

The Legend of Christmas Tinsel

According to an old legend, a poor peasant woman, with many children, decorated a Christmas tree with such humble trimmings as she was able to gather, mostly berries and nuts and such odds and ends as she had managed to save up during the year. She labored far into the night trying to make her tree as beautiful as she could.

While she was asleep, spiders came and crawled from branch to branch trailing their lacy webs behind them. To reward the woman for her devotion, the Christ Child blessed the tree and all the spider webs were turned into gleaming silver.

Well of the Wise Men

There is a "Well of the Wise Men" on the outskirts of Bethlehem where, according to legend, the three discouraged Magi found their lost star reflected and continued their quest.

In 1834 a modern candle-molding machine was developed by Joseph Morgan, so that candles no longer had to be made by a tedious hand-dipped process.



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Best Wishes and Sincere Thanks to our friends.

Wm. Stuckey Photography

Candles Light the Way Throughout the Ages

Although it has been said there was no candle to light the manger in the stable at Bethlehem, still from early times people have placed tapers in windows to light the way for the Christ Child and welcome Him.

In many countries, anyone coming to the door at Christmastime was invited to enter. For some believed that Christ Himself would appear at a house with a candle, concealing his identity, to learn the extent of their kindness.

Candles have inspired men throughout the ages, linking their bright glow with the beauty of faith. Research by Hallmark candle expert John Binjem reveals that candles were generally used at Christmastime as far back as the 11th Century. Until the 18th Century they were made primarily from tallow or beeswax. The latter was preferred, as an emblem of Mary's purity, for wax is the product of virgin bees. Many persons believed that bees came from heaven, and it was not unusual for religious institutions to keep swarms of them. According to an early writer, the wax represented Christ's body; the wick, His soul; and the flame His divine nature.

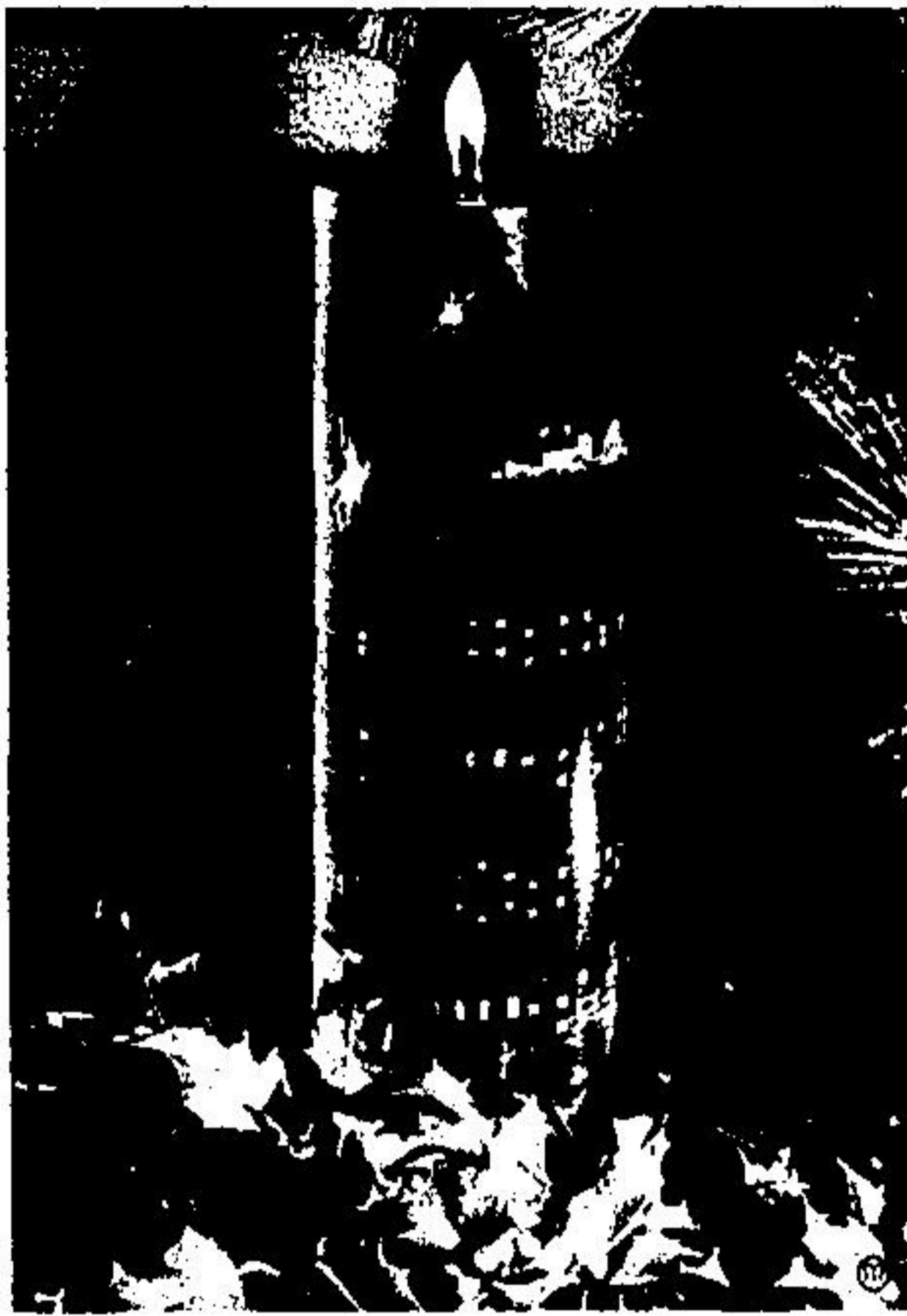
The religious symbolism of the candle grew through the centuries after early Christians, huddled in the damp chill catacombs of Rome, used lighted candles as a source of comfort.

New Candle Materials

In 1750 a substance from the head of the sperm whale was found to be superior to tallow and beeswax. Later, in 1850, paraffin wax was developed and combined with stearic acid to make candles of the modern type.

Bayberry candles with their delicate scent are especially popular at Christmas, and they are said to bring good luck to the home. The bayberry candle is uniquely American. Bayberry bushes grew in great abundance in the new world, and after learning to extract the greenish wax from the wild bayberries, the Pilgrims used it to make candles.

The Irish place lighted candles in their windows on Christmas Eve as a guide and an invitation to all, who like Mary and Joseph, may be seeking shelter.



SILENT NIGHT candle features the words and music of the famous Christmas carol. Photo from Hallmark

Greeks Have Unique Religious Ceremony to Celebrate Christmas

On Christmas Eve, children of Greek families go from house to house singing carols to the accompaniment of tiny clay drums and tinkling steel triangles. They are rewarded with gifts of figs, walnuts, almonds and sometimes money.

Afterwards there is a Christmas Eve service, which begins at 4 a.m. and ends shortly before dawn. The family then begins feasting with "Christpsomo," (bread of Christ), a simple cake studded with nuts, and "Kourbiedes," small cakes dusted with powdered sugar.

The Christmas dinner must include "cheridon," roast pig. In rural households, these are fattened for the feast from midsummer on. If a family cannot afford to buy a pig, usually relatives or neighbors provide one.

There are no Christmas trees and no Christmas presents. St. Basil's Day or New Year's Day is the time for exchanging gifts. St. Basil, "Hagios Vasilias," one of the four fathers of the Orthodox church, is the Santa Claus of Greek children.

Blessing of the Waters
Since Greece has always been a maritime nation, it is not surprising that the blessing of the waters is an impressive part of the Christmas celebration. This takes place on Epiphany Day.

At high noon on that day, the Archbishop or highest ranking priest leads a procession from the church to the waterfront. Dressed in magnificent vestments, he holds aloft before him a crucifix of gold or ebony with a silver image of the Saviour. Acolytes and lesser clergy, also clad in rich vestments, accompany him, chanting as they march. The congregation follows in their wake.

The procession halts at the water's edge. The Priest intones a prayer and then, after tying a scarf around the cross, hurls it into the water. From the shore and from boats, men and boys dive after it. The one who succeeds in bringing it up receives a special blessing

"Feast of Lights" in Merrie Old England

Over 1400 years ago, the Council of Tours decreed that the celebration of Christmas should continue on for twelve days through Epiphany, which falls on January 6th. This day, also known as "The Feast of Lights," is still observed by many churches.

It became customary, through the centuries, for the reigning King of England to open Twelfth Night revels by throwing dice. In the 17th century, Charles II played for high stakes, winning 150 pounds one year

and losing 100 pounds the next, both tremendous sums for that period.

Festivities included choosing a King and Queen of the feast. Slices of a plum cake containing a bean and a pea were served and the man who got the bean and the woman who got the pea were crowned King and Queen. With toasts to the royal pair, the party got into full swing. Revels wound up with final kisses under the mistletoe. Before sunrise, all the Christmas greens had to be taken down

CHRISTMAS Cheer

Songs of good cheer ring out as we fondly greet you and yours.

from everyone at the **ROYAL CAFE**

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

In the happy spirit of the holiday cheer that abounds, may we offer sincere wishes for a Merry Christmas to all our friends.

Nielsen's Clothing

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