

# THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Back in 1910      Back in 1940

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, Dec. 22, 1910.

The Christmas spirit is quite prominent with the many church and Sunday school parties going on. Santa Claus is having a busy time making the rounds in order to attend all the concerts. His presence at the concerts certainly attracts the interest of the children and excitement reigns supreme until the holy old saint leaves.

After receiving only one application from advertisements placed in leading dailies, Acton school board held a special meeting Friday evening to discuss the most advisable steps to take. The lone applicant was a woman and the Board of Education members refused to consider her. A special committee went to the home of Principal Stewart and talked the situation over with him.

When he accompanied the committee back to the meeting the board agreed they had acted hastily in accepting the principal's resignation without consideration for an increase and agreed to reimburse Mr. Stewart at the rate of \$100 per year with an annual increase until a total salary of \$1,200 had been reached.

Statham's delivery horse and sleigh took a scurry down Mill St. on Saturday but fortunately little damage resulted. Apparently the horse decided to continue his walk after the attendant had dropped in to a home to make a delivery. The horse's pace was increased until he broke into a regular trot and alarmed many citizens who saw the unattended sleigh moving quickly down the street.

A former Acton resident, Ed Nielsen, died in Toronto within 24 minutes after he was found by a policeman, sitting on the street curb smelling strongly of carbolic acid. He was taken immediately to hospital but never rallied sufficiently to give out any information to authorities. A note in his wallet containing his name was the only means of identification and his next of kin were notified.

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, Dec. 24, 1940.

A fair crowd attended the Christmas Carnival sponsored by the Acton Branch of the Canadian Legion, held last night in the town hall here. Apparently the Christmas shopping had livened the holiday thrill and depleted the pocketbooks. Those attending had a good evening with the amusements and games and carried away many prizes. Interest was keen during the drawing for prizes and grand award of a washing machine went to Mrs. Maplebaum.

Employees of Boardman and Company have been participating in several events during the Christmaseve season. On Thursday night the plant foremen and superintendents were guests of Colonel Boardman and S. G. Bennett at a turkey dinner served at the Station Hotel.

On Saturday over 150 children received gifts from Santa Claus during a big Christmas tree party held in the town hall. The event was arranged jointly by the company and the employees' association.

While complete figures are not available to date, it would appear the post office staff set a new record for sorting Christmas mail last week. For three days during the week, an average of 6,000 letters and cards were posted at Acton.

The annual Continuation School "At Home" proved to be a delightful event and proved most interesting for students and parents alike when it was staged last Thursday night. It gave everyone a chance to enjoy a social time and join in the dancing afterwards.

During the final meeting of the public utilities commission Monday evening, members agreed to pay a bonus to employees amounting to three and a half per cent of their salaries. Appreciation was expressed at this recognition.

A large crowd gathered to attend the Ebenezer church Christmas party Friday evening and took part in the splendid program.



# Editorial Page

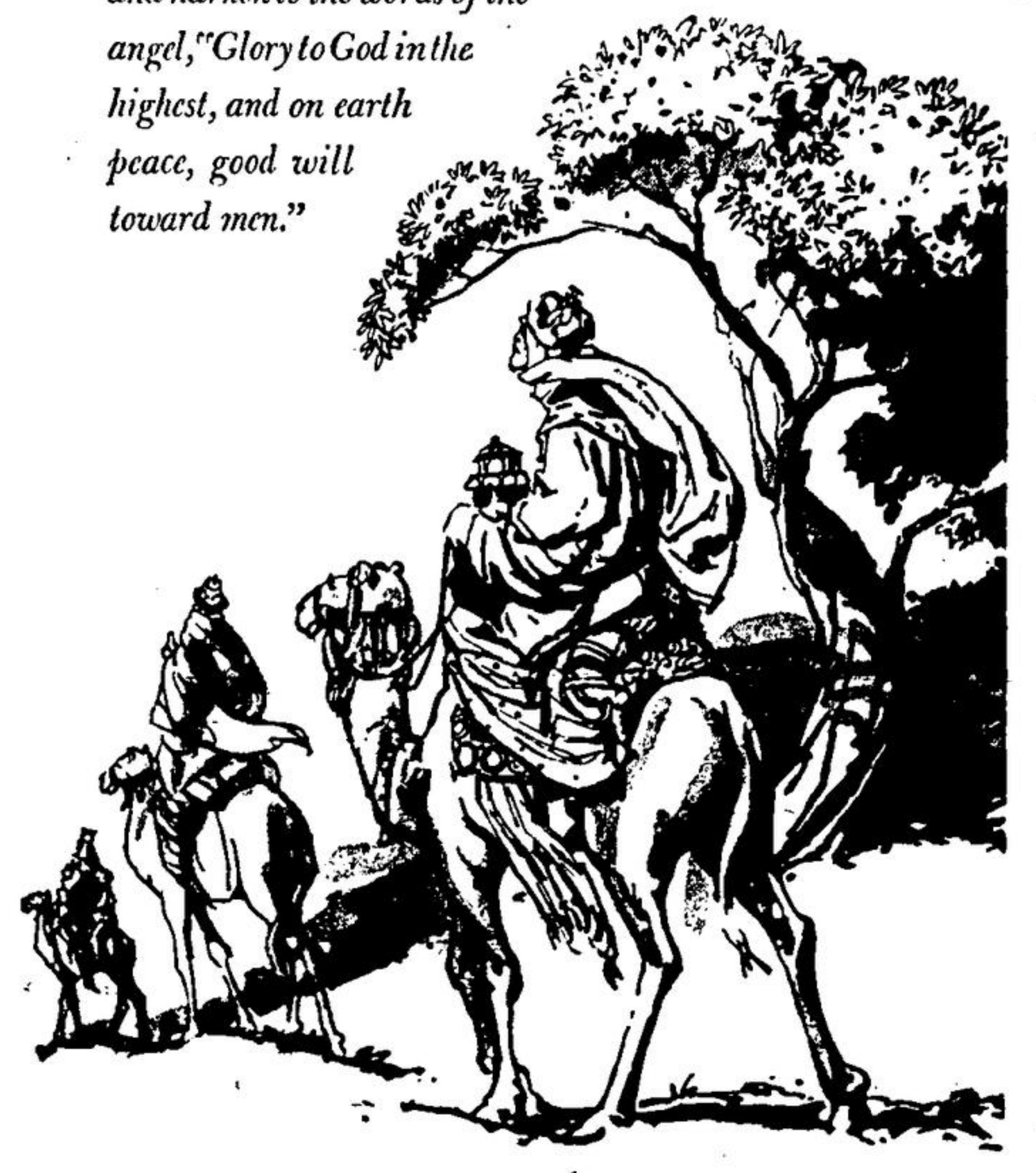
## The CHRISTMAS STORY...

On that night many years ago, as white stars glittered and angels' voices rang out triumphantly to proclaim his coming, there was born unto mankind, a Saviour. Humble shepherds, gathered in the fields tending their flocks, heard the message and came in haste to visit the babe lying in a manger, and they were filled with joy.

Far to the East, the Wise Men saw the great Star of Bethlehem and they followed it to where the Young Child was, bringing rare and precious gifts in their adoration.

Across the ages, the ever-wonderful story of the birth of Christ inspires mankind with a feeling of new hope. Today, in the spirit of the Holy Season, it is for us to rededicate ourselves to His teachings and humbly pray that the ideal of brotherhood will light the way to a lasting peace in this troubled world.

Let us rejoice in the true meaning of Christmas with sincere reverence and harken to the words of the angel, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."



## Sugar and Spice...

BY BILL SMILEY

Another Christmas is "upon us". And we're acting as though it were a fearsome monster, advancing to engulf us. From all sides come the annual lamentations and lamentations of the spoilsports. Most of them are in, or near, middle age. At every turn they bewail the "paganism" and the "commercialization" of our modern Christmas, and wonder plaintively "what's happened to the good, old-fashioned Christmas?"

It goes something like this. "Christmas was a much happier occasion when we were children. You kids, all you can think of is what you're going to get. You don't have any real fun out of Christmas. The tree, for example. Nowadays we just buy a tree. Why, when we were young we'd all go out to the bush with Dad and cut our own tree. And when we came home, Mom would have hot soup and home-made bread for us, and we'd have a jolly time decorating the tree." And so on.

new skates turned out to be a new suit of long underwear, it was because there were tears in them.

Another hallucination about the good, old-fashioned Christmas is that gift-giving was much more simple for parents in those days. I disagree. One Christmas I cavedropped on my parents as they talked about presents for their five children. It was during the depression and the conversation was heart-breaking, even for a fairly tough 10-year-old. They were deep in despair because there was no money for gifts.

I can tell them. The same thing has happened to the good old-fashioned Christmas that has happened to the good old horse and buggy and the good old Saturday night bath in a tin tub in the kitchen and the good old two-hour sermon on Sunday morning.

This little story is typical of the rest of it, half fact, half fancy. My father, for one, had more sense than to go floundering around in the bush, up to his waist in snow. He had a much better system. He simply told me to go and get a tree. And I cut it and dragged it three miles home and arrived exhausted and half-frozen. And my mother decorated it, as mothers have been doing since the first Christmas tree was cut.

It's true that today's Christmas has attracted some undesirable features: too much advertising, too many phony Santas, too many Christmas songs, dined at us for too many hours each day, too much eating and drinking. But it's equally true that today's Christmas retains the best things of the old spirit of Christmas.

Our ears throb and our stomachs heave at such musical abortions as Jingle Bell Rock, but Good King Wenceslas is still with us, and I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas shows no signs of pushing Silent Night into oblivion.

We spend far too much on gifts and cards. But we still shop with the idea that it is more blessed, as well as more fun, to give than to receive. And every time we send a card, we are sending a little piece of ourselves, and there is a moment of warmth and pleasure for the recipient, when he opens it.

Our children are just as excited about Santa Claus and the Christmas tree and the mysteriously wrapped parcels, as ever we were. And they know and love the story of the Christ-child as well as ever we did. And they sing and enjoy the lovely old carols as much as ever we did.

Most of the people who do the wailing about our manner of celebrating the occasion today would have to be tied, hand and foot, before they could be dragged back through the years to their good old-fashioned Christmas. Because it wasn't all that good.

Parents of today say they are appalled at the sophisticated greed of their children when it comes to Christmas presents. The kids aren't satisfied with a pair of skates, or a big doll. They want a portable TV set, or bongo drums, or a transistor radio. According to the "good, old-fashioned Christmas" fairy tale, when we were children we accepted with shining eyes and little squeals of appreciation anything that we found under the tree.

What they think they remember as "good old-fashioned Christmas" is a nostalgic dream they have concocted out of vague and distorted memories. Stories they have read and heard, and the tendency of humans to deplore to-day and see yesterday through a rose haze.

Well, I am here to tell you that this is pure piffle and poppycock. Greed is relative. I covered a pair of skates as furiously as my son covets a tape recorder. And if my eyes were shining when the

The trouble is they try to convince their children that this phantasm they're describing was infinitely superior to the crass, materialistic Christmas of today. I know that story pretty well. Perhaps because I have told it quite a few times.

## ...Dodging 'Round the District

BY ROY DOWNS

OAKVILLE—10-year-old Susan Merry, now completely recovered after a bout with polio at the Hospital for Sick Children, is a girl who doesn't forget. This year she is helping the hospital by selling potatoes door to door in Oakville. Mayor William Anderson was kicked out of the chair at last week's council meeting, but the result was okay by him. Councilors agreed to name the new bridge linking Randall and Rebecca Streets, the "William Anderson Bridge" in his honor.

BURLINGTON—Some play cribbage all their life, waiting for the "perfect" hand to come up. But 10-year-old Brenda Lison has hers already. The rare hand contained the Jack of spades, and five of hearts, diamonds and clubs. The five of spades was turned up on the deck. Guess I'll just have to keep waiting myself.

BRAMPTON—Two teachers who have served on the Brampton teaching staff for over 40 years were honored last week when the new Teaching Fleming school was officially opened. Miss Mary Beatty and Miss Gail Fleming cut the ribbon to open the Campbell Drive public school.

GEORGETOWN—Council passed an important piece of legislation with the new subdivision-by-law, setting out terms of control over the ratio between residential and industrial-commercial building. It is a slight modification of the controversial "60-40" ratio and is graded to require certain industrial-commercial assessment for various classes of residential construction.

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G. A. Dills, Editor-in-Chief  
David R. Dills, Managing Editor

BUSINESS AND EDITORIAL OFFICE PHONE 600, ACTON