

Looking back at Christmas past

It was 1934 and the town fathers were discussing prohibition. Fresh Christmas trees were 50 cents each and sirloin steak was 20 cents a pound.

While the tradition of Christmas has changed little in 50 years, Santa's bag of goodies is certainly worth more than ever before.

The community was just recovering from the depression and getting ready for Christmas. Treasure Island was playing at the only theatre in town, and residents were quietly going about the task of Christmas shopping.

Buyers seemed more practical and spent more of their budget on warm duds for the children rather than a host of toys. Boys' winter caps were 49 cents apiece and girls' flannelette nightgowns went for 50 cents each.

There were china tea sets for the children at \$1.25 each, or simply a cup and saucer for mother for 15 cents each.

For dad, perhaps an electric razor for \$4.99 or a pair of horsehide mitts for 49 cents. Men's suits with a pair of pants were \$18.50. For mom a pure wood coat with a sable collar for \$19.99.

About 25 years later commercialism reared its head and consumers were hit with a barrage of advertising for the "fridge of your dreams", a high fidelity phonograph and radio, or a musical top, jack-in-the-music-box and doll carriage for the children.

The Last Days of Pompell was playing at the cinema and Northern Electric moved into Brampton in the final month of 1960 with the promise of jobs for 10,000 by 1965.

The children would be made happy Christmas morning with a mechanical shooting tank for \$1.88 or a musical plush bear for \$3.88. Electric hockey games were \$9.95 each, and a child's first telephone - which doubled as a bank - sold for only 88 cents.

Men's two-pant suits had gone up to \$49.99, but girls' and women's sleepwear was still reasonable at \$1.98 for pretty flannel gowns.

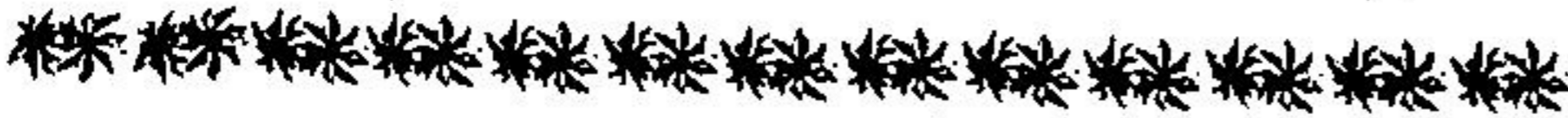
By 1971 games and toys which would be part of children's Christmas lists for years to come were headlined in local newspapers.

Kerplunk and Trouble board games were selling for \$2.99 each, the newborn Thumbalina which squirmed when her string was pulled, sold for \$5.39.

Billy Jack was playing at the city's downtown theatre and the Canada Packers plant opened on East Drive supplying 125 new jobs to Bramptonians.

Artificial Christmas trees were on the market for \$9.99 for the six-foot Scotch pine version. The same one which now sells for up to \$40.

And back then the stockings were hung by the chimney with care at 49 cents a pair.



Christmas tree origins: it's German tradition

Historians mention three decorations made by German settlers along the eastern Baltic in the early 1500s. Most credit Martin Luther, leader of the Protestant Reformation in Germany, for introducing lighted Christmas trees.

On Christmas Eve, Luther walked through a forest on a starry night. The sight of stars peeking through the fir branches deeply moved him. Luther put a fir tree in his home and decorated it with candles to symbolize Jesus Christ as the light of the world.

People in other European countries adopted the German custom. A royal marriage brought the Christmas tree to England when Prince Albert, the German husband of Queen Victoria, decorated a tree at the royal palace in 1841.

German immigrants brought the Christmas tree tradition to North America. The first attempt to place a tree in a church sparked a virtual riot in 1851. Rev. Henry Schwan placed a decorated tree in his church in Cleveland, Ohio. Congregation members said Christmas trees smacked of paganism, but Schwan held firm.

The custom spread like wild fire and communities competed with each other to erect the most lavishly decorated or tallest tree.

Although Pasadena, California, is already famous for the Tournament of Roses Parade,

its citizens made history by being the first to decorate a Christmas tree with electric lights in 1909.

A deep forest somewhere in Germany was the setting for the first Christmas tree.

According to legend, the English missionary St. Boniface used a combination of courage and quick thinking to convert pagan Germans to Christianity and give them a symbol of their new faith.

On Christmas Eve in 700, Boniface found a group of pagans preparing to sacrifice a boy before a giant oak tree to the god Thor. Boniface struck the oak and it crashed to the ground.

He pointed to an evergreen tree and told the pagans Jesus Christ had sent them a tree of love, peace and eternal life.

Scandinavians (also of Germanic stock) had a similar legend. St. Winfred, a missionary from the eighth century, chopped down an oak tree and a young fir tree miraculously sprung up in its place. Winfred told his converts the green leaves symbolized eternal life.

The Christmas tree is only one of many pagan symbols and rituals "baptized" by the early Christian church when it converted entire nations. During the Middle Ages Christians found a prophecy about Christmas trees in the book of the prophet Isaiah. The prophet foretold the blossoming of

the tree of Jesse, the father of King David who was an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

CHOCOLATE ALMOND SHORTBREAD

250 mL	1/4 cup icing sugar
175 mL	1/4 cup butter, softened
6	6 squares BAKER'S Semi-Sweet Chocolate, melted and cooled
5 mL	1 teaspoon vanilla
250 mL	1 cup all purpose flour
250 mL	1 cup ground almonds
1 mL	1/4 teaspoon salt
1	1 package (175 g) BAKER'S Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips
125 mL	1/2 cup unblanched coarsely chopped toasted almonds

Cream sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Add melted chocolate and vanilla; mix well. Combine flour, ground almonds and salt; mix well. Gradually add to chocolate mixture. Press into a 12 x 9-inch (30 x 20 cm) rectangle in 13 x 9-inch (3.5 L) pan. Sprinkle with chips and chopped almonds. Bake at 250° F (120° C) for 45 to 50 minutes. Cool; cut into bars. Makes about 48 pieces. Store in airtight container in cool place. May be made up to 3 weeks before Christmas.

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