Very little known, and for the most part unnoticed in scholarship is the important and sizable collection of early drawings and watercolors held by the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Swedish Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, depicting people of different ethnic backgrounds and belonging to various social strata of the Russian Empire. An inventory of this collection, entitled “Folk Costumes and Types,” by Peter Pfab, was included in the publication *Russian Architectural Drawings in the Nationalmuseum*, by Bjorn H. Hallström.¹

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¹ Nationalmusei Skriftserie. 1963. No. 9. Pp. 135-143. In the inventory, the original German descriptions of the drawings and prints are translated into English.
Hallström assumes that the impressive collection of architectural drawings and other visual materials was collected by Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholz (1699-1765), Gentleman Usher to the Duke of Holstein, who in the first decades of the eighteenth century repeatedly stayed in St. Petersburg and witnessed the building of Peter I’s city. A detailed account of his stay in St. Petersburg from 1721 to 1725 is given by Bergholz in his diary.² Bergholz returned to St. Petersburg in 1742 as a tutor to Karl Peter Ulrich of Holstein-Gottorp (the future Peter III of Russia, r. 1762), son of Duke Karl Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp and Anna Petrovna, a daughter of Peter I of Russia. Hallström concludes that it was Bergholz who acquired the collection now in the possession of the Nationalmuseum.

When Bergholz was dismissed by Princess Sophie Fridericke Auguste of Anhalt-Zerbst – the future Catherine II of Russia (r. 1762-96) – as unsuited to be tutor to her future husband, he returned to the city of Wismar on the Baltic coast (now in present-day Germany) which at that time was under Swedish control. Hallström could not determine how and when the so-called Bergholz collection came to Sweden. He assumes that Bergholz had left, or sold it, to the Swedish Royal House, which had helped him during the years when his Russian pension had been stopped.

However, in a recent publication “The Tessin Collection of Architectural Drawings during the Eighteenth Century (1728-1772)”³ Laine suggests that the history of the so-called Bergholz collection is much more complex. Laine argues that most of the materials pertaining to eighteenth century Russia at the Nationalmuseum are from the collections of the Tessin family, whose members were the leading Swedish architects and arbiters of taste for three generations. Both volumes of drawings were bound in 1750, hence they were drawn earlier. The Tessins had close connections to the kings of Sweden, to whom they sold their collections. Laine suggests that the “Bergholz” collection may have been given to the Swedish King Adolf Frederick (r. 1751-1771) by either the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna of Russia (r. 1741-1762), or Catherine II (r. 1762-1796), both close relatives. The rulers of Sweden and Russia were members of the German Holstein-Gottorp family, and it was a matter of custom for them to exchange political (and personal) gifts of this nature.

The several hundred drawings of the various types of Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Kalmyks, Tartars, Samoyeds, Yakuts, Tungus, Mongols,

Miscellaneous

 Finns, Estonians and Latvians, and of members of other ethnic groups inhabiting the Russian Empire were executed by different artists. It is among the earliest and largest collection of ethnographic drawings for the peoples of the Russian Empire, perhaps the fruit of one of the Empress Elizabeth’s efforts to survey the regions of her realm with the help of an array of scholars and artists. Most drawings, or prints, are accompanied by a description in German. However, that does not necessarily mean that all of the artists were Germans. Based on a stylistic analysis, several can be ascribed to the pen of the Swedish-born artist and engraver Augustin Dahlstein/Dahlsteen (1720-ca. 1769 in Kassel), who lived and worked in Russia from the late 1740s to the early 1750s. He was one of the first European artists to develop Russian themes, creating accurate representations of folk amusements, including dances and musical instruments.4

Further attributions would require a comparative study of collections in eastern Europe, such as the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow, the Russian Museum, and other repositories of such works on paper.

The Bergholz Collection drawings, some of which are striking examples of artistic quality and draftsmanship, provide a rich source for the history of customs and the social structure of the Russian state during the first half of the eighteenth century. These drawings document European Russia’s epic attempts to document the richness and diversity of its expansive Empire.

4 See his Russische Trachten und Ausrufer in St.-Petersburg [Russian Costumes and Public Criers of St. Petersburg]. Kassel: W. C. Mayr, [1750]. Another example of visual Rossica in Sweden are twenty-eight drawings and maps by Erich Palmquist (1650-76), who accompanied Gustav Oxenstern’s embassy to Moscow in 1673, and presented his drawings to King Charles XI of Sweden the following year. These are now held by the National Archives in Stockholm. The New York Public Library holds a rare collection of sixteen sketches in portfolio that reproduce some of the images from this Palmquist collection, specifically those showing Russian standard bearers in military regalia. These were published in a colored facsimile edition: Risunki odezhd, vooruzheniia i znamen Moskovskikh Strieletskich polkov pri Tsarie Aleksie Mikhailovichie v 1674 godu. St. Petersburg, [184-?]. The visual component of Palmquist’s gift to the king was reproduced in its entirety only in 1898, as Någre widh sidste Kongl: Ambassaden till Tzaren Muskou. Stockholm: Generalstabens Litografiska Anstalt, [1898]. Only fifty copies were printed.