

By David Eaming

At Christmas in the Hampshire village of Overton the hooded dancers gyrate through the streets. As the men of the village have done for 800 years, they act out the story of St. George and the dragon.

This fantastic ceremony is performed by farm labourers, who speak their parts in an ancient Anglo-Saxon dialect handed down by father to son over the centuries. Curiously none of the mummer know why they should re-enact the story of St. George at Christmas-time.

What is certain, though, is that the ceremony takes its rightful place among Christmas customs the world over - Christian, traditional or otherwise - which have their origins in the forgotten past.

In contrast is the recently-inaugurated custom of the arrival of the Three Wise Men in Los Angeles - by air from Mexico City.

Even hard-headed businessmen, it seems, are children at heart when it comes to dressing up. For when they arrive to greet the Mayor or of the celluloid city on behalf of their President they come dressed in robes more glamorous than the Magi were ever likely to wear. They wear golden crowns and carry an outside-in star.

And Christmas being above all a children's festival, they come laden with sweets and all kinds of gifts.

On the other side of the world in Australia, an innovation that has taken on the hallmark of an ancient tradition is the ceremony of "Carols by Candlelight".

Two decades ago an Australian radio announcer thought up the idea with the aim of helping sick children. To his surprise no fewer than 10,000 people gathered, candles in hand, at a rincez Bridge gateway to Melbourne, to sing the favourite carols they or their families sang back in their countries or origin in the Old World.

Now every Christmas Eve more than a quarter of a million people take part in the ceremony and guests artists travel the world to be present.

A comparable gathering of the faithful can only be seen in the famous St. Peter's Square outside the Vatican.

Speaking of candles, we are told there was no candle in the stable at Bethlehem. Yet candles have played a large part in Christian worship throughout the ages, and particularly in Christmas ceremonies.

Symbolic of Christ, the Light of the World, they are said to have been adopted from Roman and Hebrew customs.

Certainly candles were essential to many pre-Christian ceremonies. The Romans used them to symbolise the return of the sun to earth in their great Saturnalian festival which took place at the end of December.

Jews still celebrate Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, with candles to commemorate their victory for religious freedom won on December 25, 165 B.C. On that day Judas Maccabeus succeeded in cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem after its profanation by the Jews' Greek overlords.

The early Christians used candles for their secret services in the Roman catacombs.

From these various sources the tradition has spilled over into the present and, especially at Christmas, are connected with some charming customs.

In country districts of Ireland people believe that on Christmas Eve the Christ Child walks through the land. So candles are placed in the windows to guide him on his way.

In Austria and Hungary the same belief is carried a step further. Doors are left open so that, if weary, the Infant Saviour can enter to rest awhile.

Perhaps the most charming use to which candles are put is in Sweden and in America's Swedish communities. When they come to church on Christmas morning they find that lighted candles have been placed on every seat to welcome them.

And Christmas would not be Christmas in many countries with-

out a candle-lit tree.

Christmas Eve is for German children the most eagerly awaited night of the year. For their festivities begin that night when they are permitted to gather round their brightly-lit tree and see their presents.

In their love of the Christmas tree, the Germans are unconsciously perpetuating the cult of their pagan ancestors for whom the tree was the principal religious symbol of the Nordic god Woden.

Since the Prince Consort set up a tree in Windsor Castle in 1841 for the royal children, the Christmas tree has become a centre of festivities in England. His action had its repercussions in America, too. Today American cities vie with one another to set up in their city squares ever larger trees around which they sing carols. Record height so far is 200 ft.

Belgium and France, while not forsaking their traditional New Year festivities, are becoming Christmas-tree conscious and are increasingly adopting English or German Christmas customs.

In Brittany and southern France, however, the custom of burning the yule log still holds sway - as it does in the northern parts of Italy and Spain.

A belief held in common is that the ash from the log has some miraculous powers. The Breton believes it ensures protection from lightning. The Italian and Spaniard never fear hailstorms when they have some of it in their pocket.

The ceremony of burning the yule log varies from country to country. In southern France the whole family go on Christmas Eve to collect it. Wine is poured over it, and, as it burns, the head of the family calls for a blessing on the house.

In Italy blindfolded children beat the burning log, and then the whole family sing an Ave composed especially for the occasion.

Another ancient and much-loved tradition is that of the crib-people to the Italians or putz to the Germans and German-Americans.

The custom was started by St. Francis of Assisi, who in 1223 set up a nativity scene which included live animals in a church in Greccio, Italy, to show how Christ was deprived of all comforts at His birth.

The most elaborate cribs can be seen in Italy, not only in the churches and private homes but also in banks, chain stores and railway stations.

They are prepared with extreme care and the figures of the Holy Family, the shepherds and the Wise Men, with their finely carved features, are elaborately dressed with clothes.

Farmers in Northern Europe spend the long winter evenings repairing their cribs, which sometimes contain so many figures that a whole room is filled with them.

In many parts of Germany, Austria, Italy and South America there are clubs where children learn to build their own cribs, being encouraged to use their imagination in producing different styles and shapes.

Americans of German descent in Pennsylvania go putz-putzing at Christmas - that is, visiting one another's homes to view their friends' cribs, which might contain hundreds of figures, fanciful landscapes, waterfalls, bridges, fountains and, sometimes whole villages.

The Story Of Bethlehem

No one knows for how many thousands of years men have lived in Bethlehem.

It was there - a tiny triangle of stone houses spreading easily over a limestone hill six miles from Jerusalem on the road to Jerusalem - when Moses led the Jews out of Egypt.

An ancient people, still only dimly known to Archaeologists, had named it Ephrata. The Jews, when they came to the promised land, they named it Bethlehem or house of bread. They did not, apparently, reflect long over the choice of name.

It appears to be a simple translation of old Ephrata.

Perhaps the name came originally from the richness of the cornfields on the field below. There was always bread in Bethlehem. It had not changed at all by the time of the Book of Ruth, one of the literary gems of the Old Testament. The Book of Ruth is a simple moral tale - the story of a young widow who returned to Bethlehem in order to be with her husband's people and who toiled "amid the alien corn" to support her mother-in-law.

Life in Bethlehem, we learn from the story of Ruth, was good and the complicated mores of the people it described served to lay down a practical code of morals by which man could live with man with a minimum of friction.

It seems curious, now, to think of the rich and important Boaz marrying Ruth in order to do his duty by his deceased brother - but it was an arrangement, apparently, which served well.

Ruth was the great grandmother of David, the greatest of the Hebrew kings and, nearly, perhaps the greatest of the Hebrew poets.

It was from Bethlehem, the village of his birth, that David went forth as a water boy on the dreadful day that Saul and his men faced Goliath and the Philistine Army.

Goliath dared any man to face him and no man, at first, dared. David, the youngest, smallest and least impressive of a large and important family, did dare - because he had faith in the righteousness of his cause and he believed that God would see him through.

The same sense of security and of the fitness of things which runs through the Book of Ruth seems to have infected David.

Perhaps he understood that the simple community in Bethlehem was better left undisturbed. In any case, after he became king,

Another Yugoslav custom is for children to bind their parents to chairs and release them only when given their presents.

In America garlands of evergreen and holly on the front door symbolise goodwill from the householder to the passerby, while in the West of England such a wreath is intended to keep the devil out and good luck in.

At Queen's College, Oxford, on Christmas morning the feast of the boar's head is celebrated. For centuries the Provost and Fellows have walked in solemn procession to the great dining hall while old carols are sung. The boar's head, roasted and stuffed with an apple in its mouth, follows, held high on a silver dish.

This was the Englishman's traditional Christmas dish long before the turkey arrived from across the Atlantic and is believed to be a relic of paganism from the time of the Danish conquest in the seventh century.

In Denmark today - as in the rest of Scandinavia - fish forms the chief item on the yuletide menu.

The Danes follow this by eating a rice pudding which has a bitter almond in it. The finder is guaranteed good fortune.

The Serbs hide a lucky coin in their cake - like the lucky charms in the English Christmas pudding - while Rumanians bake cakes made in folds symbolic of Christ's swaddling clothes.

In the Tyrol milk is left out when the household goes off to midnight Mass on Christmas Eve - a gift for the Child and His Mother.

But what about St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus? He makes his appearance on December 6 in many European countries. The children welcome him eagerly, for his arrival means an early delivery of presents.

One of the more elaborate ceremonies in Switzerland at this time of year is the arrival of St. Nicholas. He has a bodyguard of about fifty white-robed dancers wearing six-foot-tall hats resembling stained glass windows through which candles shine.

While hanging up a stocking is the more widespread custom, Basque and Dutch children put their shoes or sabots on the window ledges into which the Three Kings can put their gifts.

Christmas boxes are believed to be of pagan origin, the practice of exchanging gifts being part of the Roman Saturnalia and Nordic yule festivities.

The Christian custom can be traced, some believe, to the boxes into which sailors and travellers on long sea voyages put thanks offerings to the monks for saying Masses for the safety of their vessels. These were presented to the monks at Christmas.

The custom of opening the "poor box" by the parish priest on St. Stephen's day, December 26, and the distribution of its contents to the needy has added an extra day, Boxing Day, to England's Christmas holiday.

Regardless of how presents are exchanged, the fact remains that life would be bleak without the pleasant anticipation of receiving a Christmas box (whatever its

shap - value) - and, of course, the pleasure in giving one.

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NOTICE

All back taxes owed Alberton South School No. 123 must be paid by Dec. 31 otherwise the properties concerned will be sold.

By order of Trustees.

NOTICE

For the first time in six years of operation our taxi stand will be closed from 1 a.m. Christmas Eve until 7:30 a.m., Wednesday, December 26th, to give our staff a well earned holiday. We appreciate deeply your patronage in the past and we trust you will understand our reasons and that this arrangement will not mean too much of an inconvenience. A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our friends.

FLICKER TAXI

ATTENTION FARMERS IN WEST PRINCE

Next week being Christmas week our shippers will be loading hogs on Wednesday, Dec. 26th and Thursday morning at Alberton, O'Leary, Conway, Ellerslie, Northam, and Wellington.

This same schedule will also be in effect New Year's week.

CANADA PACKERS LTD.

Charlottetown, P. E. I.

ATTENTION FARMERS IN ALBERTON AND SURROUNDING DISTRICTS

Large quantities of hogs and other livestock wanted weekly.

PAYING TOP PRICES

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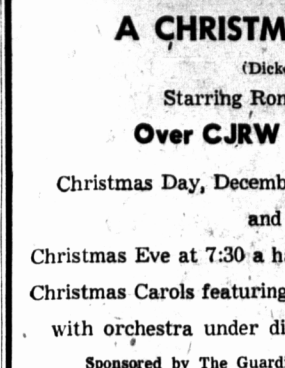
CARL SHEA

PHONE 97

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

(Dickens)  
Starring Ronald Colman  
Over CJRW Summerside  
Christmas Day, December 25th at 3:30 o'clock  
and on  
Christmas Eve at 7:30 a half hour of your favorite Christmas Carols featuring Perry Como, Joni James with orchestra under direction Jackie Gleason.  
Sponsored by The Guardian Publishing Company

Merry Christmas



EMMETT'S MARKET

Summerside

WATER STREET

PHONE 3111

NOTICE

Best wishes for a very Merry Christmas to all!

Family Bakery

Central St. S'side

Merry Christmas to all!

JENKINS BROS. LTD.

Greetings

Wishing you happiness at CHRISTMASTIME!

HANSEN'S MEAT MARKET

SUMMERSIDE

EXTENDING OUR SINCERE HOLIDAY

... to all our friends, and wishing you the best always!

Greetings

ENMAN DRUG CO. LTD.

SUMMERSIDE

until the year 330 when Constantine determined to erase what he believed to be a serious blasphemy. The grove was taken down and a church built on the site.

The final chapter in the history of the village came with the arrival of St. Jerome. Jerome was determined to translate the Bible into Latin.

Merry Christmas



SUMMERSIDE HARDWARE

WATER STREET SUMMERSIDE

PHONE 3111

MERRY CHRISTMAS

May happiness ring in your holidays and accompany you through this glad season!

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CHRISTMAS IS A TIME OF GIVING

What better gift to the relief of human suffering? A gift to your hospital is an investment in the welfare of the community. Your dividend will be in the gratification that comes from serving in time of need. Become a member of the Prince County Hospital Century Club for the year 1956 and join the ranks of the one hundred and eighteen individuals or service organizations who have contributed \$17,000 to assure the continued operation of this essential institution.

Our final appeal is directed in particular to those who desire to assist with lesser contributions than \$100.00. An objective of \$25,000 is required to meet the annual bonded debt retirement commitments. Your gift can assist in meeting this goal. A listing of Century Club and other contributions will be published in the press after December 31st.

May we have the pleasure of including your name?

PRINCE COUNTY HOSPITAL,  
Austin A. Scales, President

BUYING PULPWOOD

Now buying 3 1/2 ft. and 4 ft. rough pulpwood also 3 1/2 ft. half-barked pulpwood at our Summerside yard. Our yard is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. to receive wood.

P.E.I. PRODUCE CO. LTD.  
P.O. Box 700, Summerside.

LIGHTMASTER

Double life light bulbs are the only bulbs on the Canadian market that will burn for 2,000 hours and save the consumer over 50 percent on his lighting costs. Get them today at Summerside Hardware or send your order to the Island representative.

E. H. GORRILL,  
Summerside.

NOTICE

Our poultry killing plant will be closed from December 22 to Dec. 26 inclusive.

Jenkins Brothers Ltd.

Summerside

Grand Opening BEDEQUE RINK

Saturday night, December 22, 8 p.m. Also skating Christmas night. Admission 25 and 35 cents.

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