

3-1-1999

Instructions for Clergymen on Filling In a Household Examination Roll in 1805

James E. Erickson

Shirley Carter

Laura J. Erickson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Erickson, James E.; Carter, Shirley; and Erickson, Laura J. (1999) "Instructions for Clergymen on Filling In a Household Examination Roll in 1805," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 19 : No. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol19/iss1/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

Instructions for Clergymen on Filling In a Household Examination Roll in 1805*

James E. Erickson, Shirley Carter,[†] and Laura J. Erickson[‡]

Axel Robert Nilsson's "Almanac for 1851": *Examinations in the Catechism are not held in the North American Republic. This I have ascertained after investigations on the spot. Authorities in America are not like in Sweden—eternal and mighty. This is so because it is not as in Sweden—put in its place by God. Government exists maybe but is not seen. Those in Power do not use the Catechism to keep the populace in obedience. . . . If anyone obeys anyone else in North America then it is because he is still too much Swedish.*

—Vilhelm Moberg, *Unto A Good Land*

For over 300 years, from 1686 to 1991, the State Church of Sweden was responsible for keeping vital statistics on individuals residing in each of the country's more than 2,500 parishes. Thus, clergymen (parish ministers) maintained parish registers in which they or their assistants recorded vital and/or ecclesiastical information in the following major categories: births and christenings (*födelselängd* and *dopplängd*), marriages (*vigsellängd*), deaths and burials (*dödslängd* and *begravningslängd*), communion attendance (*kommunionlängd*), confirmation classes (*konfirmationslängd*), and movement of individuals into or out of the parish (*inflyttningslängd* and *utflyttningslängd*).

Clergymen also maintained a record known as the household examination roll or clerical survey (in Swedish: *husförhörslängd*, *husförhörsrulla*, or *husförhörsbok*). The church law of 1686 required clergymen to "keep certain rolls of all their listeners, house to house, farm to farm, and know their progress and knowledge of assigned sections of the catechism, and diligently admonish children, farm helpers and servant maids to read in book and with their own eyes see what God bids and commands in his Holy Word."¹ Thus it seems as though these records were kept to enable clergymen and other authorities to know, to admonish and, to regulate parishioners within their respective parishes.

How was this record maintained and what specific information was recorded therein? According to Nils William Olsson, a given household examination roll was:

* All translations from Swedish were done by Ingrid Lang, Translations (Översättningar), 13415 Tenth Ave., S.E., Milaca, MN 56353; e-mail: <ingrid@maxminn.com>

[†] Shirley (née Sällstrom) Carter resides at 6503 South 46 #4, Omaha, NE 68117.

[‡] Laura J. Erickson resides at 7008 Bristol Blvd., Edina, MN 55435.

¹ Carl-Erik Johansson, *Cradled in Sweden*, Revised Edition (Logan, UT, 1995), 117.

originally set up by the clergyman in making his [annual] visitations throughout the parish to see how his parishioners were faring physically and spiritually. These rolls give information about all members of a household, their names, occupations, birth dates, birthplaces, departures and arrivals and occasionally their marriages and deaths. Here we may find bits of information about the educational status of the persons enumerated, their character, notes about their undesirability as parishioners, such as being chronic alcoholics, mentally retarded or those having criminal records. Information is also given about people who boarded in the household—such as aged parents, servants, cobblers, tailors, retired military personnel and poorhouse inmates.²

Given the nature and scope of this record, it should be patently obvious why a series of household examination rolls from a given parish constitute a unique and indispensable genealogical source. Their true value for researchers lies in the fact that they “give a continuous story and not only a fleeting glimpse of the family;”³ they “give an overall view of a family and its place in parish society;”⁴ and they allow for the establishment of a research technique characterized by movement back and forth between household examination rolls, which are useful for constructing the basic family pedigree, and the parish registers, which are useful for verifying and filling in the details of the basic family pedigree.⁵ The bottom line is simply this—without household examination rolls, it would be much more difficult for family history researchers to make connections and see the big picture. They truly do help you see the forest for the trees!

The focus of this article is on the instructions provided to clergymen in 1805 on how to properly record information in a household examination roll. Those interested in more detailed information on household examination rolls per se, and how they should be used in a comprehensive research effort, should consult the following English sources:

- Anderson, John Robert. “The Genealogical Workshop. 3. The Household Examination Roll.” *Swedish American Genealogist* V (March 1985): 65-72.
- Johansson, Carl-Erik. “Clerical Survey Records.” In *Cradled in Sweden*. Revised Edition. Logan, UT: The Everton Publishers, 1995.
- Olsson, Nils William. *Tracing Your Swedish Ancestry*. 1987. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987.

² Nils William Olsson, *Tracing Your Swedish Ancestry* (Uppsala, 1987), 19-20.

³ Johansson, *Cradled in Sweden*, 118.

⁴ Olsson, *Tracing Your Swedish Ancestry*, 19-20.

⁵ Johansson, *Cradled in Sweden*, 128-130.



*Depiction of an annual household examination. Note the clergyman sitting at the table with his husförhörsbok. Special thanks to artist Björn Berg, for giving SAG permission to publish his delightful illustration from the book, *Än lever Emil i Lönneberga*, written by Astrid Lindgren and published by Rabén Förlagen AB, Stockholm.*

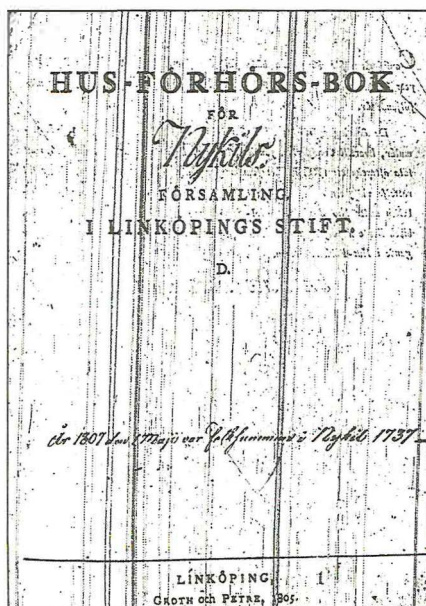
The Nykil Parish Husförhörbok 1806-1810

The three pages immediately following the title page of the household examination roll (*husförhörbok*) maintained in Nykil Parish (Ög.), for the five-year period 1806-1810, contain material that was obviously intended to be read by the clergyman who would be recording information therein. In a sense, this material represents the early nineteenth century equivalent of an “owner’s manual.” These written and visual instructions also have significant present-day value, for they provide researchers a firsthand account of *how* the household examination roll was supposed to be filled out and *what* material was supposed to be (or not be) included. Each of these pages, including the title page, will be highlighted below.

Page 1 (see facsimile below), the title page, contains the following text:

Transliteration: *HUS-FÖRHÖRS-BOK / FÖR / Nykils / FÖRSAMLING. / I LINKÖPINGS STIFT. / D. / År 1807 den 1 Maj var folksumman i Nykil 1737 — / LINKÖPING, GROTH och PETRE, 1805.*

Translation: Household Examination Roll for Nykil’s Parish in Linköping Diocese. D. On 1 May 1807 the total number of people in Nykil was 1,737 — [Printed in] Linköping, / [by] Groth and Petre, 1805.



Page 1 of the Household Examination Roll used in Nykil Parish 1806-1810.

Page 2 contains the following text:

Translation: The Consistory is hereby both fulfilling its promise and complying with the clergy's wish, by publishing a new Household Examination Roll for five consecutive years.

The changes deemed to be necessary by the Consistory in the mentioned form at the Pastoral- and Dean's Office, have required the printing of a new form. The beginning, right after the Title Page, serves as correction for these notations: also, the comment is added that the Table under Nr. V, for the Pastoral Office's New Residents and Those Who Moved is kept as is, and is followed for examination by careful recording of the New Residents and Those Who Moved in the Household Examination Book. Linköping, Aug. 28, 1805.

JAC. AX. LINDBLÖM

Page 3, which has the heading *Anmärkning om Tabellens Bruk* (Comments on the Table's Use), contains a detailed list of instructions for filling in specific columns in the household examination roll. A translation of this page is presented below. Two instructions are particularly noteworthy. First, the list of standardized abbreviations that were supposed to be used in the Name Column (see item 1 below) may prove valuable to researchers as they attempt to transliterate and translate their own documents.

Second, in the instruction for filling in the Column for Special Remarks (see item 6 below), it is made quite clear that clergymen were supposed to distinguish between civil and moral circumstances relating to particular parishioners; and the latter, if included, were to be noted cryptically. Whether clergymen routinely followed these instructions would have to be determined on a parish-by-parish basis. Olsson's quote (see page 47 and footnote 2) implies that they may not have. Regardless, it would seem as though researchers who uncover a clergyman's personal comments about an ancestor's moral character should consider themselves fortunate!

1. In the **Name Column** is noted:
 - a) the farm name on a separate line in larger letters;
 - b) the owner's or farmer's title and name;
 - c) then the wife's—childrens'—the servants' and all others that belong to the house, of what age, gender, class and privileges, whatever they may be;
 - d) outfarms and other special apartments that are lived in.
 - e) next under the farm, everyone living on the property, such as crofters (*torpare*), cavalry soldier (*ryttare*), soldiers (*soldater*), tenant servants (*inhysesshjon*), criminals (*gärningsmän*), fishermen (*fiskare*), blacksmiths (*smeder*), among others, no exceptions,

Note: To make it easier, the following abbreviations may be used:

R.st., *Rusthållaren* (the farmer who sponsored a cavalry soldier);
Skib., *Skattebonden* (the free farmer/taxed farmer);
Br., *Brukaren* (the farmer/tenant farmer);
H., *Hustrun* (the wife);
S., *Sonen* (the son);
D., *Dotren* (the daughter);
M. M., *Mannens Moder* (the man's mother);
H. M., *Hustruns Moder* (the wife's mother);
S. M., *Svärmöder* (mother-in-law);
S. F., *Svärfader* (father-in-law);
Dr., *Dräng* (farm hand);
P., *Pigan* (the maid/maid servant);
Jfr., *Jungfru* (Miss/maiden);
Hh., *Hushållerska* (housekeeper);
K., *Kusk* (coachman);
R., *Rättare* (farm foreman);
Lg., *Livgrenadjär* (grenadier at the King's Guard);
Rtt., *Ryttare* (cavalry soldier);
Sold., *Soldat* (soldier);
B., *Båtsman* (seaman/sailor);
T., *Torpare* (crofter);
Ih., *Inhysesjon* (tenant farmer);
E., *Enkling* (widower) or *Enka* (widow).

2. In the **Birth Column** is noted
 - a) always the birth year with day and month, where the last-mentioned could be expressed in fractions, the top number indicating the day and the bottom number the month, such as 20/1 or 20 January, and
 - b) for those who move in, not until they have identified themselves, and when it is found, at first glance, that the birth year is missing in the information.
 Note: All information collected during one year is numbered and bound together in a bundle and the numbers on the information are noted in order in the
3. **Column for Information Numbers**, from which, when needed, one may quickly locate information, as the number in the household examination roll shows the location in the bundle of information.
4. In the **Column for Smallpox**, natural should be marked with *N* and vaccinated with a *V*.

5. In the **Marriage Column**, the year of marriage is noted, and day and month. The stated year is a quick guide when issuing authorizations of several kinds, especially for reduction of state taxes. It can be confirmed immediately if the children, for whom the reduction is sought, belong to both the husband and wife, or one of them.
6. In the **Column for Special Remarks**, comments can be made about the health, body build, way of living, etc., affecting one's civil circumstances. Note: Moral circumstances, known only to the clergyman, such as a tendency toward drunkenness, disputes between married couples until someone has been legally charged, promiscuity, suspicion of crime, neglect of communion, etc., may not be noted. They may only be marked by a sign, which is known only to the teacher.
7. In the **Examination Column**:
 - a) In the 1st box, write day and month of the mentioned year in numbers, indicating when the examination took place; in the 2nd, the reading; in the 3rd, recitation of Luther's Catechism from memory; in the 4th, Bishop Svebelius's explanations [to Luther's Catechism], also by memory; and in the 5th, comprehension.
 - b) To determine the progress of knowledge, the letter *a*, which means good; *b*, average; and *c*, poor knowledge, can be used. If a more distinctive grade of knowledge is needed, this can be done using the same letters together, such as *aa*, *ab*, and *bc*. Main portions of Luther's and Svebelius's Catechisms can be marked by adding numbers.
 - c) For those who avoid the examinations, nothing is marked, from which one can quickly tell who should be reminded of their duty to act rightly.
8. In the **Column for Those who have Moved and Died** is noted where they moved, along with the year of moving. For those who have died, the death is noted with the usual cross, along with the day and month and year. The year is written out.
9. Putting this into practice will show an even closer resemblance to the test sheet, which should be followed with careful attention and an easy hand.⁶

⁶ This translation contains a little guesswork. It seems to suggest that a "test sheet" was used during the actual exam and the results were later copied into the *husförhörsbok* at the pastoral office.

Page 4 (see facsimile below), represents a sample or idealized page. Since it immediately follows the written instructions found on page 3, it was obviously included to illustrate to clergymen how a typical page was supposed to be completed.

Björklunds Söte.							
Hänmännets Namn & Svällestad.	Född uti	Hjstom ifrån	Björklunds N:o	Köps N:o	Värd.	Särskilda an- märkingar.	Förhör 1805.
Bönd. Anders Svensson.	Aby 1746. 2	Ödeshög 1799.	5.		1775 1793	Frih Sälig &c.	2 ^r c b c c
H. Carin Olofsdotter.	Wadsena 1750. 1	Ödeshög 1799.	5.		1793 2	Synlig.	2 ^r aa a a ad
Son. Sven.	Aby 1776. 2	Ödeshög 1799.	6.	n.		St. L. Fig. Maja Nilder, i Bergen.	2 ^r b b bc b
Dottr. Brita.	Ödeshög 1780. 1	Ödeshög 1799.	7.	n.		Vanlytt.	2 ^r a ab ab b
Dr. Sven Persson.	Ödeshög 1766. 2	Ödeshög 1799.	8.	n.		Sträffad för 7-de Budet.	2 ^r a a ab b
P. Anna Tonsdotter.	Ödeshög 1788. 1	Töby 1800.	9.	n.		Firist.	2 ^r b b bc c 4
Soldate-Torpet N:o 36 Soldat Magnus Käfte.	Kuaby 1760. 2	Dito 96.	10.	n.	1795 2		2 ^r a a a a u
Hustr. Ingrid Åkesdotter.	Kuaby 1768. 2	O. Huby 96.	11.	n.	1795 7		
Torpet Backa.							
T. Per Olofson.	Filfad 1766. 2	Ljung 1788.	n.		1798 3		2 ^r ab a ab b
H. Inga Sueddotter.	Ljung 1766. 2	Ljung 1795.	n.		1798 3		2 ^r a ab b b
S. Magnus.	Härff. 1798.		n.				2 ^r ab ab
M. M. Brita Olsdotter.	1736. 3	Ljung 1788.	n.		1760 2	Enka 1787.	
Backf. Grindor.							
T. Anna Tonsdotter.	Vist 1749.	Sainsta 1799.	n.			Varit Amma ofördig.	2 ^r b b b b b
Backf. Syltor.							
Socken-Skornakären Pon. Lidderber.	Linköp. 1769. 1	Ledberg 1799.	n.		1799 2	Enkling 1800.	2 ^r bc b c c
Lörogose Söte.	1793. 2	Vikingst. 1804.	12.	n.			2 ^r ab b c c
Backf. Hagen.							
Sökn. Sveridars Nils Klipping.	Grebo 1759. 2	Veta 1800.	n.		1781 2	Ofördig.	2 ^r c ab b bc
H. Agnet. Mäntdotter.	Grebo 1764. 2	Veta 1800.	n.		1781 2		2 ^r a a ab b
Backf. Hampen.							
Sökn. Jonas Hammarbom.	Vänga 1763. 1	Rifinge 1804.	13.	n.			2 ^r d b b bc

Page 4 of the Household Examination Roll used in Nykil Parish 1806-1810.

- Column 1: *Hemmanets namn* — Names of the household
 Column 2: *Född uti* — Born in [parish, year, day, month]
 Column 3: *Hitkom ifrån* — Arrived here from
 Column 4: *Besk.[eds] N.[umern]* — Information Numbers
 Column 5: *Koppar* — Smallpox
 Column 6: *Vigd.[a]* — Married
 Column 7: *Särskilda anmärkningar* — Special remarks
 Column 8: *Förhör 1806* — [Date of] Household examination, 1806

236

Fattigstugan (the poorhouse)

Dejon (the maid servant) / *Enk:[an]* (the widow) Anna Olofsdotter; born Nykil 1732; from Wårdnäs [Vårdnäs]; V; *Enk:[a]* (widow) 1777

Enk:[an] (the widow) Stina Svensd[otte]r; born Skeda 1730; V; *Blind* (blind).

G[am]la Pig.[an] (the old maid) / *Dejøn* (the maid servant) / Stina Bengtsdotter; born Skep[p]sås 13 September 1748; from Skep[p]sås 1750; V

Enkan (the widow) Greta Nilsd[otte]r; born G:[ammal]kil 1737; V; married 1757; *Enka* (widow) 1786

Enk:[an] (the widow) Lena Jönsd[otte]r; born Nykil 29 September 1729; V; married 1750 & 1785; *Enka* (widow) 1785 & 1789(?)

Gaml[a](?) Pig.[an] (the old(?) maid) Kjerstin Nilsd[otte]r; born *Dito* (i.e., Nykil) 30 March 1776(?); N; *Sjuk och lång ligganden* (sick and long recumbant)

Blinda Pig.[an] (the blind maid) Ingeborg Jönsd[otte]r; born *Dito* (i.e., Nykil) 1769; from Rap[pe]stad 1793; V; *Blind* (blind)

Dejon (the maid servant) Maja Svensd[o]t[te]r; born Kisa 3 October 1751; from Sjögestad 1804; Info. no.(?) 1784; N; *Enka* (widow) 1800

G[am]la (the old maid) Brita Larsd[o]t[te]r; born Asby 1728

Dejon (the maid servant) Catharina Ingesson; born Hinneryd 15 July 1766; from G[amma]l[kil] 1800; N

Sockenstugan (the parish house)

Blinda Mannen (the blind man) Lars Eriksson; born Nykil (?) June 1729 (?); V; married 1779

H:[ustru] (wife) Elsa Pehrsdotter; born *Dito* (i.e., Nykil) 30 March 1730; from G:[ammal]kil, 1776; N; married 1779

Gossan (the boy) Anders Svensson; born Hageby[höga](?) 1792; from (?) 1797

Note: Eight individuals attended the household examination on 11 March 1806. Two others are listed as being sick (*sjuk.*). The boy, Anders Svensson, is the only individual who received marks for reading (*c*) and recitation (*c*).