

Station SAQ Makes UNESCO World Heritage List

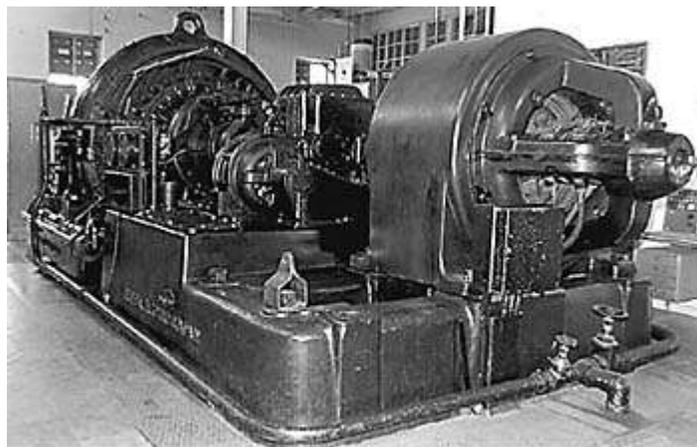
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On July 2, 2004, radio station SAQ in Grimeton, Sweden was added to the Unesco World Heritage List. SAQ operates the only remaining pre-electronic transatlantic transmitter--a 200 kW Alexanderson Alternator. This machine is the only one left of the approximately 20 200 kW units originally manufactured by General Electric. The UNESCO committee, at a meeting held in Suzhou, outside Shanghai, in China, dubbed the station "an exceptionally well-preserved monument to early transatlantic wireless communication."

Built 1922-24 and located about 10 kilometers east of Varberg, the station is maintained in perfect operating condition. On July 4, designated "Alexanderson Day" to honor Ernst F.W. Alexanderson, the Swedish inventor of the equipment, SAQ transmitted a celebratory message on 17.2 kHz. Although this was a special transmission, the station makes a practice of operating each year on Alexanderson day. It can usually be copied in Europe and on the East coast of the USA.

The station's six 127-meter antenna masts were the tallest structures in Sweden when they were installed. Each has a 47-meter crossarm to carry the array of 12 wires that feed energy into the six vertical radiating elements.

The station was built, at the direction of the Swedish Parliament, in order to establish more reliable telegraphic traffic



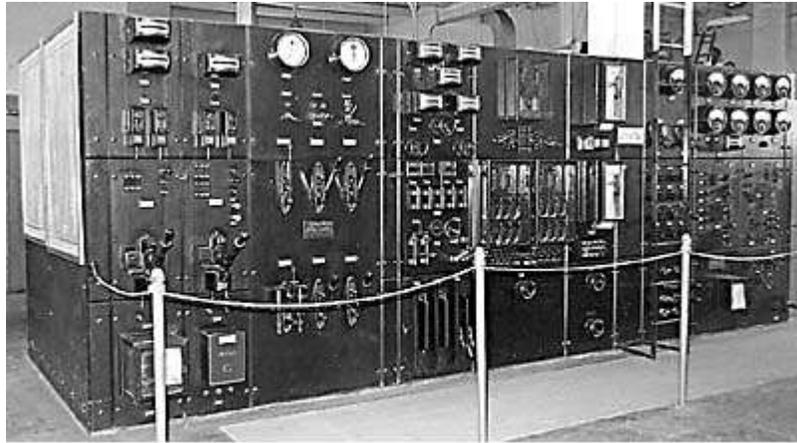
SAQ's 200 kW Alexanderson alternator.



The transmitter building at Grimeton. Two of the six 127-meter antenna masts are visible.

with the United States. The problems with existing transatlantic communications

had been made apparent by the events of World War I. The location of the station was chosen to provide a propagation path to New York that would be completely over open water. The first message from SAQ was sent to Radio Central at Rocky Point, Long Island in October, 1924.



Transmitter control panels at SAQ.

The facility was in continuous use from 1924 until 1947. During World War II, the it was indispensable in maintaining communications with other countries after cable traffic was cut off. After its 1947 retirement, SAQ was kept in operating condition, as a spare transmitter for submarine communication.

The station is open to visitors. To learn more about it, See AWA Review Vol. 3, 1988. You might also visit www.alexander.n.se/ and click on the British flag for a list of articles available in English. To see the UNESCO World Heritage list and find out how it is administered, go to whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=31. Scroll down to "Sweden" and click on "Varberg Radio Station" for a short article about SAQ.