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A Swedish Alphabet

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u. s. v. p. q. r. s. t. u. v. w. x. y. z. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

Abraham, Ben och Permina föll, och barnen nu liden vil och den fulla mard
 ostingst: Många upp som till de om barn, och fullen up, Hög
 som som i Hög, och de som icke. Och of som nu fulla
 upstom till sin egen, och de som nu i Hög i i Hög.
 Ho vill finna nu i Hög, och de som nu i Hög.
 Num: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20.


Jonas Jacob Wallberg.

A Swedish Alphabet from the 18th Century

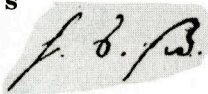
BY ELISABETH THORSELL

The alphabet on the lefthand page was written by Jonas Jacob Wallberg, born 1762 in Östergötland, and died there in 1810. His father was a surveyor, Mathias Jonas Wallberg, and as was common in those days, the son was educated to follow his father's footsteps and also become a surveyor. An important part of the job was to make maps of villages, to show who owned what fields, which also meant that he had to have a good hand-writing, and probably had to start at a very young age to acquire a good hand.

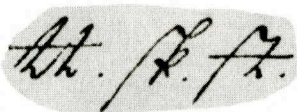
We do not know, but perhaps can assume that this alphabet is one of Jonas Jacob's youthful exercises. It is written in German script (*tyska stilen*), which was very common in Sweden during the 1700s.

In the first row we have all of the small letters, from **a** to **ö**, but there seems to be too many of them? This is because Jonas Jacob has also written some of the more common combinations, like  (**ff**) and the

several types of **s**



where the last one is a double **ss**. There are also some common combinations with **s** and **t**, like these:



They are **tt**, **sk** and **st**. Always when you see a letter that looks too large, remember these combinations.

Next comes the capital letters, and there is nothing exceptional there, except perhaps the **S**, which does not look like an S.

The long text is a citation from the Bible. It is from the Book of Job, chapter 14, and it reads like this:

Menniskan af Qwinno född, lefwer en liten tid och är full med // orolighet; Växer upp som ett blomster, och faller af, flyr // bort som en skugge, och blifwer icke. Och öfwer en sådana // uplåter Tu Tin ögon, och drager mig för Tig i rätten // ho will finna en renan när them, ther ingen ren är.

In King James Bible the text goes like this:

1: Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

2: He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

3: And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?

4: Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

There are a few things to note in the text. The letter **u** has a squiggle on top to show that there is a vowel there, otherwise it might get lost in all the other undulating letters. Jonas Jacob also writes **th**, where modern Swedish writes **d** (ther = där).

It does not show in this text, but it was common to write double letters like **mm** as just one letter with a squiggle on top (my computer will not do this). So always put some importance on the squiggles.

Do not think that all old Swedish is difficult to read like this one. Usually the researcher works with records where you can almost guess what is in them. In a Birth record you expect to find information on the baby, his parents, their home, and the

sponsors, and not much more. The format is easily learnt, and that goes for Marriage and Death records also. The difficulties are usually met when you try to decipher people's titles, but an old dictionary will be a good help.

Probates are more of a challenge, as farming tools and houseware have many names, but we will try them later on.

There has already been studies in old hand-writing published in SAG, but the new format makes better pictures possible. Reading hand-writing is also something very basic, that you need to practise all the time. Even an experienced researcher has to sit down and take a close look, when a parish gets a new clergyman and the script changes.

A good tip

When you are reading old script, take out a notebook and write down the text in your own hand, preferably in print.

When you come to a word that you can not read, try to figure how many letters there are in this word, and then leave empty spaces for those letters, then go on with what you can read.

Next, put away the notebook for the day. When you take it out again, and look at the text, then you say "of course, that word is Åseda" or whatever it was. The brain keeps working on this problem and might come up with a solution after having had some rest.