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Churching, what was that?

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reminder of what was to come and it was certainly natural that we little ones were really eager for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Christmas was called “dipping day” for then we dipped our Christmas bread in the gravy in a kettle in which the juices from the meat and pork had been cooked. The days before Christmas were called “*dan före dan . . . före dopparedan.*”

[**Editor’s note:** Dopparedagen means the 24th of December, the day Christmas starts, and during the meal the custom was and still is to dip bread in broth.] There was also a custom in our town that early on Christmas Eve morning we went to the wood box to saw and split the wood intended for the Christmas wood. Even then the town inhabitants would vie to be the first to light his or her pile. We thought it festive to see fires here and there among the neighbors, and those who weren’t up working on this pleasant task were regarded as lazy and good-for-nothing.

In the large house there was a special

place in a corner near the kitchen range which we called the box-room. This closet was filled sometimes to the ceiling with choice wood which would not be used until festive days. We children were proud to have the most beautiful wood and gladly went around the neighborhood to see how children of the same age were doing with their wood.

All the work outside the house should be finished in the morning so that in the afternoon we young folks took our skates as soon as we found smooth ice. In preparations within the house it was certainly necessary that everything be tidied up and scrubbed. In the cupboards and on the shelves the polished copper and brass shone, as did the tin vessels, and the floors were strewn with finely cut spruce twigs, which gave a wonderful aroma to the home.

That Christmas porridge (*gröt*) and *lute-fisk* were not found at the Christmas table

was only natural. Butter was amply found and Christmas drink in scrubbed cups had made the rounds. Then it was called “the house on the hill” which usually was called “the high street” since the building was at a higher elevation than any other in the whole town. Christmas trees were not known then.

Cattle would be provided for in a special way and the birds got saved oat sheaves tied to a high pole. We used to do that when we lived in the country and had cultivated land. We would go into the cow yards with our arms filled with specially baked bread and greeted the inhabitants with “Merry Christmas.” All eyes were on the food that Mother had dealt out to each creature. The horses whinnied, the sheep bleated their thanks, the chickens cackled – but the pigs just slobbered their share.

This article is an excerpt from the book “Wenstrand. A Chronicle of Family Roots from Sweden 1755 to the United States of America 1993”. Compiled by William S. Wenstrand.

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Map of some of the parishes in Kalmar County. Source: Atlas över Rikets indelningar, published by Statistics Sweden (1992).

Kyrktagning, what was that?

It is usually called “Introduction of the mother” in English.

The custom dates back to the Bible where Moses taught that after a mother had born a child, she was basically not to have visitors or be out in society for about six weeks minimum.

Eventually, the command to let the mother stay home, rest, and not mingle with society for a time period was interpreted to mean that the mother had sinned by giving birth, and she had to be cleansed of

that sin via a formal ceremony held in a church meeting. In older times, the mother might literally have had to crawl up the aisle of the church, begging forgiveness for her sin. In later time periods, she would walk up to the front of the church, the minister would take her hand, and he would say she was cleansed and formally welcome her back into society.

There was not always six weeks from the time of the birth to the introduction of the mother, so the introduction date can-

not be used to figure back to a birth date for the child.

Sometimes this date of the mother’s introduction or “churcing day” (*kyrktagning*) is simply listed to the side or at the bottom of the christening, instead of being listed in a separate record.

If you do not find an introduction after the known birth of a child, it’s possible that the mother died in childbirth or shortly thereafter.

Source: *FamilySearch Wiki*.