

## Weaving Cultural History into Your Family History

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### Online Resources for Enriching Family History

1. Google, Bing, and Yahoo searches (Also search for other search engines.)  
e.g.; “timeline of \_\_\_\_\_ history,” “history of \_\_\_\_\_,” “historic maps,” searches on names, places, events; do image searches too.
2. Wikipedia: <http://www.wikipedia.org>
3. Digital History: <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/>  
(timelines, exhibits, “Ethnic Voices,” 600 annotated documents, lectures, etc.)
4. Geni.com: <http://www.geni.com>
5. The National Archives Bookshop: <http://bookshop.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>  
(lots of family history books, including ones on occupations)
6. *Faces of America*: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/facesofamerica/> (PBS Series, available on DVD and as a book)
7. *Who Do You Think You Are?* <https://www.tlc.com/tv-shows/who-do-you-think-you-are/>
8. “Writing Your Family’s History.” Cyndi’s List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet.  
<http://www.cyndislist.com/writing.htm>
9. Fleming, Theyn. “Write Through This: Strategies for Writing About Real-Life Conflict and Tragedy.” <http://www.toasted-cheese.com/ab/>
10. Cyndi’s List: <http://www.cyndislist.com/> (information about states and countries)
11. Historical Newspapers (Do a Google search on “historical newspapers.”)  
Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com/>)  
GenealogyBank.com (<http://www.genealogybank.com/gbnk/>)  
*New York Times* (searchable database, 1851 to the present)  
(<https://www.nytimes.com/content/help/search/archives/archives.html?mcubz=3>)
12. Ask Custom Search (<http://www.ask.com>): See Google description.
13. Old Maps Online ([www.oldmapsonline.org](http://www.oldmapsonline.org))
14. Find the #1 Song on the Day You Were Born (<http://playback.fm/birthday-song>)
15. Bureau of Land Management (<http://glorerecords.blm.gov/>): Federal land patents, etc.)
16. Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>): Family members in other parts of the country can post photos of family members.

### Cemetery Record Locator Sites

1. Interment.net: Cemetery Records Online (<http://www.interment.net/>): The site has records from dozens of countries, but it focuses on the United States, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Germany. Search by individual’s name, place name, death date, birth date. Other cemetery search sites lead to this one.
2. Find a Grave (<http://www.findagrave.com/>): The site includes 60 million records. Users are encouraged to add records. Search by person’s name, birth year, death year. Search by location and cemetery name.
3. BillionGraves (<http://billiongraves.com/>): Volunteers upload photos of headstones, and they transcribe them too.
4. DeathIndexes.Com (<http://www.deathindexes.com/cemeteries.html>) has an extensive list of cemetery and burial indexes. You can search by state.
5. The Records Project (<http://recordsproject.com/cemetery/>) has state cemetery records information.
6. Online Searchable Death Indexes and Records (<http://www.deathindexes.com/>): The site includes death records, death certificate indexes, death notices & registers, obituaries, probate indexes, and cemetery and burial records. (I found Pierce County, Wisconsin, cemetery records here!)

7. Access Genealogy (<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/cemetery/>) has an extensive cemetery section.
8. JewishGen (<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetery/>) includes almost two million names from cemeteries and burial records across the globe.
9. Illinois State Genealogical Society (<http://www.ilgensoc.org/>): Cemetery Location Project (<http://usgw.tombstones.org/illinois/illinois.html>): Cemetery locations only; not transcriptions.

## Helpful Resources

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- Winterowd, Ross. *Senior Citizens Writing*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2007/
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### **Some Forms of Writing about Family History: A Tiny Sampling**

1. Timeline: For each year of the person's life, write the year on the left margin. Following the year, list an important event that occurred in the world (personal, local, regional, national, international).
2. Journal prompts (Hobbs, 126): e.g., a turning point in your life, a favorite pet, a dream, a big storm, favorite song, family traditions, special friends, family sayings, houses where you have lived, getting into trouble, a hobby, sibling rivalries, embarrassing moments (not too embarrassing), favorite movie, favorite television show, humorous moments.
3. Place names: Research the name(s) of the city(ies) where the person lived and write about them.
4. Personal and family names: Research the meaning of the person's name. ("Duane" is a Gaelic word meaning "dark one." "Roen" is a Norwegian farm name meaning "rapidly running water.")
5. Family photographs: With other family members, write about the story of a photograph—who, what, where, when, why?
6. Travel: Write about trips that family members have taken. Although writing during a trip yields the most details, you can write about trips that were taken in the past—even the distant past.
7. Recipes: Write about the stories surrounding favorite family recipes—and some of the meals that have resulted from them.

### **Questions to Generate Enriching Details about Family History**

1. What is your favorite family photo? What story is related to that photo?
2. Why did your grandparents/parents live in \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Why did your \_\_\_\_\_ (some ancestor) come to America?
4. What was happening in America when \_\_\_\_\_ came to America?
5. What family tradition has been maintained the longest in your family?
6. What was happening in the world on the day that \_\_\_\_\_ was born?
7. What is the most memorable war story that one of you relatives ever told you?
8. What is your most precious family heirloom? What makes it so treasured?
9. What is the most interesting family letter that you have found? What makes it so fascinating?
10. What were your parents' best parenting skills?
11. What was your nickname as a child? How did you get that nickname?
12. What is the most interesting fictional account of some family story?
13. What do census records indicate about \_\_\_\_\_'s occupation?
14. What was that occupation like when your ancestor was in it?
15. What are some relevant historical details about the place where \_\_\_\_\_ lived?
16. What was happening in America in the year \_\_\_\_\_? (Do a Google search on a year.)
17. What was happening in a specific country in the year \_\_\_\_\_? (Search on country and year.)

## An Illustrative Example of Enriched Family History (written by Brad Johnson)

**5 (1) John Martin Hanson** [*Hans*<sup>1</sup>] was born 6 May 1846 at Treje in Skee Parish, Bohusland, Sweden, to farmer Hans Eskilsson and wife Johanna Lisa Jacobsdotter. He became a shoemaker (*skomakare*) at Prestorp in Skee Parish.

On 3 March 1871, the shoemaker Johan Martin Hansson married Carolina Nilsson in Skee Parish. She was born 18 December 1848 at Rellen in Skee Parish, daughter of Nils Christensson and Christina Olsdotter.

On 3 May 1871, John Martin Hansson and wife left Skee Parish for America. They traveled approximately one hundred miles southeast to the major Swedish port of Göteborg and sailed from there on Thursday, 12 May 1871, on the feeder service run of the Thomas Wilson Line via the steamer *Rollo*, bound for Hull, England, with their final destination listed as Milwaukee, Wisconsin. From Hull, they traveled to Liverpool by train via England's North Eastern Railway, and sailed to America from that port.

The *Rollo* was a iron steamship of 1,568 tons (1,437 gross tons), measuring 260.4 feet by 32.3 feet, and had been built in 1870 by C. & W. Earle's Shipbuilding of Hull, England for the Thomas Wilson Line. The ship was powered by a two cylinder compound engine driving a single screw, producing speeds up to 11.5 knots. She carried up to fifty first-class, twenty-eight second-class, and 498 steerage passengers. The *Rollo* carried one funnel and two masts, schooner-rigged, and had two decks, four bulkheads, and one partial bulkhead. In 1879, she was fitted with new boilers and lengthened, reaching 1,613 net tons and a length of 274.7 feet. She was re-engined in 1897, then sold to shipbreakers in September 1909 and scrapped at Einwarden<sup>1</sup>.

The transport from Göteborg to Hull was generally through the firm Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Company, which included the following ships (all steam-driven) at this time:

	Year	Gross	
<u>Name</u>	<u>in Service</u>	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Passengers</u>
<i>Hero</i>	1866	1,034	550
<i>Albion</i>	1867	1,066	unknown
<i>Rollo</i>	1870	1,500	8-900
<i>Orlando</i>	1870s	1,500	8-900

Two ships generally alternated on the route each week, departing Göteborg on Friday afternoon and reaching Hull in two days (i.e. arrival on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning). In 1870, 70.4% of emigrants departing via Göteborg sailed to Hull; in 1869 and 1871, the number was close to 80%. The passengers debarked at Hull on Monday morning due to the tides. There, agents met them and conducted them in groups to a meal, then on to the nearby railway station for transport to Liverpool. The train journey, covering about one hundred and twenty-five miles, took about six hours. At Liverpool, they were lodged overnight and taken to the ship the next day.

By 1871, the majority of emigrants sailed on steamers, not sailing ships. Several major shipping lines routing passengers from Liverpool to New York were, in 1870: National Line, handling 38.6% of the Göteborg emigrants; Allan 17.7% (which used Leith rather than Hull as its terminal in England), Inman 14.5%, and Anchor 12.9%. By 1879, the leaders were White Star with 24.6%, Inman with 22.5%, and Cunard with 18.1%<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Harrower, John *The Wilson Line*.

<sup>2</sup> Lext, Gösta *Studier Rörande Svensk Emigration till Nord Amerika 1850-1880*. Göteborg. 1977. pp. 240ff.

The cost of passage on steamers in steerage ran from \$31 to as high as \$45. This price included food. However, many liners in the 1870s only had two toilets for up to one hundred passengers. Four tiered bunks only eighteen inches wide were provided to steerage<sup>3</sup>.

Surveying steamship arrivals in New York in the late spring/early summer of 1871, we note that most sailed from Liverpool, stopped at Queenstown, then reached New York after a total voyage time of twelve to fifteen days duration. Twelve to thirteen days seems most typical.

Transatlantic steamships of the day ranged from 2,300-3,500 tons, slightly over forty feet wide and between three and four hundred feet long, and constructed of iron. Most still carried three masts, along with one funnel. Speeds ranged from ten to twelve knots. Passenger capacity generally ran from about five hundred to nine hundred. The old ocean-going paddle steamers had disappeared; screw propellers operated by either inverted or oscillating geared engines, coal-fired, were the new means of travel.

The sailing packets of the mid-nineteenth century were known as “coffin brigs”. One-sixth of these ran aground or sank, and disease was common. The steamers of the 1870s were an improvement, but risks still abounded. Katherine Ledoux wrote *Ocean Notes for Ladies* in 1878, with grim advice:

*“I have always felt that a body washed ashore in good clothes would receive more respect and kinder care than if dressed in those only fit for the rag bag.”*<sup>4</sup>

[a later excerpt]

In 1870, Red Wing was a city with a population of 4,210, up from 2,405 in 1860. Of the first number, forty-five percent were foreign-born. Located on the south shore of the Mississippi River, the city had no connection to Wisconsin on the north bank except ferries until 1895, when the first bridge was built. It was primarily reached by steamboat from LaCrosse and Galena through the nineteenth century, though on 29 September 1870, railroad tracks were completed from Hastings (the St. Paul & Chicago Company). In 1871, a line reached to Winona, and by 1872, to Chicago. As a river port and aided by the rails, it became the largest primary wheat market in the world in 1873, with one million bushels of warehouse capacity. As many as three hundred to six hundred wagons hauled grain to the city each day that autumn and early winter.

Stagecoach was an alternative travel but somewhat limited compared to steamboat. We note that a stagecoach arrived during a bitterly cold winter night in 1867 at front of the Metropolitan Hotel in Red Wing with the driver frozen dead at the reins. However, from at least 1858 until 1871, the Burbank Stage Coach traveled a route from LaCrosse to St. Paul, a journey that took forty-nine hours including a seven-hour rest at Winona and eight hours at Red Wing. Routes also existed between Red Wing and Cannon Falls, and on to Faribault via Northfield<sup>5</sup>. Generally, six passengers, three facing front and three facing back, were carried in the coach.

Immigration was heavy to the area, which served as a waystation of sorts to western Minnesota. The city grew in numbers from 4,320 in 1870 to 5,876 in 1880. From 9 July to 1 September 1870, 1,070 immigrants

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<sup>3</sup> Maddocks, Melvin. *The Seafarers. The Great Liners*. 1978. p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Preston, Diana. *Lusitania. An Epic Tragedy*. 2002. NY. p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Setterdahl, Lilly. *Minnesota Swedes. The Emigration From Trolle Ljungby to Goodhue County 1855-1912*, 1996, East Moline, IL. pp. 99-101.

landed at Red Wing, and 1,014 remained in the area. That year, an immigrant house was built in the city for a temporary residence for the new arrivals.

In 1869, of 441 emigrants recruited by Hans Mattson, 119 listed Red Wing as their destination (27%), just behind Chicago with 172 and ahead of St. Paul at 92<sup>6</sup>. The emigrant registers from 1872-73 of Karl J. Möllersvärd, an agent for the Allan Line at Göteborg, included seventy-five persons naming Red Wing as their destination, or 2.6% of the total who named a destination and ten percent of those headed for Minnesota. The Red Wing contingent included the bulk of the Minnesota-bound emigrants from Kristianstad and Göteborg och Bohus län (Bohusland), but none from Värmland<sup>7</sup>.

Growth was also measured by construction. From 1860-79, 404 houses were constructed, mostly of wood frame construction with a handful of better brick structures in the West End. The East End, particularly beyond Bluff Street, was the poorest part of the city. This area was generally the home of immigrants, though a number lived in the lower West End near the factories and railroads. Open land, some marshy, adjoined Barn Bluff, and cattle grazed in the 1870s both below and on top of the bluff.

Industries that may have attracted immigrant labor included the stone quarries on Barn and Sorin's Bluff, the Red Wing Brewery, the lime works, the flourmills, and the tannery. Many immigrants settled near places of employment: on the West End near Main in the 1870s, this would include Betcher's sawmill and sash and door factory, a brewery, and the wagon works. On the East End, the quarries, lime works, and cooperages would dominate.

Author Robert C. Ostergren, in his study on the Chisago Lake settlements, comments:

*"The isolated nature of settlement in Sweden stimulated and preserved cultural differentiation. A prominent feature of spatial organization was the bygd, a small territory occupied by a group of people who shared common customs, a common dialect, and a sense of common historical experience. They perceived themselves to be members of an exclusive community...Such feeling was not abandoned in the process of emigrating from Sweden to America."*<sup>8</sup>

Ostergren's indication of a common origin and common experiences as a means of re-establishing the *bygd* in America is predicated on ties of locality in Sweden. An analysis of another Swedish-American community in Goodhue County, Minnesota, indicates a similar pattern. Of the charter members of the Vasa community there, fifty percent derived from three *härads* in Kristianstad province. The Red Wing church also leaned to Skånian origins; Spring Garden derived from Skaraborg and Cannon Falls from Vista *härad*. By the 1870s, the Goodhue County parishes all had approximately thirty-five to forty percent of their members originating in Jönköping province. Many members had origins in Nye Parish, and a few in Alseda. Emigrants from Kristianstad accounted for about thirteen percent of the members at Red Wing and Cannon Falls; Östergötland was well-represented in Cannon Falls and Värmland in Red Wing. Spring Garden still had a significant group from Skaraborg<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Ljungmark, Lars, *For Sale—Minnesota*. Chicago, 1971. p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> Ljungmark, Lars, *For Sale—Minnesota*. Chicago, 1971. pp. 282-3.

<sup>8</sup> Ostergren, Robert C. "Cultural Homogeneity and Population Stability Among the Swedish Immigrants in Chisago County" *Minnesota History*, Fall 1973. p. 285.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, Bradford R. *Swedish Immigration to Goodhue County, Minnesota*. 1978. Gustavus Adolphus College, unpublished thesis. pp.61 ff.