



ANGELS SING: Members of the Acton High School choir entertained during a Christmas performance last Wednesday at the school. — Angela Tyler photo



CHRISTMAS CHORDS: The Acton High School Band joined in a Nutcracker performance last Wednesday which included the choir, drama club and an art show. — Angela Tyler photo

Hanging Christmas stocking still children's custom

Hanging up a stocking at Christmas has been a custom which goes back to the time when almost every home had a fireplace and "the stockings were hung by the chimney with care" in "the hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there."

In Canada, the traditional Christmas stocking actually dates back to the end of the 19th century. The first to mention Christmas stockings being hung from a chimney was the illustrator, Thomas Nast, through his drawings. The U.S. writer, George Webster, in a story about a visit from Santa Claus, also makes mention of them.

In Quebec and Acadia, children traditionally put their shoes close to the fireplace so that the Infant Jesus, and later "Père Noël" (Father Christmas), could put gifts there on Christmas Eve.

In some Quebec families, children hung their stockings at the end of their bed rather than hanging them close to the fireplace or putting out their shoes. This custom ended during the 1930s when Christmas trees started to be set up in houses with gifts placed underneath.

Japanese oranges have a special meaning to the people who lived in the Canadian Prairies. A gift from the East, their arrival at the coldest time of the year has brightened many homes and Christmas feasts for 110 years. To many, the festive season begins when Santa Claus wel-

comes the first major shipment of Japanese mandarin oranges at the Port of Vancouver, accompanied by young Japanese girls dressed in traditional kimonos. On Christmas morning the flavourful fruit find their way into many chil-

dren's Christmas stockings.

Children today still hang up their stockings, some of them very ornate and just for the occasion, expecting Santa to have them filled with goodies when they wake up on Christmas morning.

Happy Holiday's

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Christmas candles symbolize Christ

Many of the things we use to decorate our houses at Christmas time date back to the dawn of Christianity. Christmas candles or tapers are one of the most eloquent examples.

From the very beginning of Christianity, a large candle was lit on Christmas Eve symbolizing Christ, Light of the World. It was left to burn the whole night to mark the Nativity.

The ancient custom still persists in several European countries, particularly in France, England, Ireland and

Denmark. In Canada, many families still light candles decorated with pine or fir branches during Christmas dinner, although perhaps its meaning has been obscured.

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& their families

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& staff

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A MERRY
CHRISTMAS

& a Happy New Year