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A Clerical Survey

A Source of Amusement Then and Now (or 1803 and 2003)

By KAREN LIVSEY

Two hundred years after “the deed was done,” it has been discovered to be shared with SAG readers.

Clerical surveys (*husförhörslängder*), a major resource for Swedish genealogical research, are usually the source of several emotions for today’s researchers. There is always the anticipation when adding that next roll of microfilm to the machine and anxiously scrolling toward the next piece of family history. Excitement takes over as we see the ancestor added to a family group or the disappointment when they aren’t where we expect them to be. Often by reading between the lines, literally and figuratively, sadness creeps in when a death is indicated, sometimes only by a small cross somewhere on the line.

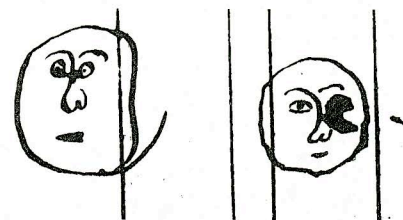
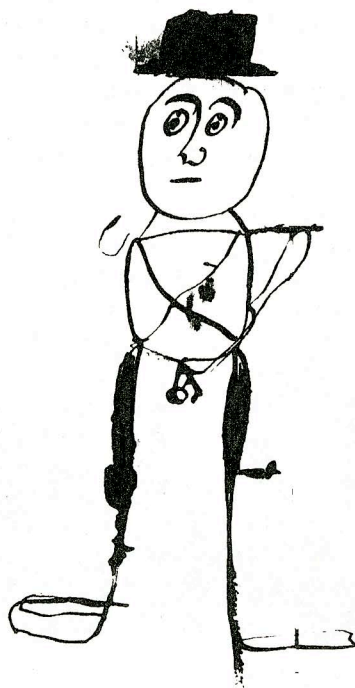
But seldom does one find a reason to be amused and feel the need to laugh out loud while sitting in the semi-darkness on level B1 of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City with other SAG workshop participants scattered among the other readers.

One day in October 2002 while following a family from clerical survey to clerical survey in the parish of Mangskog, Värmland, I got to the clerical survey for 1786-89.

As the first page rolled onto the reading surface, my heart skipped a beat, my brow wrinkled, and I thought, “Oh, no, there are ink scribbles all over the page – I hope it doesn’t continue!” The next few pages

were covered with scribbles but only in the space not used to record the families and the additional information.

The smile started as I recognized a child’s scribbling – remember how your toddler found a pen and book or a crayon and wall? But the scribbling continued and soon recognizable letters and circles with faces appeared. Figures emerged, faces with bodies, houses and some writing! I stopped a few times to look twice to see if I really did see one figure urinating and yes, there were others that were definitely male. I couldn’t resist copying a few of the pages to share with others in the SAG workshop.



Others in the SAG group observed in the drawings some of the same attributes that I did. Back for a second look at all the pages showed that there were signatures, or at least names and dates, with the same names recurring on a few other pages. Then it was time out from my family research to pursue the scribbles. One can start with the guess that it was the pastor’s children who were the most likely to have access to this book and to pen and ink.

Anders Unger	1803	den	12/24
Anders Unger	1804	den	12/27
Jan Magnus Unger	1806	den	12/24

The names included *Anders Unger*, *Jonas Unger*, and *Bernt*, and in one place *Jan Magnus Unger*. The dates were 1803 and 1804. So were these the culprits and the time that they decorated the book? The dates made sense in that the book would no longer have been actively used by the pastor, it being the record for 1786-89. So, in 1803-04, the boys could have used it with little danger of discovery. We assume they didn’t have permission. This is reinforced by the mirror images found on a few pages. Just imagine two, maybe three, youngsters with the book, pen and ink hearing footsteps approach, slamming the book shut while the ink of the freshly drawn picture is still wet enough to soak into the

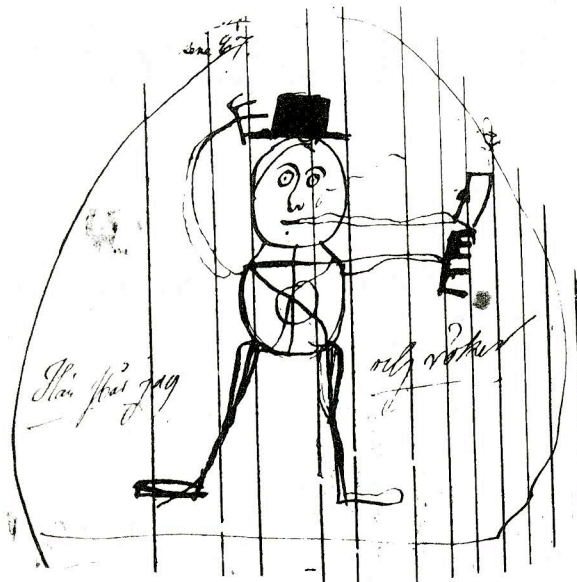
facing page while the book remained closed. In most cases the writing already on the page was left undisturbed and only the blank areas were used for drawing.

One marvels that they continued, apparently for a long time, decorating the pages of only one book. A quick look at the clerical surveys for Brunskog showed no scribbles and no other books from Mangskog were thus decorated.

Was *Unger* a surname? A check of the Swedish Genealogical Dictionary showed that *unger* could mean youth. The next step was to identify the pastor of that parish. A quick look at the birth, death, and marriage records did not reveal the name of the pastor performing these ministerial acts. But the church account book was available and there on the first page was written "Magnus Unger, LB, Pastor." But the family was not recorded in the clerical survey for Mangskog.

A check with the reference desk produced the *stift* (diocese) in which Mangskog was located. It was in the Karlstad *stift* and Mangskog was part of the Brunskog *pastorat*.

The Brunskog clerical survey (1800–1805) produced the family complete with a *Jan Magnus*, a *Jo-*

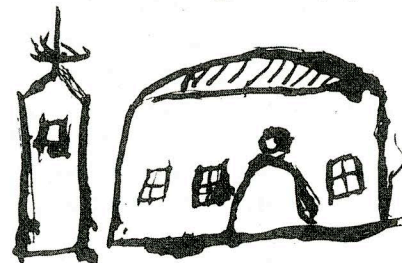


Here I am standing smoking.

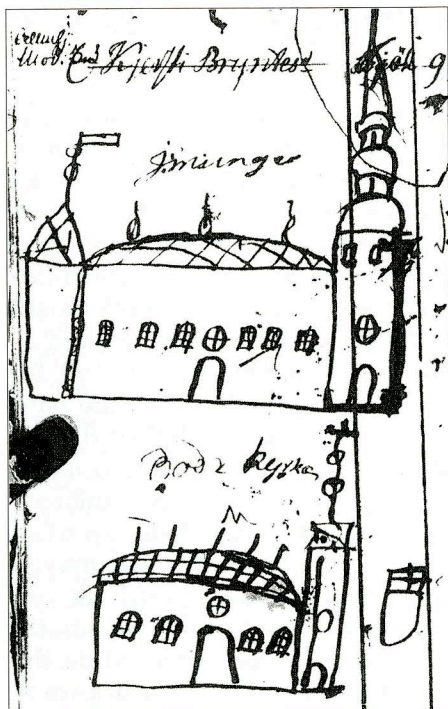
nas, an *Anders*, and a *Bernt* who died as a young boy. Jan Magnus was born in 1790, Jonas was born in 1792, and Anders in 1800. This gives us an older boy whose name appears only once plus an 11-12 year old, Jonas, most likely the drawer, and 3-4 year old Anders, the scribbler, in 1803-04. The father, *Magnus Unger*, died in February 1805. His death record indicates that he was ill for a while and was very weak as he tried to continue his duties. We can imagine Pastor Unger ill these last couple of years of his life, his wife preoccupied with his illness and caring for 8 children from age 13 to 1. The second oldest son could have been charged with caring for the next youngest son. Drawing in books would have been a quiet activity that would not disturb a household that included an ill father.

A further search for information found the "priest's books" (*herdaminne*) for Karlstad *stift*. These are

biographies of the pastors who served in this *stift*. A biography of Magnus Unger includes his children Jonas and Anders along with their brother and sisters. But it also shows that Jonas, Anders, and their older brother Johan (Jan) all became pastors and that Jonas and Anders



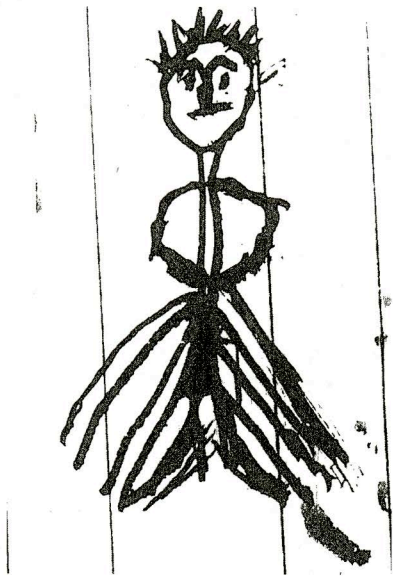
served the Brunskog *pastorat* which includes Mangskog. Another fact is that the grandfather, *Johan Bernhard Unger*, also served as pastor of Brunskog. Anders apparently had no children but Jonas's sons became pastors. One wonders if Jonas and Anders remembered their earlier recordings in a Clerical Survey as they filled out the official pages during their years as pastor in the area. One added tidbit found in the biography of Magnus Unger is the fact that he married later in life at age 42. He married a 20 year old daughter of a farmer, *Kerstin Olsdotter*, who had been one of his confirmands. Neither family was happy about the match but they were



At the bottom: Boda Church.

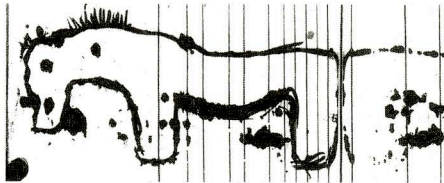


Boda church.



observed that the older ones seem to be similar to what was found in the clerical survey whereas later ones, from the mid 1800s and later are more reserved and less explicit — Ah, the Victorian era!

Although I did not spend those few hours working on my family, I did broaden my research skills by learning about the *stift* and the “priest’s books.” And I did find the family I was searching for on one of the few undecorated pages.



Jonas Unger, one of the scribblers. From *Karlstad stifts Herdaminne*, vol 3.

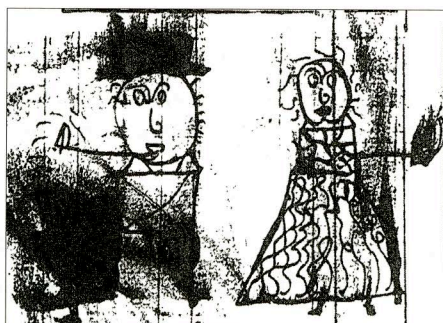
in love. This is written in “*Magnus och Kerstins kärlekssaga*” in *Unger-Edgrenska Släktminnen*, Stockholm 1928.

This artistic discovery was a break from the normal research done during a SAG workshop. The various scenarios we came up with for the execution of these drawings created conversation, laughter, and probably a few memories of childhood - both ours and our children’s, or grandchildren’s. I, as a child, used my mother’s bright red lipstick to decorate the wallpaper of red roses on white background in my under-the-eaves-clothes’s closet.

It would be fun to read through the parish, probably Brunskog, as that is where they lived and would know the residents better than in the parish of Mangskog, and try to identify the “portraits” that were labeled with names. The few drawings of buildings includes a “Boda kyrka” and is a fair representation of Boda church as found in a photograph in a book about Boda parish. Also because of the anatomical features included in many of the drawings, insight into child development may add another view of these drawings. Someone who has studied the drawings, doodles, inscriptions, or whatever we call them, found in books over the centuries could add even more. An archivist friend of mine mentioned that he has

According to *Karlstads stifts herdaminne*, Magnus Unger was born in Karlstad, May 15, 1747. He married Kerstin Olsdotter on October 29 1789. She was born March 23 1767 to Olof Olsson and Ingegärd Eriksdotter. Their children were Johan (Jan) Magnus, born July 11, 1790; Anna Christina, born July 5 1791; Jonas, born October 16 1792; Greta Lisa, born June 5 1795; Inga Maria, born October 4 1796; Berndt Olof, born November 10 1798 and died December 23 1800; Anders, born June 11 1800; Ulrika Catharina, born May 5 1802; Bernhard (Berndt) Olof, born December 12 1803. Magnus died February 17 1805.

Kerstin married a second time to Nils Selldén, her husband’s successor, and they had three children.



Mr. Rosenstein and his wife on 1 March 1803.

