

## THE WAY WE WERE

In 1970, revellers ring in the new year at the Riviera Club in Norval listening to the Alan Harkness Orchestra play. The Riviera Club subsequently became Club 2000, and most recently Nashville North, which closed in early 2019. This year marks the 200th anniversary of the founding of Halton Hills (Esquering township).

EHS photo



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### OPINION

# THINGS I NEVER KNEW ABOUT BOXING DAY

MANY TRADITIONS  
ATTACHED TO IT,  
WRITES TED BROWN



TED  
BROWN  
Column

It never ceases to amaze me how fast the days fly by on the calendar when Christmas is hovering just around the corner.

And here we are today, Boxing Day, Dec. 26 - it seems like only a scant couple weeks ago we sat down to a Thanksgiving turkey dinner.

I recently came across information about the origin of Boxing Day.

I've always known the holiday had its beginnings in Great Britain, but never

had any specifics.

Globally, Boxing Day is celebrated in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and most other Commonwealth countries.

Boxing Day originated in England in the middle of the 19th century, under Queen Victoria's reign.

It surprised me when I learned there are many other traditions attached to Boxing Day.

In the United Kingdom, British kids attend traditional Boxing Day pantomimes (plays). Classic British children's plays like Dick Whittington, Aladdin, Jack and the Beanstalk, Sleeping Beauty, Peter Pan or Hansel and Gretel are annually presented to the kids.

Some online historians claim Boxing Day was designated the day tradesmen collected their Christmas

boxes in return for their services during the year, while others in the U.K. report the traditional celebrations of Boxing Day included giving money and gifts to charitable institutions and poor folk.

Some sources say the Boxing Day holiday dates back to the Middle Ages, when the lords and ladies of England presented Christmas gifts in boxes to their servants on Dec. 26.

Other sources suggest it began with priests, who opened the church's alms (charity) boxes the day after Christmas and distributed the money to poor people.

In Ireland, Dec. 26 is St. Stephen's Day, in honour of St. Stephen, a little-known saint who was the first Christian martyred for his faith after being stoned to death shortly after Christ's

crucifixion.

St. Stephen received eternal fame in the Christmas carol Good King Wenceslas, with the words "Good King Wenceslas looked out, on the Feast of Stephen."

In Ireland, St. Stephen's Day is famous for its Wren boys.

Today, on St. Stephen's Day, Irish Wren boys and girls dress up in old clothes and paint their faces, then travel from house to house singing, dancing and playing music for the household, collecting money for local charities.

The original custom had an incredibly cruel origin.

Centuries ago, Wren boys went out to kill the small birds. Folklore accused the wren of betraying Irish soldiers fighting Norsemen by beating their wings on their shields. The

wren was also blamed for betraying St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr mentioned above.

Originally the wren was hunted on St. Stephen's Day and one was nailed to a pole at the head of the procession as the Wren boys travelled from house to house, collecting money and gifts.

Thankfully those traditions are long gone.

As I researched the countless origins of Boxing Day, it occurred to me that the same day is celebrated by such a diverse following of cultures. And I've only scratched the surface here. I'm sure other celebrations on what we call Boxing Day are equally steeped in traditions from around the world.

That's what makes it a magical time of the year.

Of course, the main at-

traction for Boxing Day today is to get out and find those Boxing Day sale bargains!

Today, Boxing Day at Brown Farm is an extension of our Christmas. In our case,

The Sidekick and I host my daughters and their families, which has become our Christmas, since my daughters attend other family commitments to celebrate with their in-laws on Christmas Day.

So if you're reading this on Dec. 26, know that the farmhouse at the farm will be filled with the wonderful smells of the season, and we'll be sharing the wonder of sharing the love of our family.

Here's wishing you all the very best of the season as we enter into another coming year.

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