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Small world

Dutch clogs, yule log and other traditions

AMERICA IS certainly the land of opportunity and variety when it comes to Christmas celebrations. Families can cling to the holiday traditions brought to America by their forefathers, or they can share in a great wealth of cultural choices.

This year, it might be fun to begin a new tradition — something from another country.

Mexico has two appealing traditions. The posadas, or processions, that begin nine days before Christmas can easily be adapted to American culture.

Originally, these were journeys that mirrored the travels of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. They have now become preholiday visits, with some staying home to prepare little treats and act as hosts while the others go visiting door to door. Neighborhoods organize these evenings before Christ-

mas as progressive open houses.

Another Mexican tradition especially for children is the pinata. Used for Christmas and also for birthdays, the pinata usually is made of papier mache and takes the form of animals, plants or favorite folk heroes.

FILLED WITH SWEETS and hung from the ceiling, the pinata is ready for an assault. Children are blindfolded, then twirled around and given a stick to break the swinging pinata. Once broken, the children scramble for the treats that tumble to the ground.

Many American traditions are actually British in origin. In fact, the British have been "very merry" at Christmastime since the Middle Ages.

Charles Dickens's 19th century version of Christmas as pictured in "A

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