

The All-American Christmas Tree Comes from Germany

To most of us, the most familiar Christmas symbol is the Christmas tree. Whether artificial or live, highly ornamented with fancy bobbles and lights, or simply decorated with candles and homemade cookies, it matters not. The Christmas tree, topped by a shining star, carries to men, women, and children all over the world the universal message of Christmas. This year in the United States more than 40 million people will be celebrating Christmas with a tree. Yet few will be aware that the custom of trimming Christmas trees, as we know it today, is in America little more than 100 years old.

Yes, it was not until the second half of the 19th century, that Christmas trees became part of our national heritage, and the reason this is important today is that many people—seeking to recapture the basic values of Christmas—are going back to that period for ideas so they can decorate their trees "the old-fashioned way."

How Christmas trees got to America is a story in itself. Actually the idea of using evergreens and cones to celebrate festive occasions predates Christianity, but it was not until the Middle Ages in Germany that trees crudely decorated with apples and cookies began to appear in miracle plays staged at Christmas time.

By the 16th century, German families were decorating Christmas trees in their homes, trimming them now with not only apples and candles, but also dolls, confections and lighted candles.

No wonder that in America the first Christmas trees were those put up by homesick Hessian soldiers who fighting here in the Revolution wanted to celebrate the holiday as they did in Germany.

Just when the first American Christmas trees appeared, no one knows for sure. Many credit Charles Follen, a German professor who taught at Harvard, in 1823, he trimmed a tree for his small son, and all Boston was impressed. The custom began to spread. When Prince Albert, German-born consort of Queen Victoria, popularized the Christmas tree in England by setting one up in Windsor Castle, Americans—eager to copy their more sophisticated British cousins—began to follow suit.

The Christmas tree soon arrived in America. In 1846, Pierce made it official when in 1856, he installed the first Christmas tree in the White House.

By the 1890s, enthusiasm and imagination generated around "trimming the tree" had skyrocketed. Two words best describe a typical Gay Nineties Christmas tree—simplicity and charm.

As today, there was on top a gilded, sparkling star. And on the branches were all sorts of decorations: streamers, flags, popcorn and cranberries strung together, chains of gold and silver paper, gingerbread men, gilded nuts and eggs, toy drums, wooden stars, candles in holders, peppermint canes, strips of gold paper, Santa Claus dolls, angels, and cornucopias ("barra of plenty") filled to the brim with candies.

Candy played a significant role in these 1890s Christmas decorations, particularly hard candies like sourballs and peppermint canes which were the typical "party candies" of the day. The canes of course were placed right on the tree, while the sourballs were either hung in little bags or used to "stuff" the gift like wagons and drums at the base of the tree, or most popular of all, to fill the tree's many cornucopias.

There were also treasures beneath the 1890s tree. Mostly toys. Some were electrical like magic lanterns or Ana Kato (that mysterious glass box whose figures danced when moved by static electricity). Others were parlor games like Parchesi, Authors, or Flinch.

Then there were mechanical toys like dancing bears and harlequin players. And mechanical banks like The Two Frogs, where you put your coin in one Frog's foot only to see it flipped instantly into the other's mouth.

For the boys, it was also roller skates, toy soldiers, popguns, and wind-up trains. For the girls—books like "Wizard of Oz" and dolls of all kinds, from Jenny Lind paper dolls to the new-fangled dolls with celloid heads. And every little girl wished for a Mary Poppins doll in the image of the world's most famous nanny.

Most popular after 1903 was the Teddy Bear, named for Theodore Roosevelt and inspired by an incident where on a hunting trip he refused to shoot a bear cub. Every year for decades, millions of these were given at Christmas time to children.

If you want to celebrate your Christmas in the 1950s tradition, it's not as difficult as you might think. For the top of the tree, you can cut a star out of gold construction paper. You can also cut chains from the same paper to string along the branches. Or if you prefer, make your strings of popcorn and cranberries.

Merry Christmas



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WHEN THE LIVONIA SOROPTHISTS arrived at the Children's Ward at St. Mary last Friday they put their gifts under the Christmas tree. Two patients were there to greet them. Soropthismist President Bette Schweiler talks



FOUR-YEAR-OLD JIM HASKINS of Farmington was happy to have the Panda Bear with Bette Schweiler and Soropthismists visit him. Sister Mary Lou-

Alice Frances Hensley Is Bride Of The Rev. James Mac Donald

Alice Frances Hensley, daughter of Frances and Olson Hensley, married the Rev. James Mac Donald in a candlelight ceremony performed by the Rev. Russell Nachtrieb at All Saints Methodist Church on Saturday evening, Nov. 21.

Given in marriage by her father, the bride was attended by Miss Elizabeth Katsala of Detroit and Mrs. June Lamont.

Denton of Dearborn. The groom's father, Mr. Bert Mac Donald and sister, Gertrude Mac Donald from Elkhart, Michigan, completed the wedding party.

The church decorations of tangerine roses and white mums with white tapers complemented Alice's Empire gown of ivory peau de soie. Alencon lace accents on the bodice of the dress were repeated in the mantilla which she wore. Designed by Jean Schell, the gown was fashioned with a detachable chapel train. Alice carried a bouquet of white gardenias.

Her attendants were dressed in olive green and carried tangerine duchess roses; their gowns were fashioned with candlelight crepe skirts and velvet bodices.

The bride's mother wore a floor length gown of silver and blue brocade with a medical collar on the jacket, and a silver pill box hat trimmed with silver lace.

Over three hundred attended the reception at the church following the ceremony. Guests included friends from Pickford, Monroe and Grand Rapids.

For her wedding trip Alice chose a three piece cranberry wool suit and coat of brown suede. The couple spent a week in Chicago where the Rev. Mac Donald resumed his duties as associate minister of St. Paul's Methodist Church in Monroe, Michigan.

The groom is a graduate of Asbury College in Kentucky and Garrett Theological Seminary in Chicago; the new Mrs. Mac Donald attended Bentley High School and was graduated from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Season's Best Wishes

May Your Holiday Be Filled With Every Happiness!

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GA 7-2900

40 From Hi-Y Plan Skiing On Weekend

A group of 40 from the Hi-Y Club of Plymouth plan a ski weekend at Pine Knob in Clarkston, December 26-27.

They will stay at Camp Copan which is a YM Camp in Fenton. Other sports for the weekend will include tobogganing and ice skating.

Chaperons are: Mr. and Mrs. Woodrow Reas of Plymouth and Mr. and Mrs. Dick Metzler from Dearborn. Also Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Crosby will join the group for skiing at Pine Knob both days.

The Hi-Y will hold a Christmas Caroling Party on Wednesday Dec. 23. After caroling the group will attend the Christmas party at "The Chip."

Price 50 cents per person and 75 cents a couple plus identification by high school I.D. card. College students are also invited.

A Merry Merry Christmas

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