images of all the estate inventories from the earliest (the 1600s) to 1960 for all of Sweden and up to 1979 for parts of Gotland county. In addition, ArkivDigital has indexed more than six million estate inventories so that you can search by name.

The original records are stored in the National Archives of Sweden. You can view images of estate inventories from the earliest times to around 1860 at Riksarkivet (<https://riksarkivet.se/>). These records are scans of the microfilms. Some estate inventories have been indexed by name but are not as complete as ArkivDigital.

FamilySearch has recently digitized its microfilmed collection of Swedish estate inventories. Their collection includes records from the earliest times to about 1860. These can be viewed at a Family History Library or Center<sup>1</sup>.

### Search for estate inventory in ArkivDigital

You can search many estate inventories by name in ArkivDigital by:

1. Go to [app.arkivdigital.se](https://app.arkivdigital.se/).
2. Select index search.
3. Select *estate inventories* under index source.
4. You can enter search fields using either simple or advanced search.

<sup>1</sup> ArkivDigital is a subscription site, Riksarkivet is free, FamilySearch is free. Only members of the Church of Latter Days Saints can view the images from their homes. Non-members must visit a Family History Library or Center.

## Case example – search for J. August Svensson’s estate inventory

In this presentation, we will search for the estate inventory of J. August Svensson, who died on September 2, 1875, in Bänarp, Eksjö parish in Jönköping county. Once we find his estate inventory, we will walk through the estate inventory, examining the preamble inventory and signature page.

### Estate Inventory Divisions

The sections of the estate inventory are the *ingress* or preamble, the inventory, and a signature page. The ***ingress* or preamble** provides information about the deceased and the heirs. You will usually find the following in the ingress:

- Date of the estate inventory
- Deceased’s name and place of residence
- Deceased’s date of death
- Names of heirs
- Names of guardians for children not of legal age and for heirs who may be living in another country
- The daughters’ spouses’ names

The **inventory** includes all the deceased’s assets and debts with assigned values. These are organized into categories: first property such as land, houses, cash, and bank accounts, followed by other categories such as copper, wooden items, tin items, porcelain, bed clothing, furniture, the deceased’s clothing, animals, tools, and miscellaneous items. At the end are outstanding claims (*fordringar*) and debts (*skulder*). It is wise to study the names of the persons owing and owed money because they may be relatives and often can provide clues to solve genealogical mysteries.

The signature page includes the signatures of the family members, guardians, and appraisers present at the estate.

### Search for the estate inventory in ArkivDigital

We will search by name for the estate inventory using the Index search feature in ArkivDigital.

- Go to [app.arkivdigital.se](http://app.arkivdigital.se)
- Select *Index search*.
- Select *Estate inventories* under *Index source*.
- Two search methods are available: simple and advanced.
- Today, we will use the *simple search* method.
- We will enter the following data:
  - August Svensson 1875 Eksjö or First name, Last name, death year, parish.
  - You can enter the data in any order.
- We get one match.
- Click on the match, and you will see an index record.
- There is a link to the source in the index record. Click on the link to see the source.

## J. August Svensson Estate Inventory – Ingress or Preamble

År 1875 den 22 November blef på vederbörandes begäran Bouppteckning förrättad efter Hemmansegaren J. August Svensson från Bänarp af Eksjö socken. Han afled derstädes den 2 nästlidne September och som arfvingar efterlämnade jamte Enkan Anna Lisa Magnidotter 2 söner, Frans Gustaf Hjalmar född den 14 Juni 1873, Johan August född den 15 October då och 4 döttrar, Maria Antine, född 28 Februari 1862, Helga Gustava, född den 5 September 1863, Ida Christina, född den 6 Augusti 1866, och Amanda Ottilia, född 9 December 1867, alla omyndiga men deras rätt bevakades af Hemmansegaren G. F. Svensson i Olart af Flisby socken, hvilken blifvit af Södra Vedbo Häradsrätt den i dennes förordnad till derasmyndige barnens laga förmyndare. Sedan Enkan blifvit tillsägd att under edlig förpliktelse uppgifvet boet, sådant det vid dess afleds dödstimma befanns, företogs uppteckningen i följande ordning nämligen

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1875, a request was made to perform an estate inventory for homeowner J. August Svensson from Bänarp in Eksjö parish. He died there last September 2<sup>nd</sup>, and his heirs survive him: his widow, Anna Lisa Magnidotter, and two sons: Frans Gustaf Hjalmar, born on June 14, 1873; Johan August, born October 15 in the same year (1875) and four daughters: Maria Antine, born February 28, 1862, Helga Gustava born September 5, 1863; Ida Christina born August 6, 1866, and Amanda Ottilia, born December 9, 1867, all minors. The children's rights were guarded by Homeowner G.F. Svensson from Olart in Flisby parish. He was named the children's legal guardian by the Södra Vedbo district court. Then, under oath, the widow stated that the estate to be presented was as it existed at the time of the deceased's death. The inventory was conducted in the following order namely.

## INVENTORY CATEGORIES – J. AUGUST SVENSSON

| <i>Swedish</i>              | <b>English</b>      | <b>Kr.</b> | <b>öre</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------|------------|
| <i>Inneliggande contant</i> | Cash on hand        | 10         |            |
| <i>Guld</i>                 | Gold                | 15         |            |
| <i>Silfver</i>              | Silver              | 110        |            |
| <i>Koppar</i>               | Copper              | 138        | 80         |
| <i>Tenn</i>                 | Pewter              | 6          |            |
| <i>Messing</i>              | Brass               | 13         |            |
| <i>Möbler</i>               | Furniture           | 216        | 50         |
| <i>Kökssaker</i>            | Kitchen items       | 56         | 70         |
| <i>Säng och linkläder</i>   | Bedding and linen   | 200        | 75         |
| <i>Den afls.gångkläder</i>  | Deceased's clothing | 152        | 50         |
| <i>Diverse saker</i>        | Miscellaneous items | 265        | 75         |
| <i>Kreatur</i>              | Animals             | 1240       |            |
| <i>Fordringar</i>           | Claims              | 966        | 01         |
| <i>Fastighet</i>            | Real Estate         | 19,700     |            |
| <i>Summa Tillgångar</i>     | Total Assets        | 23,091     | 01         |

|                         |             |        |    |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------|----|
| <i>Summa Skulder</i>    | Total Debts | 5167   | 59 |
| <i>Summa Behållning</i> | Net Value   | 17,923 | 42 |

## Genealogical Problems

1. ***Use estate inventories to find family.*** Often the estate inventory provides locations of heirs, even exact addresses. Suppose one is looking for someone who has emigrated from Sweden. In that case, one strategy is to look for the estate inventories of the person's parents who remained in Sweden and died after the person's emigration. A second strategy is to look for an estate inventory of unmarried siblings who stayed in Sweden. Often, the estate inventory will only show the location as North America, but you will often see the city and state. If you are lucky, the estate inventory will show the exact address of the person you seek.
2. ***Find the married daughter*** – When a woman emigrated to North America, she took on her husband's name, and it isn't easy to find her not knowing her new name. The estate inventory will show the daughter's married and husband's names.
3. ***Use estate inventories to find the missing father.*** While this is not a standard solution for finding an unknown father, you should always look at the mother's estate inventory because the children's father might be named.

## Certificates of Poverty (*Fattigbevis*)

For individuals who didn't have any assets at the time of their death to cover the costs of performing an estate inventory or *bouppteckning*, the surviving relatives would submit a certificate of poverty (*fattigbevis*) to the court for approval.

The certificate of poverty (*fattigbevis*) was an application by a deceased's surviving relative requesting to waive the performance of the estate inventory (*bouppteckning*) because the deceased's estate was of little value or worthless. This certificate has genealogical value because it usually lists the immediate relatives. The certificate of poverty usually contains the following:

- Information about the deceased – name, birth, and death dates
- Names of immediate surviving relatives
- Statement requesting a waiver of estate inventory (*bouppteckning*)
- Signatures of applicant and witnesses

You will find certificates of poverty (*fattigbevis*) for Stockholm for the years 1756 to 1933 in ArkivDigital in the following archives:

- Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning (Justitiekollegium, Förmyndarkammaren) 1756-1924
- Stockholms rådhusrätt, bouppteckningsavd 1925-1933

We will search for the certificate of poverty for Johannes Eriksson, who died on March 19, 1917, in Stockholm. To directly search for a certificate of poverty (*fattigbevis*) in Stockholm's district court archive (*häradsrätt*), do the following:

1. Access ArkivDigital online.
2. Select archive search.
3. Select county type.
4. Select Stockholm stad
5. Select Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning archive.
6. In the volume list, you will find the *fattigbevis* and *register till fattigbevis*.
7. Search for person in *register till fattigbevis. 1911-1925*.
8. Search for the “E” section and the year 1917.
9. You will find an entry for Johannes Eriksson at the following reference  
*Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning (A, AB) EIID:51 (1911-1925) Image 250 (AID: v494741.b250, NAD: SE/SSA/0145a)*
10. The entry refers to the volume 1917, page 27.
11. Go to the volume for the *fattigbevis* for 1917.
12. Open the book and go to page 27. Reference *Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning (A, AB) EIID:41 (1917) Image 350 / Page 27 (AID: v494731.b350.s27, NAD: SE/SSA/0145a)*

## Common Words in Estate Inventory Preamble

| <i>SWEDISH</i>             | <i>ENGLISH</i>   |
|----------------------------|--|
| Aflidit (Avlidit)          | Died   |
| Arvinge                    | Heir   |
| Barn                       | Children   |
| Bevaka                     | Secure, is often used to protect the rights of minors or heirs living in another county. |
| Boet                       | Estate   |
| Bouppteckning              | Estate Inventory   |
| Derstädes                  | There, in the same place   |
| Dödstimma                  | Hour of death  |
| Döttrar                    | Daughters  |
| Edlig förpliktelse         | Holy oath  |
| Efter                      | After  |
| Efterlämnat                | Left behind, survived by   |
| Följande                   | Following  |
| Förmyndare                 | Legal guardian   |
| Förrättades                | (was) performed  |
| Förretogs                  | Conducted  |
| Hustru                     | Wife   |
| Laga                       | Legal  |
| Myndig                     | Of legal age   |
| Nämligen                   | Namely   |
| Nästlidne                  | Last   |
| Omyndig                    | Minor  |
| Ordning                    | Order  |
| Protokollet                | Record, minutes  |
| Sistlidne                  | Last   |
| Socken                     | Parish   |
| Sterbhuset<br>(stärbhuset) | Estate   |
| Söner                      | Sons   |
| Värderingsman              | Appraiser  |

## COMMON CATEGORY HEADINGS

| <i>SWEDISH</i>    | <i>ENGLISH</i>   |
|-------------------|--|
| Bleck             | Tin  |
| Contant (Kontant) | Cash   |
| Diverse Saker     | Diverse Items  |
| Fastighet         | Real Estate  |
| Fordringar        | Amounts owed to the deceased.                                |
| Gångkläder        | Everyday clothing  |
| Guld              | Gold   |
| Jern (Järn)       | Iron   |
| Kläder            | Clothing   |
| Koppar            | Copper   |
| Kreatur           | Animal   |
| Kökssaker         | Kitchen Items  |
| Körredskap        | Driving Gear   |
| Linne             | Linen  |
| Mässing           | Brass  |
| Möbler            | Furniture  |
| Porslin           | Porcelain  |
| Redskap           | Tools  |
| Skulder           | Debts, Amounts owed by deceased.                             |
| Sängkläder        | Bedding  |
| Tenn              | Pewter   |
| Träd              | Wood   |
| Tillgångar        | Assets   |
| Transport         | To carry forward, as in addition, from one page to the next. |

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Online References – Estate Inventories

- Family Search Wiki Sweden
  - [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Sweden\\_Probate\\_Records](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Sweden_Probate_Records)
- ArkivDigital Blogs
  - <https://www.arkivdigital.net/blog/bouppteckning/searching-for-estate-inventories-in-arkivdigital>
  - <https://www.arkivdigital.net/blog/bouppteckning/review-an-estate-inventory-ingress-or-preamble>
  - <https://www.arkivdigital.net/blog/church-books/where-did-klara-settle-in-north-america>

### Online Swedish/English dictionaries

- Swedish Genealogy guide 1788 and 1814 Swedish/English dictionaries
  - <http://swedishgenealogyguide.com/>
- Good Swedish-English dictionary focused on terms in introductory and inventory list sections.
  - [http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~swewgw/Fact/Dict/facdic\\_bou.htm](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~swewgw/Fact/Dict/facdic_bou.htm)

## Sandin family site

- Site that includes transcriptions and translations of estate inventory registers and a pictorial dictionary of objects found in the inventories.
  - <http://www.sandinfamily.com/genealogy-resources/bp-xlat-intro.htm>

## History of the Swedish Monetary System

- <http://www.hhogman.se/monetary-system-sweden.htm>

## Historical Currency Converter

- <http://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html>

## Pictorial Object Collections

- <https://web.archive.org/web/20170629050639/http://www.domboksforskning.se/index.htm>
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20170630151716/http://www.domboksforskning.se/foremalsexion/foremalsexikon2.htm>
- <https://digitaltmuseum.se/>

## Swedish Historical Newspapers

- <https://tidningar.kb.se/>

## Books in English

Hallgren, Bengt. *The World of Cajsa Andersdotter, A close-up view of Sweden in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.

Johansson, Carl-Erik. *Cradled in Sweden*. Sandy, Utah: Everton Publishers, 2002.

Skogsjö, Håkan. *Explore Your Swedish Heritage*. ArkivDigital AD AB, Lyrestad, Sweden, 2020.

Ågren, Maria. *Domestic Secrets Women & Property in Sweden, 1600-1857*.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

## Books in Swedish

Clemensson, Per and Kjell Andersson. *Släktforskning Steg för Steg*. Fallköping: Elanders Gummessons, 2003.

Johansson, Ewa. *Släktforskningens Mysterium Lärobok i släktforskning*.

Kristianstad: Kristianstads Boktryckeri AB, 2009.

Lagerqvist, Lars O. *Vad Kostade Det?*Lund, Sweden: Historiska Media, 2011.

Lunsjö, Barbro. *Släktforskarens Ordbok Nyckeln Till Bouppteckningar*. Natur & Kultur, Stockholm,

## Journals

“Handwriting Example XIV,” *Swedish American Genealogist*, Volume XXVII (June 2007 No. 2), pages 11 and 24.

“Handwriting Example,” *Swedish American Genealogist*, Volume XXXII (September 2012 No. 3, pages 4 and 22.