GUIDE
FOR VISITORS
IN
THE "STORKYRKA" IN STOCKHOLM

St. NICHOLAS CHURCH
presented by
Princess
viggo
april 1927
THE STORKYRKA IN STOCKHOLM

(St. NICHOLAS' CHURCH)

ITS

HISTORICAL AND NOTEWORTHY MEMORIALS.

ASSISTANCE TO VISITORS.

STOCKHOLM
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1912.
The Storkyrka or Church of St. Nicholas.

In old Stockholm, many years ago, this church was called the Village Church and was the only church that had no connection with a monastery. It was founded about 1260, during the time of Birger Jarl and was at first, at the beginning of the 16th. century, dedicated to St. Nicholas, who is said to have been the Patron of Navigation. St. Nicholas was a Swedish Saint; Bishop Nicholas Hermanni, declared a Saint by Pope Alexander IV in the year 1499. On account of Nicholas' great work of conversion at the beginning of the Middle Ages in Finland and the Baltic Provinces, and also in the interior of Russia, he was, after becoming a Saint, worshipped by the seafaring people of the Baltic Sea, and it was thus quite natural that, with the increased worship of Saints in the Middle Ages, the seafaring folk should take his name for Stockholm's old village church.

External architecture &c.

From the recorded accounts kept in the church's archives we find that the church has originally consi-
ged of three aisles; a higher middle-aisle with a Gothic choir continuing to the castle hill, and also two side-aisles. In the course of time a great number of small chapels were erected off the latter, one at each window, and in addition two at the west gable. The oldest dated from the year 1337 and was dedicated to St. Martin. There were also altars consecrated to the »Virgin Mary» and to the »Honour and Glory of God's Angels», and also to »The ten thousand Holy Knights» and »The eleven thousand Holy Virgins», among the other chapels is to be noted St. George's, St. Eric's &c. Each choir had its own priests, altar-pieces, crucifix, holy vessels etc.

All the church's possessions, however, were annexed to the crown by Gustavus I. The same king had in the year 1555, according to other accounts even as early as 1548, the whole choir pulled down in order to prepare a place for the extension of the castle-moat. Possibly the work thus continued for several years, and the different accounts referred to different parts of the great castle moat. When digging operations were being conducted in the castle-hill in 1908, the original foundation walls of the choir were disclosed in the upper part of the hill. In order to indicate the same, the stones of the pavement were so arranged that the place was marked out, besides which a memorandum was cut into one of west gable base stones.

Between the years 1736 and 1743 extensive repairs were carried out, through which the church acquired the less satisfactory external form in which it now appears. Among other things the church lost its high pointed spire, which was replaced by a cap, or turret. The reason
for not replacing the old spire with a similar one, was the fear of it being struck by lightning, against which the technical expedients of that time did not protect.

Among the decorations on the exterior of the church a statue can be seen executed by Prof. A. Th. Lundberg of the Reformer Olaus Petri, a clergyman in St. Nicholas, born the 6 th. Jan. 1493 and died the 19 th. April 1552. The inscription on the great copperplate which hangs on the wall behind Olaus Petri’s statue is the work of Eric Alstrin, who in 1734 became Pastor Primarius in Stockholm (or head of the clergy in Stockholm), and later Bishop in Växiö. The plate is of copper, with gilded letters firmly fixed to it. At the entrances of the so-called church-yard 4 female figures are erected in the baroque style, which, according to Nordensvan, were modelled in the year 1702 by the German-born sculptor David Kortz. According to Eichorn the two ones standing towards Trångsund were modelled nearly 100 years earlier and restored by Kortz. Prudence and Hope are placed standing on each side of the lattice gate at the castlehill, and Obedience and Virtue are facing Trångsund.

**Interior of the Storkyrka.**

The many changes in the interior have not been able to deprive the church entirely of the magnificent solemn appearance that it formerly possessed. Its beauty is also contributed to, by the truly splendid furniture. The magnificent Royal chairs, from the designs of Nikodemus Tessin the Younger and executed by
Burchart Precht in 1694, consist of loosely folded draperies with genii, supporting immense crowns resembling a canopy. The pulpit, executed in the same style, is a gift from Mrs. Elizabeth Funk to the church in 1701, and is said to have cost 12 thousand copper daler (a daler is about 16 öre). The altar with silver figures and ebony architecture, procured from North Germany and presented to the church in 1654 by the widow of Adler Salvii, was, according to the accounts in the town archives of Hamburg 1668, made by the Hamburg jeweller Erdmüller and the carver Hertel.

The woodwork of the altar was a gift from Lucas Weilandt., who, it is recorded, made this »from his own tree».

**St. George and the Dragon.**

This extraordinary work of art appears, with great probability, to have been executed by the carver Bernt Notke of Lübeck with the assistance of a Flemish portrait painter, Hindrick Wylysynk of Antwerp, about the year 1489, and was with certainty finished in the year 1492, thus about 420 years ago.

The expense of this work was defrayed by Sten Sture the Elder and his wife Ingeborg Åkesdotter Tott, although the citizens of Stockholm appear to have contributed to it also. It costs over 4,000 marks. As a mark at that time was calculated to be worth 16 lodes of silver, the sum was one of real significance. (A lode is about 1/2 ounce.)

If the St. George’s group, as seems quite likely, was first placed inside St. George’s chapel which had
a lower ceiling than the church, it has probably stood on a base which only had the same height as the side-pieces describing St. George's history and which are still preserved in the Storkyrka (or Great Church). The group seems to have then been removed immediately outside the chapel by the side of the high altar: there it stood till the year 1528, since then it has occupied different places at different times and even been in the Royal Historical Museum during an interval.

The dark patina now covering the group has not come there as a result of old age alone but through the so-called restoring which the group, according to Roosvalls investigations, seems to have undergone in conformity with the accounts of the 9 th. November 1699, and also the 25 th. June and 12 th. July 1700.

Investigations seem to indicate that the knight's armour has been richly gilded, under which was a light-blue dress, and that the horse has been white or slightly dapple with a white tail and provided with adornments.

The side-pieces at the pedestal which are now painted white have, as scrapings clearly prove it been richly gilded and painted in fresh, clear colours, and they still after 420 years seem to be able to disclose the former clearness and magnificence.

The board-partition behind the relief portraits of the side-pieces have evidently come there at a later time. If it be removed we find that the back has been painted light-blue with yellow stars. As the sunlight played through the openwork relief of the group it must have been most beautiful and appeared as if some feature of mysticism hung over it, when one observed on the
inner side the sky-blue paintings with the yellow stars.

Light and airy as a promising hope of the future with the confidence and joy of life this splendid group might have appeared in its original form. It was certainly a real work of art executed by an inspired master. Powerfully it might have spoken to Sweden's sorely tried people of that time.

Other noteworthy memorials.

The mock sun painting. On the north wall in the lower part of the church a peculiar old memorial is hanging which seems to have come with the entrance of the powerful impression which a natural phenomenon created on the town's inhabitants. (A similar natural phenomenon occurred on the 20:th. April 1592.) The inscription on the picture is as follows: In Stockholm on the 20 th. day of the month of April Anno Domini 1535, such appearances were visible in the sky from 7:00 till 10:00 A. M. According to what was stated during the lawsuit against Olaus Petri in 1539, the picture was painted by arrangement between himself and Anders Hanson, master of the mint.

»The Last Judgment«, a great painting by Ehrenstrahl, painted in 1694. For the execution of this work the artist seems to have taken his inspiration from the picture of the same name by Peter Paul Rubens, painted in 1618 for the Jesuit church in Neuburg.

»The Crucifixion« by the same master, painted about the same time.
Both these works of art were first placed in the magnificent chapel of the newly-built wing of the castle, but were removed to the Storkyrka in 1697 when the castle was burnt down.


»Christ crowned with thorns», an oil-painting by an unknown master, possibly executed as early as in the 15 th. century. The conception reminds us of the old masters Roger van der Weiden, who lived from 1400 to 1469, and Jan van Eyck of the same time, both belonging to the old Dutch school.

The organ, built 1636—1638 by the organ builders Philip and Jørgen with the assistance of the wood-carver Mårten. It is one of the largest in the kingdom and has 66 pipes.

The costly, casted columns at the sides of the choir were manufactured by Gerdt Meyer in 1568. During the most recent repairs of the church in 1908, as the altar-circle decreased, a number of these columns were taken away and are now kept in the store-room of the church.

The seven-armed candlestick. This peculiar work of art, placed before the altar, is a present from king Magnus Erikson Smek in memory of his father and uncle the Dukes Eric and Valdemar, who, in 1317, were starved to death in the castle of Nyköping; it was also designed to indicate their common grave where Duke Valdemar’s ashes still remain, though alone, since
Duke Eric's corpse has been removed to Uppsala. After the rebuilding of the choir between 1548 and 1555 during Gustavus I's reign nowadays one cannot indicate the burial places with certainty.

**Ebba Brahe's silver crown**, presented by her in remembrance of her marriage in the church in 1618 with Count Jacob de la Gardie. The crown weighs 2,704 lodes of pure silver. (A lode is about \( \frac{1}{2} \) ounce).

**Font** of sandstone, a work of historical value from the Middle Ages.

**Didrik Slagheck's tablet**, placed on the lower part of one of the pillars in the South-East part of the church. Under it two lions and an eel appear. According to an account Johannes Messenius, the tablet and animals were executed on account of Didrik Slagheck, Christian II's evil genius and the originator of Stockholm's massacre, before, being hated alike by the Danish garrison and the citizens of Stockholm, he was compelled to fly from the town. The eel would therefore be, according to the alleged author, a picture of Slagheck who escaped from the lions claws, or in other words, the Swedes. The inscription translated into modern language, runs:

»The eel is a fat and strong fish; with the hands only it is not easy to catch him, so it certainly was in 1521. He who will secure it must spare neither bags nor boxes.«

During the restoration of the Storkyrka which was carried out at the beginning of September 1906
Old Paintings

were discovered under the plaster of the arch of the south side-aisle, which, judging from the style, seem to belong to the 15:th. century. Three of the arches in the so-called 'Our Lady’s Chapel' are provided with a beautiful ornament of arranged creepers which at each side enclose circles with the heads of Holy persons in them. They are 24 in number, that is to say 8 to each vault. Another arch is decorated with a tastefully designed border of four-leafed clover, which forms the frame round the pictures of the Saints, who on one half of the arch are provided with halos, but not on the other.

At the extensive work of restoration in 1906 much of the whitewash was got off the pillars, and the church recovered much of its original, beatiful appearance.

Monuments.

Olaus Petris’s tomb-stone, lying under the pulpit within iron-railings, with an inscription cut into the walls.

The walled grave of Gustavus Johansson the Tree Roses near the north wall. He was beheaded in the massacre of Stockholm on Nov. 8 th., 1520.

Several of the prominent Swedish persons who suffered the death during the massacre of Stockholm have been given a common stone in the church to their memory, on the north side, to the left of the north entrance.
Eric Skiepperus' tomb-stone in the north side-choir, distinguished by a ship. Born 1555, died 14/2 1620.

Jesper Mattson Cruus. To the left of the altar is an immense stone sarcophagus surmounted by a canopy. Here the senator and warrior Jesper Mattson Cruus, rests died 1/11 1622, portrayed in his armour, with his wife Brita de la Gardie, and at the feet of the married couple lie their children with their hands clasped, portrayed in the clothes of their time.

John Adler Salvius born in Strängnäs 1590, died 1659, and his wife Margaret Pedersdotter Skute.

Simon Grundel Helmfeldt, Field-marshal, born in Stockholm the 25 th. Sept. 1617. He was mortally wounded by a bullet at the battle of Landskrona July 14 th. 1677, and died shortly after.

General Charles Gustavus Rehnsköld, born 6/8 1656, died 29/1 1722. His warlike career full of great exploits terminated at the disaster of Pultava on the 28 th. June 1709. His tombstone is situated under the Salvii epitaph.

On the walls of the church, in broad and lordly baroque style, are several epitaphs with small encha-sed portraits in oils according to the Italian custom, or with the dead persons bust in relief.

Henrik Hoghusen, Royal Counseller, — 1624—1684. Served as secretary at the peace negotiations in Roeskilde 1658.

Charles Wattrang. Chief Justice in the county of Södermaland. Born \( \frac{11}{4} \) 1689, died \( \frac{23}{12} \) 1749.


Lars Skytte.

Axel Oxenstjerna’s children.

Gudmund Kåre.

Of a later period is to be observed:

*The Arfeidsonska monument* with allegorical figures which testify the chisel of Byström.

Notable events.

During Sten Sture the Elder’s time, St. Eric’s standard was transferred with great pomp and circumstance from Uppsala to the Storkyrka and was placed on St. George’s altar. This has a certain significance for Stockholm as St. Eric was declared Stockholm’s Patron saint.

The first Lutheran Archbishop, Laurentius Petri, was elected in the Storkyrka June 24 th. 1531 and got 150 votes.
It was also here as the unfortunate Eric XIV, on the 24th Jan. 1569, was brought into the choir and called to account before the assembled nobility: and it was here the judgment was passed upon him that day.

Since the death of Charles XII all the coronations have been celebrated here, with the exception of Ulrika Eleonora's, which took place in Uppsala, and Gustavus Adolphus IV's which occurred in Norrköping. Among other great notable ceremonies the golden weddings of King Oscar II and Queen Sophia must be mentioned.

Finally it may be recorded: that the Mass is said for the first time in Swedish in the Storkyrka of Stockholm in the year 1525, that the public services in this place began in 1676, and that the collection of money in collection-bags first took place on the 1st June 1869.

Among notable persons having held office in the Storkyrka are:


Eric Skiepperus, who was Priest of the church at the critical period during John III's reign. In the beginning a supporter of the Catholic Liturgy he became later one of its most violent opponents.
He was finally maintained at Uppsala Synod on the subject of Protestantism, and afterwards caused many of the Storkyrka's old memorials to be destroyed.

**Eric Emporagrius**, later Bishop, a well-known theological writer, born 1606. Pastor Primarius 1649, died 14/3 1674.

**Johannis Rudbeckiui**, later Bishop, a noted sholar, born 5/1 1622, Pastor Primarius 1666, died 2/9 1676.

**Olof Svebilius**, later Archbishop, in 1689 wrote an explanation of Luther's shorter catechism, which was used as a textbook for over 120 years. Born 1/1 1624, Pastor Primarius 1671, Noted speaker of the clergy 1682—1697, died 29/7 1700.

**Eric Alstrin**, later Bishop, born 3 rd. February 1683, became Pastor Primarius in the Storkyrka of Stockholm in 1734. He was a profoundly learned theologian and philosopher, also a man of scientific training. He had the copper-plate on the outer East gable of the church put up, became Bishop in Växiö in 1742, and died Nov. 4 th. 1762.


**Charles Edward Taube**, later Prelate, born 26/12 1746. He first entered upon a military career, be-
came lieutenant in the Dal regiment in 1776, was ordained in 1780, became Dean of the Royal chapel and Rector at Lofön 1781, and at the same time Pastor Primarius, died 28/5 1785.

**John Gustavus Flodin**, later Bishop, born in Torshälla 18/1 1741, became Pastor Primarius in the Storkyrka in 1786, died 4/1 1808.

**Gustavus Murray**, later Bishop, born 28/3 1747, Pastor Primarius in the Storkyrka 1801, died 4/5 1825.

**John Olof Wallin**, later Archbishop, born 15 th. Oct. 1779, became Pastor Primarius in the Storkyrka 1818, died the 30 th. June 1839. Prominent writer of Psalms. Issued, at the request of his Royal Majesty in addition to the commissioners, in the year 1819 the new Swedish Psalmbook, in which Wallin wrote not less than 128 Psalms and revised a great number of the others.


**Adam Theodore Strömberg**, later Bishop, born 5/6 1820, Pastor Primarius 1880. Removed
already the following year to the Bishop's throne in Strengnäs, died 3/5 1889.

**Frederick Augustus Fehr**, born 25 th. April 1849. A prominent Preacher of great learning, he became Pastor Primarius before he was fully 35 years of age. Died 14 th. May 1895.

He was succeeded by the present holder of the office of Pastor Primarius:

**John Frederick Håhl**, Doctor of Theology and Philosophy, born 1835.

Among the notable servants of the church may be mentioned:

**Torbiörn Tidemanson**, Organist, who wrote a rhymed chronicle of the church of historical importance. He appears to have held office from 1555 to 1593.