

HAGAFORS CHAIR FACTORY

The first Swedish spindle-back chair is usually attributed to “Her Ladyship” at Hook Manor, Henriette Killander. She ordered chairs in the 1850s from the parish woodworker Jonas Fagerlund and Daniel Ljungqvist from Lunden.

A spindle-back chair consists of a seat, turned back spindles and legs as well as a back plate. The model was not unknown; there were English and American forerunners. But what happened next was new – the model became so popular that farmers in the Svenarum area started making the chairs as a sideline. The production was manual, and the only machine needed was a treadle lathe.

Hagafors Chair Factory in Svenarum parish was established in 1863 and is usually considered to be the oldest furniture factory in Sweden. The founder Johan Wilhelm Thunander and his co-workers were the first to utilise hydropower for turning the spindles. More machines were installed, production was mechanised, and the first furniture industry was born. The factory had many successors. Per Johan Andersson also started a spindle-back chair workshop in the parish. In 1876, he moved production to Malmbäck and later to Nässjö, where the proximity to the railway brought success to Nässjö Chair Factory. In Malmbäck, the Wigell Brothers Chair Factory started in 1878.

The factory in Hagafors was destroyed in a fire in the late 19th century. It was rebuilt and extended in stages. In the 1950s, the factory had some 60 employees and made around 60 000 chairs per year. Hagafors was known for its good design and collaborated with a number of designers. In 1965, Nässjö Chair Factory bought Hagafors, and despite pledges for continued operation, the factory soon closed down. Production of the most popular models was moved to Nässjö. Today, Wigells in Malmbäck is the only traditional spindle-back chair manufacturer still in operation.

The industrial buildings in Hagafors are preserved in their original location but are used for other purposes. The oldest workshop is a warehouse, and the more recent machine hall and storage buildings are used for woodworking and building supplies.



Hagafors chair factory in 1906.



HIDDEN GEM 83



HOW TO GET HERE

Hagafors old chair factory is located east of Road 30, just outside Svenarum, between Jönköping and Vrigstad. Turn east just north of Svenarum church. The road is sign-posted “Hagafors 2”.

Coordinates:
N 6369925 / E460985
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°
28' 12,75 E14° 20 57,80''
(WGS84)



The old chair factory is located close to the river Linneån. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.

JÖNKÖPINGS LÄNS
MUSEUM

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HIDDEN GEMS

There are so many things to discover in the countryside! Here, Jönköping County Museum presents some of the cultural environment and heritage attractions in the county.

They include well-known cultural monuments such as Habo Church and the Smålandsstenar Stone Circles, but also lesser known gems such as log-driving remains in the river Valån and Stengårdshult Church. Around the county you can find evidence of how people lived and worked in the past, everything from castles and manors to abandoned embankments and clearance cairns in forest areas.

The idea with Hidden Gems is to tempt you to make excursions in the cultural landscape – here you find our history, revealed in different ways in the physical environment. This heritage is worth experiencing and protecting. Bit by bit, we will be adding more sights under the heading Hidden Gems, both for people living in the county and visitors from further away. The more people who discover these gems, the better chance that they will be preserved for the future.

FACTS

In Jönköping County there are more than 4 000 registered ancient remains, 87 cultural environments of national interest, close to 130 listed buildings, around 150 churches, some 100 rural community centres with old settlements, a large number of industrial heritage sites, and two cultural reserves. There are also a large number of cultural environments with buildings worthy of conservation. More information about the sites can be found on the websites of the County Administrative Board, the municipalities and the local heritage societies.

GOOD TO KNOW

Access to the Hidden Gems varies. Some sites are well signposted, with easy access and proper parking facilities, etc. Others are more challenging to reach. Visitors may have to walk some distance, sometimes through scrubby forest, only to be met by a broken sign (if there ever was one) when they reach the site. All the sites, however, have an exciting and interesting history.

Please note that many of the cultural heritage buildings are privately owned and can only be viewed from the outside. Also, please respect private land. Many churches are open in the summer. During other times of the year, the churchwarden may be able to open the church for you.

