

The year Grandma came to stay



THE YEAR GRANDMA CAME TO STAY, is recalled by Connie Switzer as the best Christmas ever. Mrs. Switzer, now a resident at Wildwood Nursing Home, was a young child when her mother died. Cared for by housekeepers, she was delighted when her grandmother moved in.

As a young girl, the traditional tree and stockings were part and parcel of Connie Switzer's Christmases.

But the childhood Yuletide the 88-year-old lady has the fondest memories of have little to do with decking the halls or opening gifts.

When Mrs. Switzer was four years old her mother died, and her best Christmas, she recalls, was the year her grandmother came to stay.

Her father had employed housekeepers to look after his family of seven until Mrs. Switzer's grandmother offered to sell her house in Buffalo and move to St. Marys.

Grandma stayed until her death in 1911.

"She wasn't even his (mother), she was the other side of the family."

"Everyone thought it was awful -- kept him from marrying," Mrs. Switzer says. "All the women on the street were after him. . . but he said it was protection."

Years later, after Mrs. Switzer herself was wed, her father almost did remarry. "He evidently changed his mind," she points out, "he came out to live at the hired man's house."

Caring for each other is apparently a family tradition. Mrs. Switzer moved to Wildwood Nursing Home several years ago after her children offered her a place to stay.

"One wanted me here and one wanted me there, so I said I'd come out here and they could come and get me when they wanted to visit."

She doesn't know yet what her plans are for Christmas this year. "Somebody'll pick me up."