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## A gigantic project--Swedish old maps

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# A gigantic archival project is finished

– a unique treasure trove of old maps is online

BY BENGT OLOF KÄCK

The archives of the *Lantmäteriet* – the Swedish mapping, cadastral, and land registration authority, are now online. They contain about three million maps and some 70 million descriptive texts. The time frame for the archives is from 1630 until today.

After almost ten years of development of programs and a massive scanning of documents, the project is now finished, one of the largest digitization projects ever done in Sweden.

The digital version of *Lantmäteriet* archives has been entered into a database which is accessible online. Everything in the database is open to the public, from the 1600s up to 1928, in the search service *Historiska Kartor* (historical maps) on the web site of the *Lantmäteriet*.

The digitization, besides facilitating the surveyor's work also in a considerable way, has also made local historical and genealogical research possible to do from the office or from home. The archives of the *Lantmäteriet* are special in that they focus on local history. They give information on the history of the parishes and the villages, and even on individual farms. The online version of the archives of the *Lantmäteriet* is a fantastic asset for everyone that wishes to research their home and their family.

## Historical background – archives from the 1600s

The operations of the *Lantmäteriet* during the centuries have produced several different archives. The old-

est is the archive of the Board of the Surveyor's Office (*Lantmäteristyrelsen*). It was started in 1628 when King Gustavus Adolphus appointed the cartographer *Anders Bure* to make a systematic survey and mapping of all Swedish villages. This work went on during the entire 17<sup>th</sup> century and into the 18<sup>th</sup>, and is considered the start of the Swedish *Lantmäteriet*.

The result of this first geometric mapping, the Geometric Ground-rent book (*geometriska jordeboken*), became a national treasure of maps that in the beginning was kept in the royal palace in Stockholm. When a special building of the *Lantmäteriet* located by *Kungsträdgården* was finished in the late 1600s, the maps were moved there and thus were

spared from damage during the big fire at the Stockholm royal palace in 1697.

In this archive are also kept the *renovations*, that is, the copies of the most important operations of the *Lantmäteriet* in the country. In this archive one can find copies of the redistribution of land maps, the *storskifte* (the division of common grounds into distinct lots), the *laga skifte* (a later form of redistribution), and other larger operations.

In a class of its own are the archives of the local departments of the *Lantmäteriet* (*Lantmäterimyndigheternas arkiv*). These archives were normally kept in the residential cities of the county (*län*), cities like Linköping, Falun, or Karlstad. These archives contains maps and minutes



The old house of the *Lantmäteristyrelsen*, close to *Kungsträdgården* in Stockholm.

from all the surveying operations from the end of the 1600s until today.

These archives have a special interest for family and local history researchers as they contain the full records from the era of the huge redistributions of land in Sweden that started in the 1700s and lasted into the 1900s.

This is where we find the original maps from all *storskiften* and *laga skiften*. These *skiften* changed the look of the landscape in a major way, and the maps and minutes give very important information about the local history of Sweden. The maps were drawn in ink and then colored in various colors to show the nature of the various fields and forests. They could be very different in size, from a couple of square feet to small letter-sized maps.

These archives have documen-

tation that is still valid in court today when it comes to disputes concerning real estate. Other documents are informative about historical and cultural aspects regarding the cultivation, building, and development in general in the local history of Sweden.

Besides the copy of the important surveying operations that were sent to the King or rather to the archives in Stockholm, another copy was also made that was given to the landowners or the village. Many of these documents have been destroyed over the years, but many are still to be found in *byakistor* (village chests) around the country.

The general mapping of the country that has been done since the 1900s is kept in the archives of the *Rikets allmänna kartverk* (General Mapping Office of the Realm). The best-known maps are the *Häradskar-*

*torna* (economic maps from the late 1800s), *Generalstabskartan* (maps from the office of the military chief of staff), the modern *Ekonomiska kartan* (large scale maps), and *Topografiska kartan* (the topographical maps).

## Digitization

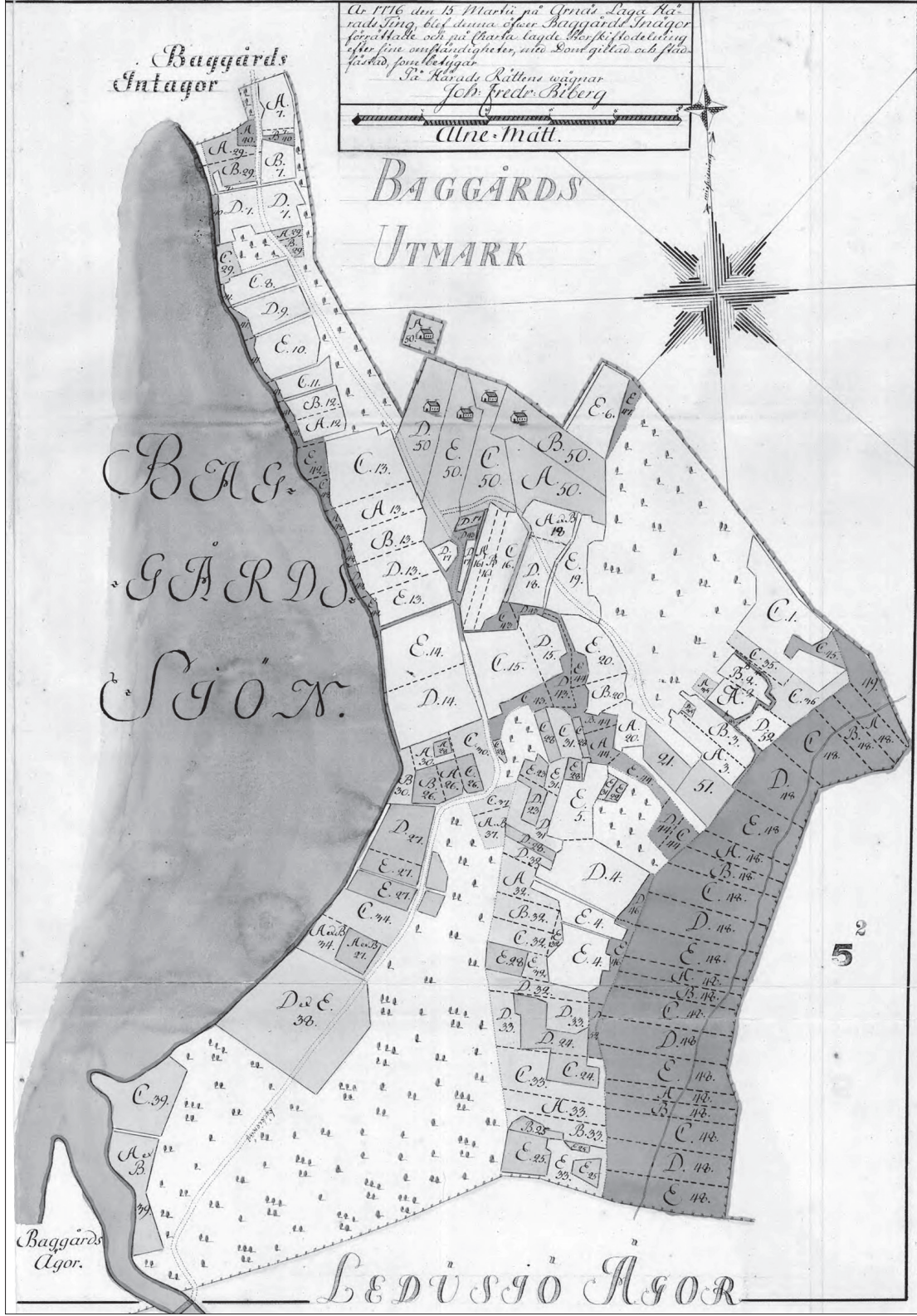
The reasons for digitizing the archives are mainly three: to make the daily work for the surveyors more effective, to lessen the wearing out of the old originals, and to make the material more accessible. After several trial processes, technics and methods for scanning have been developed that yield a good result.

The experiences of using the maps online have been very satisfactory. The readability of the maps and documents on screen has been very good, and the search time for maps is very short.



This is a map of Old Uppsala (Gamla Uppsala) from 1640, which clearly shows the church (in the square frame) and just south of the church are the three famous mounds, said to be the burial mounds for the kings Adils, Aun, and Egil from the 500s A.D., which is probably not correct.

CHARTA öfver **BAGGÅRDS ÅKER** uti **NORDMALINGS SOCHN**  
**NORRA ÅNGERMANLAND** och **VÄSTERNORRLANDS LÄN**, Uprättad År  
 1775, af Underleknad Herr Extraordinarie Landtmätaren G. E. O.  
 MÅN'S Lagligen Tilförordnade Vicarius.



This map was made for the first big redistribution of land (stor-skiftet) and there is also a description of the properties, and how the various fields were evaluated.  
 This will be found on p. 8. BUT no transcription or translation in this issue of SAG! It will appear in the next one.

This is a map of the fields of the village Baggården in Nordmaling parish, in northern Ångermanland, Västernorrland län, made in 1775. Each farmer has a letter to his farm, and the same letter is seen on his different pieces of land. To the left is the lake Baggårdssjön, and to the north is the common grounds of the village (utmark), and to the south the next village starts.

After digitizing, the original maps were moved. All the archives of the *Lantmäterimyndigheterna* are now kept in the regional archive (*landsarkivet*) in Härnösand. The archives of the *Lantmäteristyrelsen* and *Rikets Allmänna Kartverk* were moved in 2008 to the *Riksarkivet* (National Archives). Left in the hands of the *Lantmäteriet* are now just the digital versions of everything.

## Increased access to the archives

The archives of the *Lantmäteriet* have great value as a source of historical knowledge. Of special interest is the fact that the archives contains large scale records, village by village, or farm by farm, which show how the land was divided, how it was used, and what buildings there were.

The records of the *Lantmäteriet* tell in detail where the ancestors lived and what land they farmed. From notes in the minutes there can often be found little details about the life of the common farmer during

various epochs of our history.

The archives were accessible also in the old days, but required a trip to the right office and that someone had the knowledge to find the maps that interested the researcher. In reality this made it difficult for the lay researchers to use them for local historical research, and they were also seldom used by academic researchers.

The digitization is a revolution in the ease of accessing the records. Online, on the *Lantmäteriet* web site, there are two versions. One, called **ArkivSök**, is the full version that is geared towards professional researchers that have a subscription. ArkivSök can be found at many companies, institutions, and authorities all over the country.

The other version is called **Historiska Kartor** and is open free to the public. Anybody can look at maps and documents archived in 1929 and before. Through an e-shop it is possible to buy copies of interesting maps and documents for a low fee.

The new free accessibility has

already shown good results. The *Historiska Kartor* has already had almost 40,000 visitors per month, even though it was opened not long ago. That is more than ten times the number of visitors to the actual archives. The number of items that are opened during a year will be around 2 million as compared to about 200,000 at the start of the digitization.

The possibility of using old maps and documents via the internet leads to a huge increase in the use of the archives. It means both an effective help to people working with real estate, and also makes it much easier for people in Sweden and abroad to find information and obtain knowledge about the local Swedish history, and a better understanding of life in past generations. This archival project has become an important part of the Swedish cultural heritage. The map in the computer tells the story of the local heritage area.



ST = Soldat Torp = soldier's cottage. Some of them have been marked, but there are more of them than shown. Skatelöv parish had ca 40 soldiers serving in the Kronoberg Infantry Regiment.

A small part of one of the Generalstabskartorna, #15, showing Skatelöv parish in Kronoberg län. This map was printed in 1869 and has a scale of 1:100,000.

LANTMÄTERIET Svenska + English

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**News**

[Lantmäteriet International Services, Newsletter No 2, 2010](#)  
2011-01-14

[Lantmäteriet International Services, Newsletter No 1, 2010](#)

The Land Survey Board archive contains a number of Parish Maps from separate periods of time. Two periods are particularly significant: the first stretches from the end of the 1600s to the first decades of the 1700s and the second from 1845 until 1859 when parish material became more uniform throughout the Land Survey Board.

The archive has 272 Parish Maps and 244 descriptions. The collection has an uneven coverage over Sweden. Stockholm's county which has the most, has 50 maps while the county of Södermanland has only one map.

One of the English pages of the Lantmäteriet web site.



An example of the Häradskartan. This map was made in 1883.

## Fact Box

### “Historical Maps” on [www.lantmateriet.se](http://www.lantmateriet.se) for Swedish-American genealogy

- The archives of *Lantmäteriet* contain maps and documents from 1630 onwards.
- The archives show – village by village – for which purpose land was used, how it was split up into properties, where buildings were located, and who owned and lived in these properties at that moment. They are therefore of great importance for Swedish-American genealogists searching for their Swedish roots.
- Local history societies and genealogists in Sweden have found great joy and benefits of the service “Historical Maps.” Now this possibility exists also for Swedish-Americans.
- In order to view the maps, the “DjVu” browser plugin must be installed on your computer – it’s an open source software.
- The online service is in English, but the documents are in Swedish.
- Tips on how you can search: look at “About Historical Maps – Search Tips.”
- Through the e-service you can download maps and documents for SEK150 for a digital dossier, all pages including map(s).