Made Man Famous

How Santa Claus Arrived in New York

Editor's Note: Santa Claus belongs to the ages now, but there was a time and not so long ago when few people would have recognized him, even if they ran into him on Christmas Eve. Here is the story of a man who did just that and gained immortality from the meeting.

Santa Claus came to New York on a cold snowy Christmas Eve in 1822. Only one man, Dr Clement Clarke Moore, a professor of Greek and Hebrew at the General Theological Seminary, recognized him. And then only by accident.

Moore, a gentle man of prodigious learning, lived on West 23rd Street in a rambling old mansion overlooking the Hudson River.

If it hadn't been Christmas Eve, a time for geniality and generosity, Moore might have grumbled or pleaded the weather when his wife asked him, late in the evening, to trek down to the market for a turkey.

Story for Daughter

Following a long family tradition, she had been packing Christmas baskets for the poor families and discovered at the last moment that she was one turkey short.

Moore cheerfully set out. The walk might do him good, he decided, give him time to collect his thoughts for the Christmas story he had promised to tell six-year-old Charity, the oldest of his three daughters and his favorite. She would be waiting up when he got back and it had better be good.

Moore's previous literary accomplishments written some years before, had been well received by his fellow scholars but were hardly designed for the family fireside.

But there was nothing in Moore's past to tell him that immortality awaited him that night at the family fireside, that his own grave in Trinity cemetery would be visited each Christmas Eve for decades, maybe centuries, by children carrying lanterns and singing carols.

He bought his turkey and headed for home. The snow had stopped falling and the winter sky came alive with a million stars.

At the bottom of a hill, Moore met his caretaker, Jan Duychinck. They chatted about Christmas and old Dutch customs and ultimately St Nicholas, the fourth century bishop of Myra, who rode through the sky in a horse and wagon each December 5, his feast day, bringing gifts for good little Dutch children and birch rods for those who had been bad.

It was a familiar legend. Washington Irving had written about it several years before and children of English stock in the city had borrowed portions of it for their own Christmas ritual.

Fertile Imagination

The gentle professor conjured up a totally different picture of the gift-bringing saint. In Moore's imagination, St Nick was fat and jolly and he rode down the starways in a wonderful miniature sleigh drawn by eight tiny reindeer.

Home in his study, Moore took quill in hand and began to write the story he had promised his children and the whimsical lines that would make him famous.

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse . . .

In less than an hour he was finished.

A friend of the family sent a copy of it to the editor of the Troy, N.Y., Sentinel, where it was published for the first time the following year with the title, A Visit from St. Nicholas.

But it was 15 years before it appeared in print under Moore's name and, after years of arduous scholarship, brought him lasting fame with the trifle of an hour's work.

The poem has since been translated into nearly every known language. It remains today the most popular poem ever written in America.

Tips on Touring

By Carol Lane

Women's Travel Authority

Your own community during Christmas provides one of the nicest treats you can give to the older folks in your home.

Cities across the nation provide street spectacles that are brilliant and festive. Why not invite the folks for a drive through either the shopping or residential district of your town? It can provide them and yourself with more free thrills than a Roman circus.

Colorful lights embroider homes in jewel-tones. Elaborate creches with full-life Biblical figures can be seen on lawns or garage doors. Or Santa Claus and his reindeer galloping down chimneys covered with fake or real snow flurries.

Trees are necklaced and garlanced with tinsel, wreaths and figures. And communities vie with each other to transform their street lamps into Christmas trees, stockings, stars or wreaths.

Naturally, children will like to see such sights and taking them along will make their Christmas season even more memorable.

THE POLICE

The police need your help to put their best enforcement foot forward. Selective enforcement can be the key factor in the attack on holiday accidents. Many communities make holiday periods special traffic alert periods. The police turn out in full strength and put emphasis on preventative enforcement.

The Big Hunt

From Nursery to the Dump

Canada's multimillion dollar Christmas tree decoration business has already begun and throughout the vast forest areas and on the plantations of southern Ontario, the big search for Christmas trees is on. Hundreds of rural families have, of course, already selected the tree which will be cut and hauled into the living room with due ceremony when the time comes.

But that is nothing compared with the wholesale purchase and subsequent re-sale of Christmas trees in many cases from submarginal land on which owners of the past with a view to the future planted their crops years ago. Most of the trees to be sold in Ontario this Christmas — and to be exported to the United States, one of the world's major markets — were provided by Ontario Department of Lands and Forests through its system of tree nurseries. From these nurseries each year are shipped over 30 million small trees, some of which will ultimately grace the living room at Christmas time.

Superstitions

Research carried on by the Department of Lands and Forests indicate that even before the Christmas era, trees and boughs were used for ceremonials. Egyptians, observing the winter solstice, brought green date palms into their homes as a symbol of life triumphant over death. Romans raised evergreen boughs to celebrate the feast of Saturn; early Scandinavians believed sprigs of evergreen brought in to the house signified eternal life; Norsemen thought they symbolized the revival of the sun god Balder.

Even more recently many superstitious people believed branches of evergreen placed over the door would keep out witches, ghosts and evil spirits.

Still more recently has grown the custom of decorating the Christmas tree — a custom which has now become an inevitable ritual to be followed by fathers and mothers for their families. There are few Canadian homes in which the Christmas tree is not decorated before the arrival of the happy day. Many still wait until Christmas Eve, after the children have gone to bed. Many more, however, believe Christmas trees should be brought into the house on the weekend before Christmas, providing a constant source of delight and amusement for the children who help do the decorating. The custom of leaving the trees in place until the weekend after New Year's, has also grown.

Objections are still raised about cutting evergreens for Christmas trees, but opinions are divided. It it true the living trees have helped preserve water supplies; provided cover for game and birds; helped beautify the countryside.

Improves Crop

Foresters, however, believe strongly that forest crops can often be improved by thinning. Every gardener knows that a row of carrots is improved by thinning out; the same applies to a forest crop. By careful selection of trees to be cut, it is possible to obtain evergreen trees without harming the forest, often indeed with positive benefit to it. By the same token, it is possible to thin out stands for fuel and obtain faster growth and greater returns in saw timber from the remaining trees.

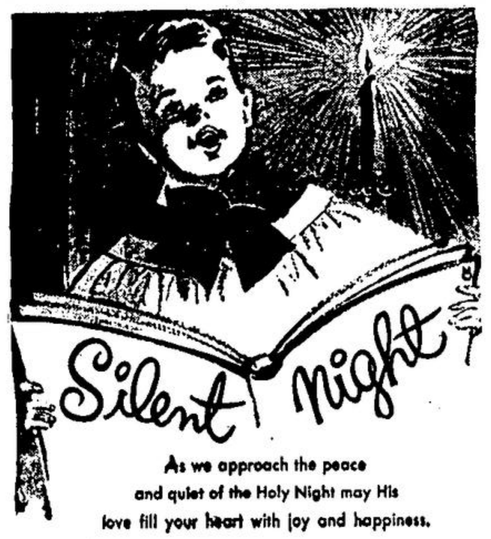
In any event, hundreds of Canadians are now working in the search for and selection of suitable trees for export, for delivery to Canadian homes.

Thousands, even millions of these trees were raised in provincial tree nurseries, sold for reforestation purposes at about one cent per tree, carefully cultivated and nurtured by private and commercial organizations alike and are now destined to make Christmas the happy time it is.

SET EXAMPLE

On our way home today, let each of us resolve to set a good example for the rest of the year. Drive courteously as we express our good will, not only to our friends, but to everyone. Be especially considerate of others in our walking and driving habits.

ACTON BILLIARDS



As we approach the peace and quiet of the Holy Night may His love fill your heart with joy and happiness.

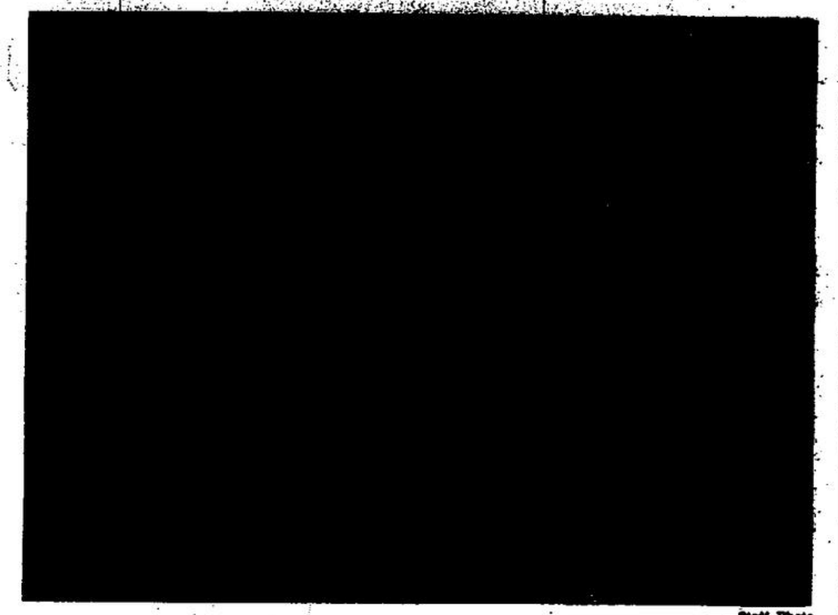
ACTON TV SALES and SERVICE
92 GUELPH ST. ACTON, ONT.

May this Holiday Season be one that will remain in your memory as one of the happiest you ever had. A Merry Christmas to all!

STATION HOTEL

At this festive season, we look back upon a year of meeting old friends and making new ones. To all go our hearty thanks and happiest greetings. May each and every one of you have the merriest holiday ever.

WATSON'S DAIRY BAR
15 Mill St. Acton, Ont.



—Staff Photo

CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS were distributed to the kindergarten class at the Robert Little School on Monday morning, by ladies of the Acton W.I., and four of the lucky children are pictured as they receive their present. Shown in front, left to right, are Bobby Krul, Dianne Frank, Pat Dunne and Garth Taylor and back row, Mrs. G. Fryer, W.I. president, Miss Alice Sidey, kindergarten teacher, and Mrs. J. Wilderspin, W.I. secretary.

Christmas Decorations, Tree Spark Mood for Dublin W.I.

Mrs. G. R. Somerville was hostess to Dublin Women's Institute last Thursday evening when a large attendance of members and friends was present. The house was prettily decorated with Christmas decorations and a Christmas tree.

Mrs. H. Blyth, the president, presided for the opening exercises, after which the roll call was made by Mrs. C. Armstrong, the secretary, and was answered by the display of a homemade gift or decoration.

Some fine articles were shown made by the members.

A donation of $10. was made to the Salvation Army for their work.

Mrs. C. Britton, Mrs. C. McIntyre and Mrs. M. Nellis were the committee to look after the Christmas party and a good program of contests and games was arranged. Scores of the winners were Mrs. D. Moffat, Mrs. M. McCullough, Mrs. Wm. Ballentine, Mrs. C. Armstrong and Mrs. F. McCarron.

Santa Claus, impersonated by Mrs. C. Britton, delivered gifts to all the ladies. Christmas carols were sung with Mrs. W. Frank accompanying on the piano.

A generous contribution was made for the hampers for needy families. A delicious Christmas repast was served by the hostess, Mrs. Somerville, assisted by Mrs. M. McCullough, Mrs. W. Watkins and Mrs. Wm. Frank.

A very happy and enjoyable time was spent by the ladies. Mrs. J. C. Dennis was courtesy convener.

To ALL the Citizens of Acton:

MY BEST WISHES FOR A VERY
HOLY, JOYOUS CHRISTMAS
AND A
HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS
NEW YEAR

. . . *Father Morgan*

OSPRINGE

Bring White Gifts Sunday To Send to Scott Mission

Rev. Hawkes delivered a timely Christmas message at the local Presbyterian church Sunday morning, taking as his theme, "I bring you tidings of great joy," in which he said, "Sin is to be feared more than atomic wars, as sin destroys both body and soul."

The junior choir with Mrs. G. Sunter at the organ sang The Angels' Song. Junior member of the congregation brought white gifts which were later sent to the Scott Mission in Toronto.

Recent Visitors

Miss Gail Sunter and friend of Niagara Falls were recent visitors with her grandmother and aunt, Mrs. G. Sunter and Miss E. Baldic.

Mr Jack Sim of Toronto was a weekend visitor with Mr. and Mrs. D. Stewart and family.

HOLY DAY

Let us remember that the Christmas holiday is really a holy day. It is only too easy in these modern times to think of holidays as holi-"daze". Mad rushing about, Christmas celebrations, last minute shopping, the distractions of store windows and crowds on the street can easily put us in a daze. I'm sure if we remember holy day and be wary of holi-"daze", Christmas will be happier and safer for all of us.

Miss Joan Aitken of Western University, London, is home with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Aitken, for the holidays.

Messrs. Norman Robertson and Vic Patrick of Acton were Sunday visitors with Mr. and Mrs. D. G. Robertson.

Mrs. M. Jackson visited on Friday with her sister, Mrs. George Watson, who is quite ill in Fergus hospital.

Season's greetings are extended to the editor and staff and readers of the Free Press.

Christmas Once Movable Feast

Christmas was once like Easter in that it was a movable feast, celebrated on a different date each year.

St. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, is responsible for establishment of the universal date we celebrate today. In 337 A.D. with the permission of Pope Junius 1, St. Cyril appointed a commission to determine, if possible, the precise date of Christ's nativity. The theologians of the church finally agreed upon December 25 and since the year 354 this date has been celebrated.

THE MANAGER AND STAFF
of
The BANK of NOVA SCOTIA
in Acton
WISH ALL RESIDENTS OF ACTON AND AREA
A Very Merry Christmas
and a
Prosperous New Year

With every good wish for your happiness and good health.

ACTON AUTO BODY

It is our sincere wish that the spiritual beauty and festive joy of the Christmas season light up your days with bright hope and happiness.

Acton Farm Supply
12 MILL ST. W. ACTON, ONT.

We hear the wonderful music of Christmas carols and our holiday joy grows and deepens. We want to share it with all our friends, and to wish them a truly happy season.

ACTON MOTORS
6 MAIN ST. ACTON, ONT.

Sincerest Wishes that your holiday be filled with peace and contentment

Paul's
MEN'S AND BOYS' WEAR
37 Mill St. Acton, Ont.