

12/24/08

THE CHRISTMAS GOOSE

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Our photo this week, taken in the early 1930s by Fred Holt, shows his sister, Edith Holt, carving the Christmas goose. Like many things over the years which have fallen by the wayside, goose for Christmas dinner is one.

Yes, goose was a traditional fowl found on many Christmas menus years ago. It was indeed something special unlike the typical chicken dinner on Sunday afternoon. Goose was reserved for a special occasion.

We have to remember that we were a much more agrarian society years ago. Even when this picture was taken seventy some years ago there were many self sufficient farm families in Orleans County. The typical farmer had a host of varied crops and a wide array of farm animals for various purposes.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

My grandmother Lattin prided herself in raising geese each season. It was not uncommon for her to have a

gaggle of geese numbering more than 30 all destined for the superb spread at Christmas feasts.

This was specifically her department in the barn yard of domestic animals. She nurtured them, watered them and fed them. One by one they were called for by people in town some specifically ordered way ahead.

As a side note, I should mention that my grandparents had a telephone beginning in 1906 which was the only one in the neighborhood for many years. Therefore, my grandmother had the contacts for her brood of geese from townfolk.

I should mention here that when it came time to kill a goose my grandfather and hired man had that duty. The down was saved for pillows my grandmother made or otherwise gave the down to relatives so they could make their own pillows. Did I say self-sufficient?

Slow roasted in a wood fired oven in an old kitchen

range, goose made a delectable meal for Christmas. In our photo of Edith, we see a kerosene cook stove with a movable oven positioned over one of the burners as the heat source. Surely we know this is a special occasion, as Edith is wearing a nice dress covered with an apron, which would have been removed once she sat down at the dining room table.

Lastly, I want to mention that my grandmother also used goose eggs in cooking. They truly make the most wonderful custard pie imaginable because of their richness. Now there's something in it self that would be a Christmas treat.

As I end this story, I should point out the volume number on this column. Translated, it means I've been doing this weekly now for 30 years. Bethinking of Olde Orleans first appeared in January 1979. Best wishes to all my readers for a joyous 2009.