

# TREASURES and HEIRLOOMS

By Rob Reid

A bright and Merry Christmas to all. Here we have a great collection of vintage holiday items. Long a religious holiday, Christmas became a populist and secular celebration in the 20th century. This small collection of ephemera, produced from 1880 to 1950, illustrates a shift in Canadians' observance of the Season.

Victorian gift cards came in many shapes and sizes. There is one example in this image on the upper right. It is quite large with a silk fringe and was produced in the mid 1880's in Boston, Mass. It features a young couple picking holly along with the caption "Health and Wealth and Joy be thine, prays the friend of Auld Lang Syne". Both 19th and early 20th century greeting cards and gift tags featured poems and scriptures along with winter images and biblical scenes. The smaller postcard below, c1910, features holly, angels and a church and is nicely embossed. In the lower left is a card for Christmas 1917 and New Year's 1918 that uses a poem and quotes Auld Lang Syne, the famous poem by Robert Burns.

The final paper item in this collection is an ink blotter produced for the Toronto Salt Works, c1914. This is a promotional item and would have been given out to customers. The collage on the front cover is printed on celluloid, an early plastic. In addition to the traditional holly, there is a Union Jack flag and the

phrase, "Business As Usual" which probably refers to the Great War, WWI and the apparent ability of the works to continue their business in spite of the war.

After WWII the likeness of Santa Claus became much more prevalent and was reproduced in almost every conceivable form. On the bottom right is a mesh bag Santa figure that would have originally contained candy. The head, hands and feet are made of celluloid. The gift bag was made in Japan about 1950. The larger Santa on the upper left is a wall sconce light made by Norma here in Canada and also dates from around 1950.

Collecting Christmas related items is a very popular pastime. Family treasures brought out only once a year and carefully stored for the 11 months in between can last for generations. As a result there are many different categories of collectibles including greeting cards, figurines, tree ornaments and toys and a majority of them are fairly easy to find at a reasonable price. The items pictured range in value from \$2 to \$25.

I welcome inquiries about any objects and look forward to seeing and perhaps writing about them. Please forward a photo and a description to me through Stouffville Free Press or drop the material off at Reid's Antiques, 6397 Main St. Stouffville during regular business hours or via my website at reidsantiques.com.



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