

Free Press Editorial Page

Christmas past and present ...

When Charles Dickens wrote his classic, A Christmas Carol, it became a best seller because the people in it were so real others could identify them on their own street or neighborhood. Dickens took a long, hard look at the Christmas of his day and found little in it that was good.

He looked back at the Christmas of the past and immortal Ebenezer Scrooge's change from a sensitive youth to a tight-fisted miser. Then he looked to the future and it boded little good for Ebenezer.

Perhaps we should all sit down at Christmas, reflect on the past, think on the present and wonder about the future.

I can remember Christmas as a child. It was a time of awe and mystery.

The Christmas story with its stress on the birth of Christ was somehow accompanied by the myth of Santa Claus with no perceivable ill effects. As far as I can remember there were no psychiatrists around to tell us we shouldn't believe in the jolly old elf from the North Pole.

On the contrary, there were daily radio programs from the North Pole which we children followed religiously. The newspapers carried a comic strip which was read avidly. It featured Santa Claus, his elves and reindeer. No, Rudolph wasn't one of them. He hadn't been created yet.

There was Donner and Blitzen, and Cupid and Comet ... and Vixen.

Although we had no fireplace the stockings were hung close to the nearest chimney which often had a pipe and a Quebec heater on the end of that.

There weren't too many skeptics in our family to wonder how Santa came down the chimney, through the stove pipe and past the red hot fire in the heater. He could do it, that's all there was to it. We left a Tönch, a glass of warm milk and a piece of mincemeat pie, for the weary traveller. It was invariably eaten.

The religious significance of Christmas was not lost either. There were carols at school and, of course, pageants at church and the inevitable Christmas concert.

In the depths of the depression, presents were often practical rather than playful. Some were home-made. We appreciated them, maybe more than the expensive gifts given today.

Christmas Day was a time of feasting. There weren't many turkeys around then. Chicken was a luxury, at least at our house. Sometimes we had a goose. The aroma of the fowl, cooked in the coal-fired kitchen range permeated every part of the house. Somehow the fowl of those days had a different taste than it has today.

There was the inevitable good-natured argument at the Christmas dinner table about who would get the drumstick. And the wishbone? It was the prize deluxe.

In the event you got the part which was known in Catholic homes as the Parson's nose and protestant homes as the Pope's nose, it was just your bad luck. You made the most of it! Somehow, even though Christmas fowl was as much a luxury to our parents, the children seemed to get the choice parts.

Most of your close relatives would manage to come by for a visit sometime during Christmas day. They were served home-made ginger beer, or if they were lucky there might be a glass of elderberry wine, whopped up on the sly during the summer.

The evenings were a pure delight with a Christmas tree lit by bulbs which all went out when one died. Maybe you'd have a story read, perhaps a game of cards as you sat around the heater in the living room. You didn't go too far away from it at any time in the cold winter months when Jack Frost painted lacy designs on windows.

Nostalgia sometimes clouds the reason and perhaps it is better we don't remember the less pleasing things of Christmas as a child. It was a time of poverty for many, men were out of work and prospects for the unemployed were often dim.

The picture has changed today. As we approach Christmas 1967 there is little unemployment in this area. People are more prosperous than they've ever been.

There is money for expensive presents, there are furnaces which run automatically in the houses, a car in the garage, refrigerators well stocked with food in the kitchen.

Are we happier? Perhaps in some cases, but the rush and tear to prepare for the great Christian festival often leaves us neurotic and full of anxiety for the future.

Christmas is still a family festival, a special time for children. Parents are still making sacrifices to see their children get something worthwhile out of Christmas. But the content has changed. Now more is made of the expensive toy or the choice of clothing.

It should be more love, more understanding, more peace, less anxiety and a faith in the future. In spite of their lack of material goods in the depression years there was no lack of love in the family. There were less disruptive influences.

You can't turn back the clock but you can still have the commodity your parents had in abundance. These nerve-racking days need not be a part of your life, especially at Christmas.

Fill your heart with the peace of the real Christmas story.

If you're worried, anxious and nervous, take time out to examine the real motives behind Christmas. Ignore the crass commercialism.

Take time out to have a very merry Christmas!

Notes ...

Alice St. may be one of the shortest in town but it is one of the brightest with the hydro building and private residences displaying a brilliant display of Christmas lights. Hydro chairman Ted Tyler says the name of the street should be Power St.

Snap judgment: something that comes unannounced too often.

A neighbor of ours says the warm days we've been having are for the delinquent people who haven't yet put up their outdoor lighting.



TYMPANIST Neil Anderson plays the two new tympanists purchased by Acton Citizens' Band and presented for the first time at Sunday's concert in the high school auditorium. Bass drummer Bill Buchanan admires Neil's technique. (Staff Photo)

Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

As some brilliant clod once pointed out, Christmas comes but once a year. And it's a jolly good thing it does.

Think of what we'd be like if we didn't have the glory of Christmas to pull us out of the bleak, little lives of selfishness, misery and loneliness.

Especially in these bracing northern climates is Christmas a necessity. It is cold, the nights are long, and the festival provides a splash of color, warmth and love that enables us to face the dreaded long winter ahead.

Oh, I'll admit it is a bit of a drag, in some ways. The gentle day of joy has become the focus for a multitude of irrelevances.

There's the darn tree to put up, the ridiculous cards to be sent to neighbors you saw yesterday, the horrors of gift shopping, and the stupid bird to be stuffed, trussed, cooked and eaten.

In addition to these trappings, which make perfect ladies swear and strong men weep, there is the incredible commercialization of the event, in every possible aspect. But don't blame that on others, you don't have to take part unless you want to.

Admitting all this, there is a magic in Christmas, in the very word, that still holds up. There's a vast satisfaction for example, when you finally get the tree to stand up with no more than a 45-degree list, and it's all decorated, and you realize that, despite what your wife said, it's the best tree in town.

When you sit down to write those cards, you discover that you still have a great affection for old friends you haven't seen for so long, and you wax quite lyrical, and ask them to visit you. Sometimes, alas, they do.

And you must admit you feel as though you'd climbed Everest when you get that last package wrapped and sit back admiring your good taste in gifts, paper and ribbons.

Then there's the turk. For a number of years, this has been my baby, at our house. And when I've made the dressing, trussed the brute and stuck it in the oven, I feel something akin to the pure pride and joy of a woman who has produced a real baby.

What were the three gifts the wise men gave the Christ child? According to one person it was gold, frankincense and mirrh.

The entrance to Beardmore and Co. is again one of the most attractive places to see during the Christmas season. Don't fail to see it if you are contemplating a tour of the Christmas lights and sights.

Be careful during the holiday season. If you drink don't drive.

school auditorium. Bass drummer Bill Buchanan admires Neil's technique. (Staff Photo)

(Staff Photo)



There's the fun of spilling your kids rotten and putting yourself in lock for six months. Christmas wouldn't be the same if it didn't make you a little reckless.

But perhaps the best things about Christmas are the simple ones. There's the wonderful moment of peace and quiet on Christmas Eve, when everything is done, and the stockings are hung and the fire murmurs and the tree glows, and you talk warmly and lazily of Christmas Past and Christmas Present.

Then there's the church service, with its ancient, simple story, so familiar, so real because you've known it all your life. And the gaudy jukes churning in your stomach. And the post-church salutations of "Merry Christmas," really meaning it.

And the opening of the presents, after church. There's love in them. You realize this daughter of yours tried to get something really special for her Dad. And this son of yours spent his last five bucks on a gift. Even though he'll beat you for ten before the day is over. And nothing fits your wife, as usual.

And, of course, dinner. But the time you enjoy this is when you are 14, and have an elastic stomach, not when you are 44, and have a dyspeptic one.

After the dishes, which are a real pain in the posterior, because all you want to do is sleep, some carol singing restores the spirit. And the old carols sound like new.

This year, we're having a quiet family Christmas, after many years of having a large, fairly noisy one. Hugh said he was coming home for Christmas, even if he was in Australia.

It may be a mess, because we fight a lot in our family. But not at Christmas time. May you all have the Christmas I hope we'll have.

Free Press

back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, December 18, 1947.

Hurry! Hurry! Christmas is just a week from today! Stores with Christmas gifts advertised for sale were: Cooper's drug store, Elliott Bros., Symon Hardware, Cooper's Men's Wear, Eisen's Clothing store, Acton Home Bakery (J.F. Wilds); J.K. Gardiner watchmaker; E.T. Marks, Manning Electric, Talbot Hardware, Hinton's 5c to 10c, Carroll's groceries, McEachern Electric, Kendrick's hairdressing, Brada shoe store, H.D. Ruchlin Jeweller, Hatcher's Bakery, Johnstone and Rumley Home furnishings, Acton Poultry farm.

Rev. W.G. Luxton, rector of St. Andrew's Anglican Church at Hamilton Beach and St. Matthews church at Aldershot has been appointed rector of St. Alban's church, Acton and St. John's, Rockwood.

Mr. S.G. Bennett had outstanding exhibits at the Royal Winter Fair with his catfish. Baxter Laboratories is installing large new equipment. It is hoisted in through the roof.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, December 20, 1917.

Christmas shopping ads - Russell's fancy groceries, fruits and confectionery; Nelson and Co., (novelties and practical lines); Conway and McLean, L. Starkman, - tea aprons 25¢, fancy work; Geor Hynda, Jeweller; Xmas Fish specials at Stauffer's; Wm. Landsborough meat shop, phone in your order for Xmas fowl; C.W. Kelly, Guelph - a new record will make a Victrola practically new again; W. Williams boots and shoes; J.R. Livingstone groceries; Fine footwear at Kenney Bros.; R. Rubinoff, Acton creamery, C.C. Spelght.

Pte. Thos. Bennett is recovered from his wounds and in at the front again. The electorate of Halton spoke strongly in favor of Union government. A women's vote was a large contributing element. Although it was thought since they lacked experience there would be a large number of spoiled ballots this proved not to be the case. There was not a single spoiled ballot in the 400 at Acton.

One of the saddest deaths for a long time is that of Mrs. Georgie Barber, who leaves her husband and three motherless children. Blood poisoning set in after an operation.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, December 22, 1892.

The Public Schools will close this afternoon. The teachers and their pupils will remove to the new school building after vacation.

Acton's fine new school, rendered necessary by increasing population, will supply ample accommodation for many years to come.

The building presents a commanding appearance, its architectural outline producing a handsome and pleasing effect from all points of view. Its size is 62 by 36 feet, two stories high, surmounted by a fine belfry, and has a splendid basement under the entire building. The material is first class and the workmanship superior.

The school is entered through a commodious open portico of artistic design. From the vestibule the two schoolrooms on the first floor are reached. A fine wide staircase leads through an arch to the upper rooms. The architect is Mr. John Cameron.

When the seats and desks are in place all the new school will lack is a new bell, and a Union Jack to float from the pinnacle of the belfry on special anniversaries.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Canadian Champion, Milton, December 10, 1867.

A sad occurrence took place in the neighborhood of Kibiride, on Saturday night, the 14th inst, which was attended with the loss of two lives and has cast a gloom through the locality in which it happened. Mr. James Coulson, farmer, and an old resident of the Township at Nelson, a few years ago built a commodious brick house, which was occupied by him and his son, who was married. On the night in question a fire broke out in the kitchen, occupied by John Coulson, the son, and was first discovered by Mrs. Coulson, senior, who after satisfying herself the adjoining kitchen was on fire, gave the alarm. Mrs. Coulson junior took her child, came down the stairs, and unfortunately opened the door of the burning kitchen, and instantly the flames, which had hitherto been confined, found vent and judging from all appearances, struck her down. Both mother and infant were beyond saving by any human hand.

Free Press

Church Notices

THE CHURCH OF ST. ALBAN THE MARTYR ANGLICAN
Corner Willow St. and St. Alban's Drive
Rev. Ritchie McMurray, M.A., S.T.B.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1967
Advent IV
9:00 a.m.—The Holy Eucharist.
10:30 a.m.—Church School
10:30 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, celebrated for the first time in the parish by the Rev. Laurence G. Duby.
11:00 p.m.—The First Eucharist of Christmas.
MONDAY, DECEMBER 25
CHRISTMAS DAY
10:00 a.m.—The Second Eucharist of Christmas.

BETH-EL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
Minister — Rev. P. Brouwer
Acton, Ontario.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1967
10:00 a.m.—English Service.
11:10 a.m.—Sunday School.
2:30 p.m.—Alternating Dutch and English Service.
Saturday — Bible Classes 10-12 a.m. Everyone Welcome

MAPLE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH
81 Maple Ave., Georgetown
Pastor: Rev. Robert C. Lohnes

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1967
Here is our sincere invitation to the whole family to attend church.
9:45 a.m.—Sunday School. All ages
11:00 a.m.—Morning Service.
7:00 p.m.—Evening Evangel.
7:45 p.m.—Wednesday. Prayer Meeting
Acton 853-1956 Georgetown 877-6465

ACTON BAPTIST CHURCH
Founded 1842
Pastor: Rev. Stanley Gammon
Res., 144 Tidey Ave., Ph. 853-1615

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1967
CHRISTMAS SUNDAY
10:00 a.m.—Sunday School classes for all ages.
11:15 a.m.—Morning Worship "His Name is Jesus."
7:00 p.m.—Evening Service "Family Night." A service of story and song. Special music. All welcome.
Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.—Prayer, Bible Study
Thursday, 8:00 p.m. Choir Practice
No B.H.F. on Friday
Text — "And they brought unto Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh." Matthew 2: 11.

TRINITY CHURCH (The United Church of Canada)
Minister: Rev. Gordon B. Turner, B.A., B.D.
Organist: Dr. George Elliott, M.A., Ph. D.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1967
10:00 a.m.—Christmas Service. Sermon "The Christ Event — The Reality of Christmas." (nursery provided)
SUNDAY SCHOOL
Sunday School classes cancelled to enable children to attend services with their parents.
7:40 p.m.—The Brass Quartette will play selected arrangements.
8:00 p.m.—A Service of Carols and Lessons presented by the Trinity Choirs

CHRISTMAS DAY
10:00 a.m.—A service of meditation and communion. The sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated.

EVANGEL PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE
P.A.O.C. 33 Churchill Road
Rev. S. M. Thoman, Pastor, 853-2715

Thursday December 21, 7 p.m. C. A. Caroling

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1967
10:00 a.m.—Sunday School.
11:00 a.m.—Christmas Message "The Radiant Star"
7:00 p.m.—Christmas Eve Candlelight Service and sacred Christmas music.
Tuesday, 8 p.m.—Prayer Service and Bible Study.
Thursday, at 8 p.m.—Christ Ambassadors.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA KNOX CHURCH, ACTON
Rev. Andrew H. McKenzie, B.A., B.D. Minister
Mr. E. A. Hansen, B.A. Organist and Choir Master

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1967
9:45 a.m.—Church School for ages 3 to 15 years.
9:45 a.m.—Minister's Church Membership Class withdrawn this Sunday only.
11:00 a.m.—Christmas Sunday Worship and Baptisms. Special Music by Senior Choir.
7:30 p.m.—Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. The Birth of Christ in Scripture, Poetry and Music.
Everyone Most Welcome
This is an invitation to attend the Church of your choice on Sunday.



Centennial Picture Gallery



ACTON GOLF LINKS, a popular spot years ago, were located on what is now known as the cemetery hill and beyond into Beardmore property. Outside of a private course adjacent to town there are no links here now although a new course is being made on the first line.

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