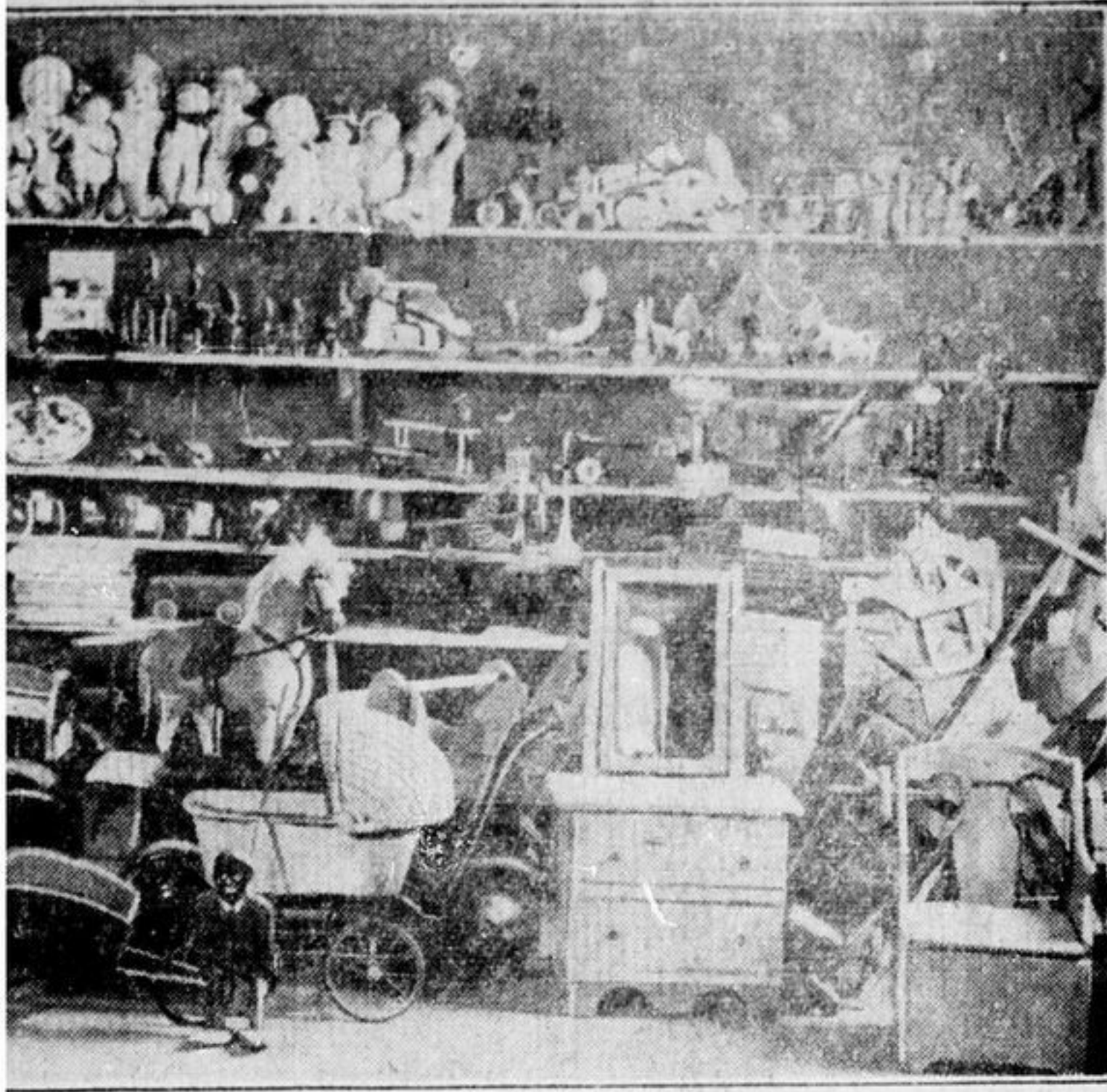


CHRISTMAS IN OLD DAYS A GALA AFFAIR



Timmins Fire



to make Merry Christmas for the Children.



This "Little German Stags. (From left



le lots of music, and fun, at one of the good old Turkey A. Wilford, F. J. Wolno, Carl Johns, A. Pappone).



Fifteenth Century W. Snow, W. Ric



ers at the Turkey Stag (Left to right — A. Pearce, A. s, E. R. Street).



Entertainers at enzo, Victor Dor



' famous Turkey Stags. (Left to right — Ernest Lorriscotti, Michael Espalator).

Oldsters Let Hair Down At Annual Turkey Stags

No. 31. Timmins and the Porcupine Always Knew the Right Way to Celebrate Christmas.

By G. A. MacDonald

"It was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed 'God bless us, every one!'"

It was with these words that Charles Dickens concluded his heart-touching Christmas story, "A Christmas Carol."

Those who have, themselves, caught the Christmas spirit, will feel that was a high tribute to pay to the chief character in "A Christmas Carol." It is not every man who deserves so gracious a tribute.

It is still more gratifying to find a whole community to whom these words of Charles Dickens may justly be applied.

But it is not going beyond the record of the years to claim that these heartening words might honestly be spoken of the people of Timmins and the Porcupine Camp.

"It might always be said of them, that they knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge!"

From its very inception, the Porcupine Camp has been willingly and cheerfully held by the charm of the Christmas season. It has been a time of thought for others, a time of good cheer, a time when the unfortunate are remembered kindly and generously, a time when the children have a special thought, a time when, with one accord, there seems to be determination that none shall go without comfort and friendship.

This was proved by the very first Christmas in the Porcupine. And each new community, as it developed, seemed to catch the same Christmas spirit.

Porcupine's First Christmas
At the time of Porcupine's first Christmas, only a few were left at Porcupine City. The majority were able to go home, or, at least, to friends in larger communities. But those, who for one reason or another, had to pass the Christmas time at Porcupine, did not have to endure a sad or sombre Christmas. Instead, all were invited to the Gibson & Stirling Store, and there they had a merry Christmas. They feasted on turkey and all the trimmings, they laughed, they chatted, they sang Christmas carols, they read, they smoked. There were gifts for all—from all. It was a merry Christmas!

Whether this Christmas spirit drifted over from Golden City, or, more likely, the men from Golden City carried it over, it is the fact that there was always merry Christmas each year at South Porcupine, Dome, Schumacher, Timmins, and all the other little communities that developed. This was illustrated in the first or second year of the Town of Timmins, when no less than twenty-six people were entertained for Christmas dinner at the small three-roomed house of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Faithful. That was a merry Christmas that remained in the hearts of all who enjoyed it. And this one case could be duplicated time and time again in Timmins and the other towns in the early days.

It might surely be said of the people of Porcupine that they knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed that knowledge."

The Porcupine Christmas Spirit
The Porcupine Christmas spirit had very special thought for the stranger, the less fortunate, and very particularly ALL children.

The churches, of course, were always kind and helpful to all who came under their notice, and this was, perhaps, especially true during the Christmas season. Old-timers will recall, for example, the gracious work carried on in Timmins by St. Anthony's Ladies of Charity, who seemed to work generously and well all year, and then do double duty around Christmas time.

Before any service clubs were instituted in Timmins, there were organizations here doing the kindly sort of work that service clubs now carry on so well. For example, the Odd-fellows' annual Christmas Cheer Social was a feature here for many years, the proceeds of this pleasant event going to provide Christmas cheer to scores who would not have fared well without this aid.

A Christmas feature that will always be remembered here from the days of long ago was the carol singing each year. Cornish and elsh choruses singing carols on the streets to the delight of all, while their regular visits each year to the St. Mary's hospital cheered patients, nurses and the good Sisters alike.

The Porcupine Christmas spirit has taken special thought of the children—all children. Schools, churches and societies, of which Timmins has had its full share, have brightened the

Christmas time for the children with parties, Christmas trees and gifts. In 1923, The Porcupine Advance, in co-operation with Leo Mascoll and the Empire Theatre, presented all the children of the town and district with a free party at the Empire theatre, the estimated number of children enjoying the event being 3,000. The same year, the first Kiwanis Christmas tree was given the children of the town, and greatly enjoyed. For several years the Kiwanis continued their community Christmas tree until the need was filled in other ways.

Schumacher's Santa Claus
Mention of Christmas in the Porcupine would be sadly incomplete without reference to Mr. F. W. Schumacher, one of the pioneers of the Camp, and in whose honour one of the good towns of the Camp is named. For nearly a third of a century, Mr. Schumacher has sent every child in the town of Schumacher a worthwhile Christmas gift. These gifts are the kind to delight the hearts of the youngsters. Sleighs, books, skates, sweaters, are among the articles on the list each year. Never a cheap gift in the lot! The cost must run into thousands of dollars each year.

It would take literally pages to detail the Christmas Cheer work of the Salvation Army, the other churches, the fraternal societies, the service clubs, the national societies, and other organizations, but two special old-time Christmas efforts seem to demand particular reference at this time. Both of these appear to be definitely in the "Porcupine Christmas spirit."

Firemen "Bootley" for Santa Claus
One of these was the work carried on for years by the Timmins Firemen. This work was the hobby and delight particularly of Firemen Tony Ayotte and Capt. Pete Jeffrey, who spared neither time nor effort in this happy branch of service. The work started on a small scale at first but soon grew to large proportions. With the approval of Fire Chief Borland, who had the "spirit of Christmas" in his heart all the year, the boys at the fire hall took on the work of repairing toys. The Advance publicized the idea, the plan being to have people send broken toys to the fire hall where they would be repaired, and then passed on to children who would otherwise not receive that sort of gift. At first, it was hoped that enough of these toys could be repaired to give each child at the Children's Aid home some gifts of this sort for Christmas. But the people responded so generously with discarded toys that not only was there enough for the Children's Shelter, but also for scores of other homes unlikely otherwise to receive such gifts. Marshall-Ecclestone and other dealers also evidenced their Porcupine Christmas spirit by sending to the fire hall any toys that might be broken in transit or by accident in the store. Soon the boys at the fire hall had all the toys they could handle in their spare time, and many hours they spent at the work. So far as could be seen there was no toy of any kind that Tony and Pete were not able to repair, and not as good as new. They repaired, painted and varnished and renovated everything in the toy line. But they were not content even then. The next thing they started was the making of new toys. They were turning out tables, bureaus, sleighs, carriages and what-not for the youngsters. Then the John W. Fogg Co. showed their Porcupine Christmas spirit by supplying the firemen with the necessary wood for their new work. A miniature fire wagon and ladder truck made by the firemen may be noted in the picture.

The picture shows a large number of dressed dolls. These all looked new. But there was one thing that Tony and Pete could not do—or, at least, they didn't—and that was make doll's dresses. But they didn't have to go far from the hall for that. Mrs. Alex Borland, and Miss Maimie, looked after that part of the work, and hundreds of delighted children during the years will insist that they were real experts.

This Christmas work of the firemen was carried on year after year. In 1933, for instance, no less than 270 toys were repaired or made, and these brought joy into over forty homes.

The other outstanding specimen of the Porcupine Christmas spirit was that famous old-time event, the Timmins Charity Turkey Stag. That event was not only a big feature of the pre-Christmas season in Timmins, but its fame traveled far and wide. Artists on its program made such a hit that they were called to Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, and in one case,

to New York, to repeat specialties given at the Turkey Stag. Motion pictures were made of more than one Turkey Stag.

The attendance grew from around 200 in 1923, its first year, to 1,200 in 1932. The reason it did not grow to 2,200 was because that number could not be accommodated anywhere in those days.

The Charity Turkey Stag was unique in its line, both in regard to its programs, and in reference to the extent of the Christmas cheer it distributed. The originality of its programs attracted people from far and wide. Muckers, miners, merchants, professional men, mine managers and bank managers mingled happily together at the Turkey Stag. Usually, the whole T. & N. O. Commission would be among those present. Members of parliament in the district would not have missed the Turkey Stag for a vote. More than once members of the Provincial Cabinet attended, and they had as good a time as anyone else.

The success of the Turkey Stag was due primarily to the talent of A. Laprairie, district manager for the Canadian Industries Limited. "Lap," as he was affectionately known during his residence in Timmins, was a genius at organization, and outstanding as a showman. What he couldn't think up was nobody's business. He was so closely identified with the Turkey Stag that it usually was referred to as "Lap's" Turkey Stag.

"Horse and Cutter"
In its first two years, the Turkey Stag was sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, with the purpose of raising a little money for Christmas cheer. Both these first years were good successes, and there was general commendation of Grand Knight J. D. MacLean and his committee, under the direction of Chas. McCann, for the excellent entertainment provided, and the general success of the event. There were two specially popular features of the 1924 Turkey Stag. One of these items was a Kiddie Car race, in which the mayor of Timmins was a contestant. The other was a lucky hat draw. The prize for the latter was a horse and cutter, won by Frank Baderski. As The Advance pointed out at the time, however, the winner could not succeed in properly hitching that horse to that cutter, the "horse" proving to be a saw-horse, and the "cutter" a wood-cutter (otherwise, a saw).

The event, however, was so successful, and so enjoyable, and the attendance was so cosmopolitan, that it was decided to make it a community affair. Then "Lap" was put in charge, and the affair each year was the biggest seasonal affair, not only in Timmins, but for a wide area.

"Eat All You Can!"
At his Turkey Stags, "Lap" always featured games and "eats." Tickets were as high some years as \$2.00, but even those days that was not high in view of what was given. "Eat as much as you like, as often as you like" was usually the sign, and the intention. The food was always of the best, the immense lunch counter at each Turkey Stag in the big hall of St. Anthony's church was a regular feature, with its scores of uniformed waiters.

As for games, anyone could find their favourite. There was always provision for bridge, cribbage, whist, five hundred, and Lap's own favourite game, "Gimme" was played with paddles, and the prizes were usually turkeys. It was an unlucky fellow, or a close one, who could not walk away with one or more turkeys from "Gimme." Sometimes, "Gimme" turkeys cost more than on the market, but no one worried about that.

Music was always a big feature on the Turkey Stag program. At the 1928 Stag, for example, carol singing by the Cornish Wrestling Club, under the leadership of Stan Johns, was a delight to all attending. At the 1929 Stag, there was a remarkable musical feature, the songs of the rivers and shanties by Charles Marchand and his famous Habitant Troubadours from Montreal. Along with this feature that year there was singing of carols by the "Four Jacks" (Cousin Jacks). Also Fred Wolno and his Turkey Stag Orchestra. For several other years, Tommy Stephens and his Turkey Stag Orchestra featured the evening. "Lap" also had the happy gift of springing surprise numbers. One of these was at the 1932 Turkey Stag when he conscripted Capt. Jones, Capt. Reddington, W. R. Sullivan and Dr. J. A. McInnis to sing a quartette, which they rendered with surprising talent. R. R. Johnson and Ted Emery were other talented musicians helping in the Turkey Stag events.

Great Musical Talent
One Turkey Stag, indeed, that of

1933, was outstanding for the remarkable local talent gathered together for the evening. The Carol Singers (Archie Pierce, Alf. Snow, W. Rice, W. S. Johns, A. Jobb and E. R. Street) were dressed in 15th Century costume, and their singing was something to be long remembered. At the same Stag, Wolno's "Little German Band," (A. Wilford, F. J. Wolno, Carl Johns and A. Pappone) provided both music and fun all through the happy evening.

But the other group of musicians at the 1933 Turkey Stag, were among "Lap's" unusual finds. Their entertainment alone was worth more than the price of admission. Ernest Lorenzon (at the left in the picture) proved to be a singer of striking talent, while the other singer, Michael Espalator (at right), had a voice and a gift for musical interpretation that should give him a place in any high-class professional group. The two accordion players were equally talented, and the selections by this group were a genuine delight.

The Whiskerino
Probably, the greatest of all the Turkey Stags was the event in 1926—"The Whiskerino." It featured a whisker-growing and beard-trimming contest. Entries had to be clean shaven on Oct. 16th, that year, and were judged for their hirsute adornment on Dec. 16th. After the judging of the whiskers, came the beard-trimming by local barbers, with prizes for the barber who could do the quickest (but preferably not the best job) of taking off the beards. The contestants, who had suffered growing the beards, claimed that the trimming was still more painful.

In the contest, P. H. O'Gorman won first prize for the most bountiful crop of black alfalfa. The experts found that he had grown 29 distinct hairs to the square inch, and that the hairs were on an average of 1 1/2 inches long. A number of hairs were pulled out by hand for measurement. This may not have been pleasant, but Pat had no kick coming when he collected his winnings. The prizes to the winner of first place were as follows: \$1,000.00 accident insurance policy for a year; \$50.00 made-to-measure suit; \$30.00 watch; a big turkey; 2,000 pounds of anthracite coal; a safety razor; and a \$10.00 rocking chair.

Second prize was won by W. Cosington, third, by D. Maxwell; fourth, W. McIntyre; fifth, D. Lauzon; sixth, J. M. Belanger; seventh, Peter Godin, each of these six winning a valuable prize. Fourteen others were in the contest, which attracted attention all over the continent.

Another novelty at the 1926 Stag was the moose-calling contest. The crowd had five dollars' worth of fun from this contest. The winners were: A. W. Young; J. W. Barron; Ham. Lillie.

Big Prizes
There were always big prizes at the Turkey Stags. Even in playing "Gimme", there was a big prize, usually a turkey, or sometimes, a small pig, for the individual winner, and every time the paddles were gathered in there was a prize-winner. Example of the generous prizes was given at the 1927 Stag. The big feature was a "Spaghetti Eating Contest." The contestants nearly killed themselves eating spaghetti, and the people attending nearly killed themselves laughing at the contestants. First prize included a \$50.00 suit of clothes and \$25.00 in gold. Second prize was \$25.00 worth of fancy dressed hog and \$15.00 in gold. A little pig worth \$8.00 and \$8.00 in gold comprised the third prize, while there were two other prizes of a \$7.00 turkey each.

Another famous Turkey Stag was the one in 1930. It was called the "Moustache" and it featured the "Gold Camps of '49 and '98." Mining Camp costumes and moustaches were much in evidence. George Jones won the prize for the curliest moustache; J. M. Belanger, for the best goatee; John Ash, for best sideburns; T. Orr and George Wallingford for the best moustaches, any variety; Marcel Blare for the longest beard.

Others of the Turkey Stags featured step dancing, wrestling, boxing, Jimmy Cowan and Pat Larmer, in kilts, provided entertainment at one of the big nights. In Cornish style wrestling, W. Hooper, of Oldpound, Cornwall, clashed with H. Trevanna, of Butte, Montana, and J. Brenner, of St. Denis, Cornwall, vied with Tom Venner, of Oldpound.

The 1929 Stag saw battles in the ring between Lefty Trumble and Frenchy Maurice and Arthur Leonard and George Taylor, Saskatchewan. In 1935, after "Lap" had been transferred to head office in Toronto, a committee of the Loyal Order of the

(Continued on Page Two)