



Grades 1,2 and 3 students at Pineview School at the annual Christmas concert Tuesday night. sang their hearts out for a room filled with parents

Christmas tree evolved from ancient customs

Long before the advent of Christianity, plants and trees that remained green all year had a special meaning for people in the winter. Just as people today decorate their homes at Christmas with pine, spruce and fir trees, ancient people hung evergreen boughs over their doors and windows.

In many countries people believed that evergreens would keep away witches, ghosts, evil spirits and illness.

The ancient Egyptians worshipped a god called Ra, who had the head of a hawk and who wore the sun as a blazing disc in his crown. At the solstice, when Ra began to recover from illness, the Egyptians filled their homes with green palm rushes which symbolized for them the triumph of life over death.

Across the Mediterranean Sea, the early Romans marked the solstice with a feast called the Saturnalia in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture. To mark the occasion, they decorated their homes and temples with evergreen boughs. The Saturnalia was a special time of peace and equality when wars could not be declared, when slaves and masters could eat at the same table, and when gifts were exchanged as a symbol of affection and brotherhood.

In Northern Europe the mysterious Druids, priests of the ancient Celts, also decorated their temples with evergreen boughs as a symbol of everlasting life. The

Vikings in Scandinavia thought that evergreens were the special plant of the sun god Balder. Many historians believe that our word for Yule came from the Norse word 'rol', the Gothic word 'hiul' or the Saxon word 'hweol' all of which means wheel and refers to the cycles of the sun.

When families bring home their Christmas tree from a sales lot or a choose-and-cut tree farm they are following a tradition that is more than a thousand years old. 'Bringing in the Yule log' was a ritual that began in Great Britain and that spread throughout Europe, eventually reaching North America. On Christmas eve the large central trunk of a great tree was dragged from the forest. Everyone in the family, both adults and children, helped with the job by pulling on ropes. When the log was finally brought into the house it was thrown on the family fireplace where it burned for the 12 days of Christmas.

Miracle plays

In the Fourteenth Century, when few knew how to read, churches held 'miracle plays' to tell the people in villages and towns stories from the Bible. The play held every December 24, Adam and Eve's Day, was about the Garden of Eden. The play showed how Eve was tempted by the serpent, how she picked the apple from the forbidden tree, and how the couple was expelled

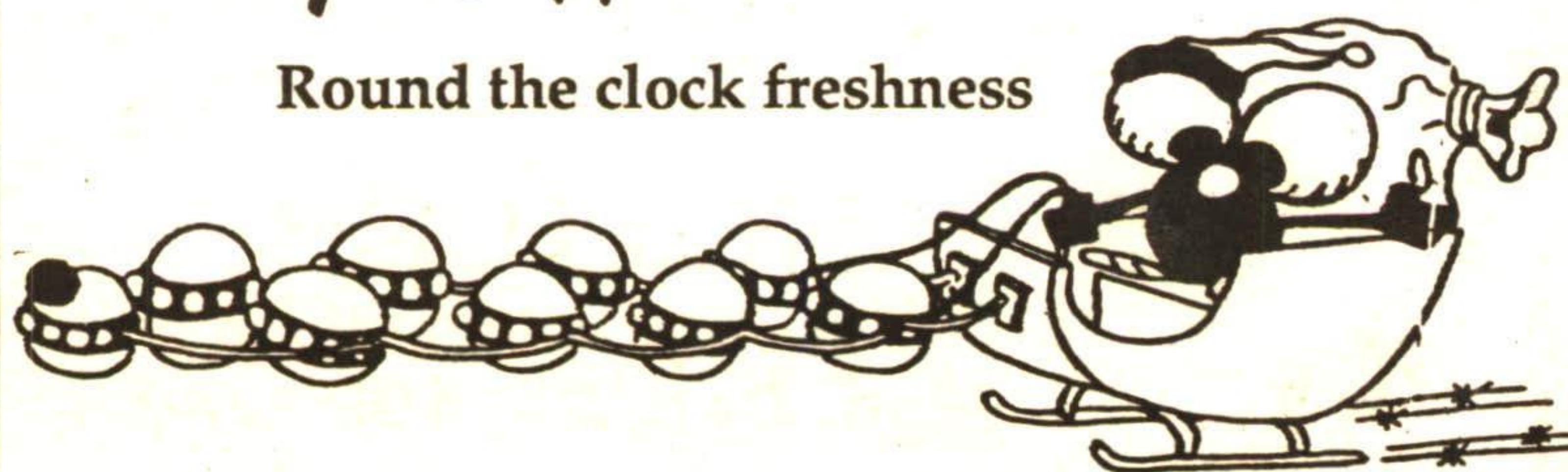
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HOLIDAY HOURS

CLOSING

3 p.m. Christmas Eve
(Dec. 24)

RE-OPENING

7 a.m. Boxing Day
(Dec. 26)

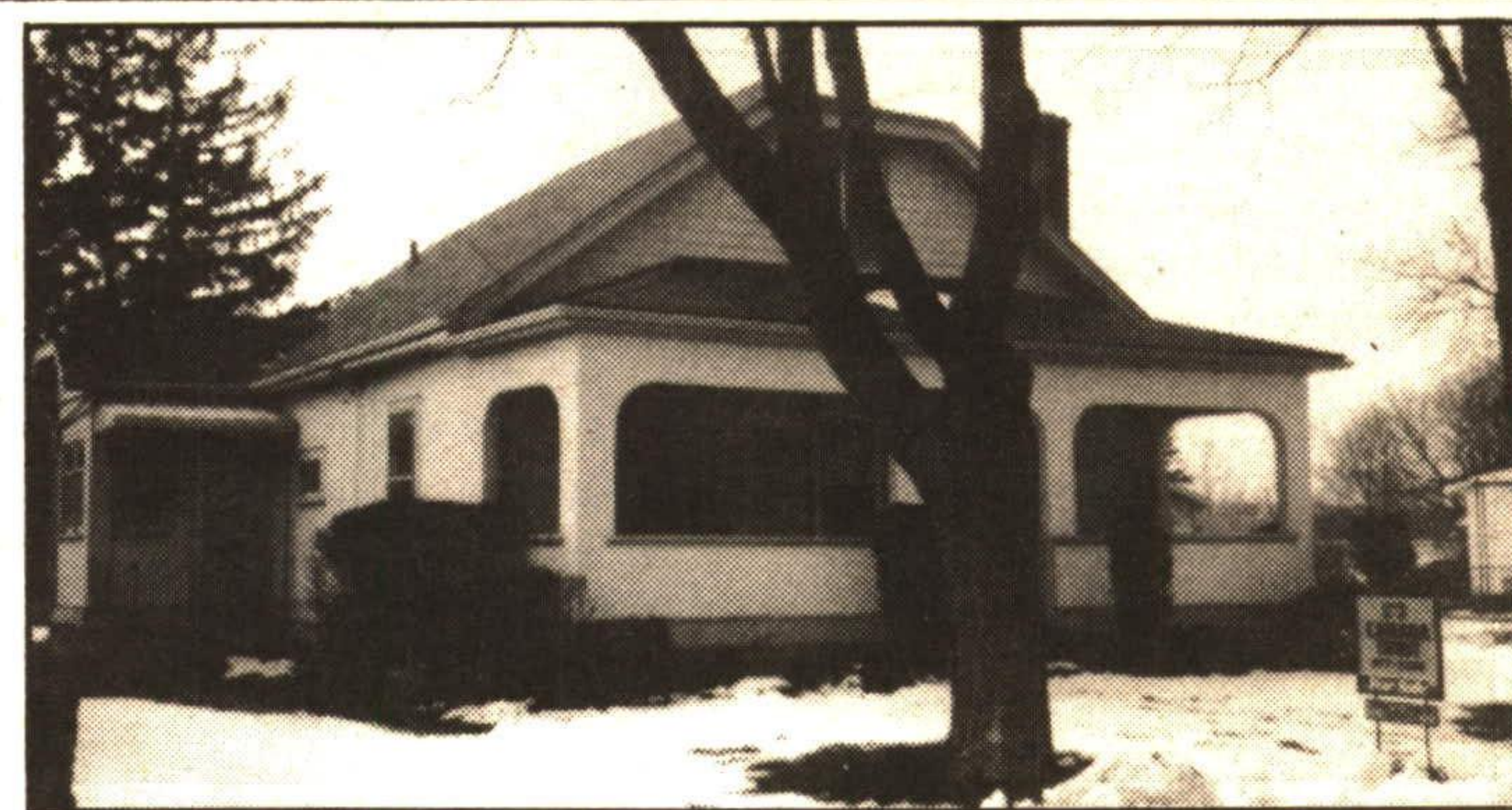
CLOSING

3 p.m. New Year's Eve
(Dec. 31)

RE-OPENING

3 a.m. Jan. 1st

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