

Humble origins of the Christmas tree come alive

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namon or dried apples strung into small wreaths, figures of animals and people cut from cookie dough and popcorn balls festooned with cranberries were all added to the gay mix of American tree traditions.

SCANDINAVIAN Christmas customs blended with neighboring German customs in the settlements of the American Northwest.

In 17th-century Sweden, small pines divested of their bark and greens were placed outside doors at Christmas-time. Like the German pyramid, they were kept from year to year and brought out for the holiday celebrations.

With the coming of the German tradition of trees inside the home, the stripped pine tree was brought indoors and decorated with cookies and paper ornaments.

Out on the American prairie where evergreens were scarce, the stripped pine tree became a handmade stick tree.

Northern European immigrants brought the custom of remembering the winter birds. Bits of suet, fruit and bread were hung from evergreen trees for the birds' Christmas dinner. Also, the finest sheaves of grain, selected at

harvest time, were perched on tall poles.

IT WAS BELIEVED that if many birds came to share the feast, a year of hope and an abundant crop would follow.

In England, the Christmas tree was not well known until the 1840s, when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert popularized it.

The English happily adopted the Queen's tree for their homes. When mass-produced color lithograph greeting cards were developed in the 1880s, people hung them on Christmas trees with their customary ornaments.

Christmas trees in the 1980s are likely to be as individual as the families who decorate them.

Whether store-brought or hand-made, contemporary ornaments reflect a growing urge among Americans to own keepsakes, collectors' ornaments to unpack and enjoy every Christmas.

Today's ornaments offer insight into the passion for the season, with traditional angels and bells dangling side by side with teddy bears, hobby horses, Paddington Bear and Snoopy and Woodstock. Some ornaments actually move, light up or change scenes before your eyes.



One Stop Shopping

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1 MEADOWBROOK VILLAGE MALL
Adams Rd. at Walton Blvd., Rochester

2 GREAT OAKS MALL
Walton Blvd. at Livernois

3 WINCHESTER MALL
Corner of Avon & Rochester Roads

4 SUMMIT PLACE
Telegraph at Elizabeth Lake Road

5 BLOOMFIELD TOWN SQUARE
Telegraph Road, N. of Square Lake Rd.

6 KINGSWOOD PLAZA
Woodward at Square Lake Road

7 LAKESIDE MALL
Halt Road (M-59) at Schoenher, Sterling Heights

8 SOMERSET MALL
Big Beaver Road at Coolidge, Troy

9 DOWNTOWN BIRMINGHAM SHOPPING DISTRICT

10 OAKLAND MALL
John R. and 14 Mile Rd. (Just off I-75)

11 ORCHARD MALL
Orchard Lake Road at Maple

12 LINCOLN CENTER
Greenfield at 10 1/2 Mile Road