

Long before the radio invasion of the home, before the introduction of television and when electric organs were unheard of, there was a sanctity and reverential atmosphere about the home on the farm on a Sunday. This was strikingly evident on Christmas Sunday.

Everybody, so it seemed, made a habit of arising early on the Sabbath day and following the usual breakfast of oatmeal porridge laden with cream and doused with brown sugar, there was always time for two or three strips of bacon, fried potatoes, tea and toast. A couple of fried eggs were added for good measure. The chores were attended to and the woodbox filled to the brim.

Dinner was held early and all morning preparations were made to attend church, a service held in the little red school house.

Once again it was a beautiful crisp day with the sun glistening on a thin crust of snow. It was cold but no one seemed to mind the weather and when the large open sleigh was pulled up to the door there was no waiting, and everyone was tucked in under heavy blankets and robes.

There was Uncle Henry sitting upright in the front seat while Grandmother, Mother and we three smaller tikes squeezed into the sleigh.

Everybody was warm and happy. It was fun and thrilling as the roadsters trotted along the long lane to the road. There were other cutters and sleighs on the road, all making their way to the meeting house for Sunday afternoon service.

As we piled out of the sleigh at the church door and walked inside we were greeted by neighbours who were very friendly. Most of the churchgoers gathered in the seats near the long wood-stove and some of the older people carried in long pieces of cordwood. Soon the heat drove

the older folk away from the box-stove.

We remember looking around the schoolhouse and seeing the chalk-marked blackboards and over one large blackboard there was a large map and on the corner of the teacher's desk a large round ball which we were told was a map of the world.

On one corner was a home-made bookshelf piled high with large and small books and on the teacher's desk was a copy of the Bible. At the back of the teacher's desk, leaning against a corner of the blackboard was a long tapered pointer which we were told was used to punish bad boys and girls.

There was a little more commotion than usual when a tall man in a long black coat walked in from the cloak-room and took his place at the front desk. He was the preacher and he smiled at everyone and called grown ups by their first names.

Before starting the service, the preacher walked down to where we were sitting and after speaking to mother he shook hands with the three of us and there seemed to be a warmness in his handshake. He smiled broadly at us.

There was no organ and no choir but a burly low-set man with a bass voice led the singing and how these people could sing--sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. The good old hymns were sung with fervor and the prayer of the preacher seemed to hush everyone into deep silence.

The service was short but the parson was apparently good, so he was told by his congregation. It was a memorable service in so many ways and the spirit of Christmas prevailed.

The people in that small congregation apparently were generous as one of the men reported after the collection. Every boy and girl dropped pennies on the plate and we were told these coppers would help to place gifts on the Christmas tree at the concert to be held the following night.

It was a wonderful and memorable experience but even this experience was climaxed by the Christmas gathering which was held in the farm dining-room that night. A number of the neighbours gathered and soon there was a buzzing and chatter of many voices as the older people gathered around a small organ and began to sing hymns and carols.

Mother was the organist and we could see her fingers pressing on the white and black keys while at the same time she pumped with both feet on two large foot-pedals.

That choir of untrained singers confronts me now as the event is proudly chronicled. It was melodious; it was harmonious; it was beautiful sing-

ing. The old hymns, which we seldom hear today, except at evangelistic meetings heard over the air, were sung. Many of these fine old hymns remained through the centuries and they still take a prominent place where there is good congregational singing.

It seemed that these grand people sang for hours and they were happy and joyful. They were also ready for the hot biscuits and hot tea, Christmas cake and treats which were served by grandmother and the girls.

Late that night the neighbours departed but only after the men had discussed farm problems, church topics and even politics. These men were adept at conversation and at all times courteous and reasonable. No one lost his temper and many a perplexing situation was laughter away! They were friends!

It was a Christmas Sunday long to be remembered and it left indelible impressions on our young minds. How completely different to the Christmas of today.

How different Yuletides of years gone by reminisces FORD MOYNE

CHRISTMAS DAY ON THE FARM