Celebrating Christmas . . .

Continued from Page Three

Grandfather asked God's blessing on the food we were about to eat, and then we all set to.

"During the evening, there might be another family gathering at one of the connections. There'd be square dancing and games — and maybe a bit of sparking on the side. I remember how well Cousin George played the harmonica for Myrtle's step-dancing. And, oh brother—could she dance!"

Yes, that was one way of spreading Christmas that became increasingly popular with the passing years. And it's strange to say, in some families Christmas was hardly celebrated at all. We rather suspect this non-observance was handed down as a result of the sparse living conditions that some of the early settlers could never forget.

Thus in a diary written by the granddaughter of Mrs. Robert Evans, Nelson township, we find the following entry for December 25, 1869. "Mopped floors, baked in morning, made bread, fried cakes, churned, went over to John's on a visit. Worked on my dress trimming and had eight for breakfast."

By and large, Christmas is what we make it. Traditions vary according to nationality and creeds. Canada now has a cosmopolitan population, observing a variety of customs. But, whether we observe it or not, there is one celebration common to us all, from the pioneers to the present day — the anniversary of the birthday of Christ.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

Dull World Without Him

Yes, Virginia, There IS a Santa Claus

Years ago, Charles A. Dana, then editor of the New York Sun received the following letter from eight year old Virginia O'Hanlon:

Dear Editor: I am eight years old. Some of my friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says if you see it in the Sun it's so. Please tell me the truth. Is there a Santa Claus?

The following editorial reply appeared in the Sun next day:

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think nothing can be which is not comprehensible to their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your local life their highest beauty and joy. Alas, how dreary would be the world if there was no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then; no poetry; no romance to make tolerable this existence. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what does that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not. But that is no proof they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are until seen and until seeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle, and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal glory and beauty beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God, he lives, and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will still live.

One Third Canadian Population at Parks

Acquisition and creation of additional parklands, especially in southern Ontario, "before thought may be given to the possible refinement of our present parks" was indicated by Ontario Lands and Forests Minister the Hon. J. W. Spooner, addressing Ontario park supervisors.

The Minister was referring to a suggestion that the parks should have laundromats, showers, electricity and waste drains for trailers.

"Although the eventual possibility of these has not been eliminated," he said, "our thinking is to retain some semblance of true camping atmosphere in our parks. I have no doubt the vast majority of park users think along these lines. We must draw the line somewhere and block the efforts of those affected by a Luna Park or Coney Island complex."

Canoe trippers have urged more cleanliness on the canoe routes. This brings to light the problem of providing quality wilderness recreation for large numbers of people. It may well call for public education and additional staffs for patrol and guidance duties," Mr. Spooner pointed out.

He noted that the park attendance this year, a record of 6,215,300 visitors to the 79 parks open to the public, "represents one-third of the whole population of Canada."

STAND IN STABLES

Horses and cattle in Denmark are given extra food on Christmas Eve. It is believed that hungry animals stand at midnight in honor of the Christ-Child's birth.

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Handy Hints for Outdoor Christmas Trees

By Suzanne Lancaster

There is nothing quite like a colorfully lighted evergreen tree, a starry Christmas night, and a soft blanket of snow to create a wonderful Christmas scene in front of your home. A well decorated Christmas tree outdoors can create both symmetry and mood by the careful use of both lights and color.

If your trees and shrubbery are lopsided, don't be discouraged, for they can be symmetrical by using a few lighting tricks. You don't have to prune them, and in fact, it's not advisable to do so. First, fasten two screw eyes to the ends of two short, narrow pieces of wood, and then securely tape these to the top of your tree — one on each side. Next, string a series of wires through the screw eyes in a cone shape around the tree, and fasten the ends securely into the ground with wooden pegs. Then fasten your strings of outdoor lights to the wires, rather than to the branches of the tree, running them first straight up and down the trees, then arranging more strings of lights in graceful loops merely by draping the strings horizontally over the wire frame. This technique can also be used over well-shaped trees to accent their symmetry.

Adds Depth

This conical pattern of stringing lights is also very effective in emphasizing the towering symmetry of a large evergreen tree, and adds considerable depth to the over-all outdoor decorations.

A very startling and pleasing effect can also be created by the use of outdoor floodlighting kits. These are available in clear glass and in five colors, blue, green, red, yellow and pink. A combination of red and blue, or blue and yellow floodlights placed opposite each other on each side of a tree that is set against a white wall, will give some striking effects. First, the shadows created on the wall will give the impression of three trees. The shadows will be different colors, and where the two colors of light meet on the tree, the effect will be of white light, and the tree will retain its natural green color. This is because the primary colors combine to produce white.

Tend To Wash Out

They must be used in proper proportion to achieve these effects: two blue or green lamps are required to every yellow or red lamp used. Of course, the colored floodlights will tend to wash out the natural color of the tree on the sides nearest each lamp, but this can be counteracted by placing appropriately colored tree lights at these points.

In using strings of lights, the order of brightness is: white, yellow, red, green, and blue. Therefore, if you use all colors in decorating your tree, try to have twice as many blue and green lamps as you do white, yellow and red, in order to have a good color and brightness balance. In this way you can also retain the true color of the tree.

Light Formula

I am frequently asked how many lights should be placed on a tree. Here is a formula that I use outdoors: Multiply the height of the tree by the width at its base, times 1.5, and then multiply this by two if you want a solid light effect, or by one if a tree outline only is required. Half of it will produce a spotty effect. Thus for a tree four feet wide by six feet high, to get a solid effect you will need: 2 X 6 X 4 X 1.5, or a total of 72 lamps.

Make Sure Toys Safe From Fire

If you are buying toys for the youngster this year, make sure they are safe toys, incapable of causing fire, shock or explosion, the Canadian Underwriters' Association advises.

Miniature space vehicles, rockets, airplanes, automobiles, and other mechanical toys that use kerosene, gasoline, carbide or hydrogen peroxide for fuels may be hazardous if placed in the hands of unattended small children.

The C.U.A. urges that parents supervise all play with electrical toys, also those powered with fuels and chemicals.

On heat-producing and electrical toys the UL label of Underwriters' Laboratories is especially important.

Off-Tree Lighting Best for Metal Tree

If you are using a metal Christmas tree this year, the Canadian Underwriters' Association recommends that you use off-the-tree lighting with colored lights to give a softer and more beautiful illumination.

Placing strings of Christmas lights upon any metal tree sets up the possibility of electric shock if the cord becomes frayed or the interior of a light socket comes in contact with the tree.

Play it safe and use off-the-tree lighting with any metal tree.

SHORT-LIVED

Modern lads — and lassies — might object, but in olden times the privilege of kissing beneath the mistletoe required that each maiden kissed be given a berry from the mistletoe branch, and, once the berries were gone, so were the kisses.

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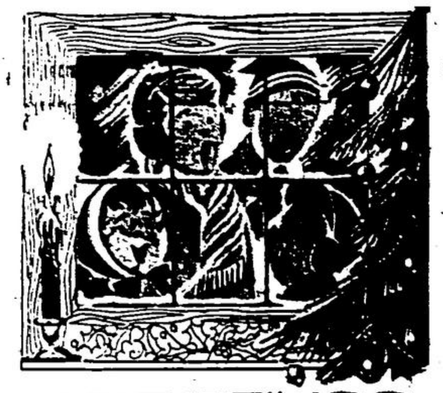
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