

bells, a quiet hush and then the sound of Santa's boots coming up the wooden steps of the village church. In his pack he brought such gifts as hard candy, popcorn balls or oranges.

Germany has contributed much to our yuletide celebrations, and they have as the center of their festivities their Christmas tree. On Christmas Eve, at the right moment, a door is thrown open for the children to view the trimmed tree in all of its glory. Decorated with glittering stars, dolls dressed as angels, sweetmeats, tinsel, painted cookies and handmade toys, it can only bring delight to all.

Father then reads the familiar story from the Bible, presents are exchanged, and all join together to sing such Christmas favorites as "O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum!" and "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht!"

The first Christmas trees this side of

the Atlantic were decorated by Germans, homesick Hessian mercenaries who had been hired by George III to put down the rebellious colonists. The custom, however, was not adopted by the colonists.

Much later, in 1843, a German professor at Harvard University, Charles Follen, is credited with having set up the first Christmas tree after the Hessians in his home in Cambridge, Mass.

The first decorations were quite simple and were described by Mrs. Follen as being strings of cranberries, popcorn, homemade chains of colored paper, candy canes, dolls and painted nuts. Small wax candles were put in tin holders and placed on the branches.

As we observe the season with our own trees, in their beautiful and cherished traditions, may we find deeper messages in their symbols of hope, faith and immortality.



Oh Tannenbaum!

The warmth of the holiday always seems to center around the Christmas tree. The presents are set about for children to tear into on that special morning. Friends and family gather around the soft colors of the lights and toast another year's end.



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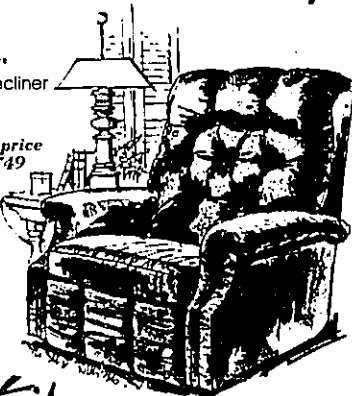
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