

# Trees in church fond memory of Christmas past

OHSWEKEN — When my wife and I remember our past Christmases, we somehow always seem to remember the happy times. Her happiest Christmas as a girl was the year she got exactly what she wanted. No, it wasn't a doll. It was a football. She was a bit of a tomboy and she remembers happily kicking the ball into the air with snow all around. Like me, when she remembers Christmas past, she doesn't think about bone chilling cold or frost-bitten fingers.

The log house in which I was born and where I spent the first 11 years of my life seemed to be snug and warm. It had been built by my grandfather, Peter Beaver, or perhaps by his father. On very cold days I recall seeing the heads of nails, sticking out of the walls, covered with white frost. But I don't remember being cold, so I guess I wasn't.

One of my best Christmases was the year I helped put up the Christmas trees at church. In those days we often had two Christmas trees, one in each front corner of the old Medina Baptist Church. These were not little trees. They were towering monsters that often brushed the high ceiling of the church.

This church, which sat at Medina Corners on the Six Nations reserve, was an old style church with what we called a "gallery" at the rear of the auditorium. To reach the gallery, you had to climb a winding stairway. This stairway creaked noisily even when used by children, so it was only used on special occasions when there was a large crowd. There was always a large crowd at "the Christmas tree" which is what we called our concert.

The year I helped put up the tree I was about eight or nine. I followed my father out after our noon meal, which we called dinner. The evening meal was always referred to

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George  
Beaver



as supper. After putting the harness on the horses and hitching them to the big sleigh, we swung out of the barnyard and headed back toward the woods at a trot. I thought at first we were just going to get some firewood. Then we stopped at this beautiful evergreen tree. My father chopped it down and we dragged it up into the sleigh. Then we went back past the barn and out to the road. It was covered with snow and we headed up the road to the church.

It was still in the middle of the afternoon when we got there. The Christmas program was to be that night. Several men were already there and they opened up the double doors and wrestled the big tree inside. Using a saw they cut the tree off straight. They had to use ropes to set it upright.

Then another tree arrived and that was set up in the south corner. I had often wondered as a small boy how those tall trees got into the church. Now I had helped put them there. Or maybe I just got in the way.

It was starting to get dark as we headed back home. To this day I don't remember the cold. I could hardly wait to go back after supper.