

care a whit for the calendar if he felt Christmas coming on."

The uncle, Rockwell recalled, had a fancy for popping into the Rockwell household in March or July "or any odd Thursday with a booming 'Merry Christmas,' an armload of presents and a turkey or goose." He would brush aside all objections from Norman's mother, distribute his gifts, help operate all the toys, and do full justice to the ensuing dinner.

"To this day," said the illustrator, "I am not sure whether he really imagined it was Christmas or just wanted it to be. But it was a wonderful idea."

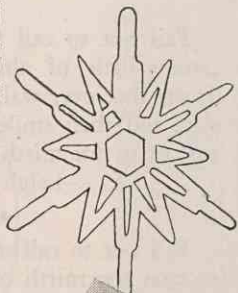
Rockwell was fifteen when he entered the Art Students League to receive his first formal art education. He had abandoned high school after one year and was attending the National Academy of Design in the morning, the League in the afternoon. Later he studied at the Chase School as well.

He earned his first commission at 17, illustrating a children's book called, "Tell Me Why

Stories." Soon he was illustrating stories in youth magazines and shortly thereafter was named art editor of "Boy's Life". At 22, when he painted his first Christmas cover illustration, he was a veteran with five years of professional work behind him.

"In Vermont, Rockwell has hardly to move from his own studio to find the Christmas characters and scenes he paints so movingly. The mailman, the carpenter, the school teacher, and dozens of Arlington children all pose for him more than willingly. Village square dances are held almost on his front lawn. And he re-reads annually the Charles Dickens and Washington Irving Christmas stories, of which he is immensely fond, to create mentally one of the old-time Christmas settings for which he is noted.

Sentimentalist or realist, Rockwell loves Christmas and enjoys it as few men are capable of doing. Certainly few men have contributed more to making Christmas for others the merry and magical season that it is.



"BRINGING HOME THE TREE" shown on facing page, was painted from Rockwell's recollection of a trip with his own boys in search of a Christmas tree.

"THE CHRISTMAS CAROLER", left, was Clarence Decker, a neighbor lad in Arlington, Vt.

Below is "HOLIDAY DANCE" and "THE JOLLY POSTMAN". These paintings are typical Rockwell touches.

