

The SALEMITE

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serving the salem collegee community since 1920

Dr. William May

Changes in Eductation

Candle Tea Emphasizes Christmas Spirit

When Old Salem dedicated its rebuilt Single Brothers Workshop, it offered a four-part lecture series to the public, and to Salem students in particular. The third part of the series, labelled Education, was a speech by Dr. William May titled "Public Happiness and a Liberal Arts Education."

In his speech on Nov. 14, Dr. William May claimed that the sense of connection between private and public happiness has been lost in our world today. He illustrated his philosophy by discussing a typical public ceremony, a high school commencement. Dr. May stated that commencement should be the graduation from puberty to adulthood, but that this type of change does not occur, because growing up happens in small private steps, not in one large public leap. In addition, he said that personal achievements and growth rarely coincide with traditional public ceremonies.

To further illustrate his philosophy, Dr. May discussed the last three decades, and the social upheavals in each. In the 50's, people conformed to conditions, and only had individual, private lives. However, this conformity changed to rebellion in the 60's, when the population withdrew from conventions and tried to create a counter culture by joining and promoting strange religions - "cults of far-away things." Now, in the 70's, there is "individualistic careerism." We live in the ME decade.

As a result of these attitude changes, Dr. May feels, education has undergone a change. In the past, a liberal arts education was designed to create well-rounded persons, but that philosophy has been lost, and the universities of today are dedicated only to the training of the technically proficient. Education today, according to Dr. May, represents the decline of civic arts, and reflects the industrial trend, because universities are corporate-like environments. Dr. May's solution to these problems is to insist that education deal more with critical inquiry. He feels that citizens deserve more than they are receiving, and that if they were educated with an emphasis on critical inquiry, they could better deal with civic problems. "Critical intelligence," commented Dr. May, "is a social act that teases the mind out of the bottle of private preference and opens it to civic inquiries. Education is not a private deal; the classroom is public." Dr. May added that, "The library is a commonwealth of learning, and the critical inquiry of peers is the parliament of the human mind." Along with these points, Dr. May stressed the idea that people "need places to go ... spaces in which to expand," and he emphasized our need to seek help from the past, as we at Old Salem are indeed doing.

Robin Elmore
Nancy Coudriet

The Moravian Candle Tea ceremony began this past Wednesday evening. The Candle Tea has been a tradition at the Home Moravian Church since 1929. This ceremony takes place each year in the Brother's House on South Main Street (across from Salem Square). In earlier Moravian history, the Brother's House was a workshop and apprenticeship house for the single men in the community. Here they learned their trades as well as their moral and spiritual disciplines.

The first part of the ceremony is held in the Old Chapel, where Christmas carols are sung, accompanied by a classic David Tannenburgh organ of pewter and wood. Downstairs, one is exposed to the art of candlemaking. The ingredients of these candles, beeswax and tallow, are poured into pewter molds and left to set form on their own. The red crepe paper ruff on the bottom is an added bit of Christmas decoration and spirit.

Beside the old dining room where these candles are made is the Old Brother's Kitchen, where German sugarcake and the traditional Lovefeast coffee is served during the ceremony.

In the cellar is the "putz" a word derived from the German verb putzen, "to place, to decorate". When the Moravians came to the New World, they brought with them years and years of traditions. One of these traditions was the putz-building at Christmas-time. The first scene is an accurately scaled reproduction of Old Salem as it was in 1860. The second scene is that of the Nativity, which shows the countryside and town of Bethlehem as it was the night of Christ's birth. Here a woman dressed in the style of Old Salem recites the Christmas Story. Both scenes are built in the old meat cellar of the house and involve antique hand-carved wooden figurines.

The Moravian tradition is a

preparation for their celebration of Advent. It is an inspirational time of fellowship. It attempts to link the past with the present through the various stages of the

candle-making, the putz, and the sugarcake and coffee. The Candle Tea emphasizes the timelessness of the Christmas spirit.



Salem's Christmas Story

by Missy Littleton

As the weather begins to turn frosty cold, stores fill their windows with gifts and decorations, green wreaths appear on doors and decorated trees are placed in windows. Santa and his elves come out of hiding and we see Rudolph's red nose shining once again. The Christmas season is definitely here and as we watch Old Salem being decorated, we may wonder how the Moravians prepared for and celebrated Christmas long ago. This information is easily gathered at Old Salem, Inc.

In general, the Christmas custom of the 18th century American Moravians reflected

their German heritage. These customs were expressed through the practices of their church. On December 24, Christmas Eve, a childrens Love Feast commenced at about 5 or 6 p.m. This service consisted of Scriptures and music related to Christ's birth. The songs and passages were delivered on a level the children would understand. They were asked simple questions concerning the birth and life of Christ. Then each child received gifts, usually an apple, a piece of ginger cake and a colorfully written Christmas verse. Finally, each child was given a lighted candle with a red ribbon tied around it. They would walk home through the

darkened town with the candle still burning.

The tradition of the Children's Lovefeast dates back to 1747 when Johannes Vor Watteville, a young Moravian minister living in Germany met with the children of his congregation to tell the Christmas story. As a reminder of what he had told, he gave the children a lighted candle tied with the red ribbon. The flame was symbolic of Christ's love and the red was suggestive of the cost Christ paid for their redemption. Today the candle represents the light that came into the world with Christ's birth.

Apparently the 18th century Moravians had not adopted the customs

of decorating the Christmas tree as we know it today. But there are references made to the German tradition of building wooden pyramids decorated with cookies, fruit candles and greenery. Surrounding the pyramids were pictures, illuminated with candles, of the baby Jesus and Virgin Mary, the Bethlehem manger and the shepherds. Below the illuminations the word Children was written.

Though decorated trees appeared in Europe during the 17th century and in England and America around 1820, they probably did not appear in Salem until 1840 or later.

Ocurring about 8:00 that same night,

Christmas Eve, was the watch service and Lovefeast. The service included the reading of the story of the Birth of Christ and the singing of Christmas carols and hymns. The music came from the large Hymn Book which contained over 2,000 hymns dating from the early Latin church to the contemporary Moravian church. This service would last until midnight.

At an appointed time during the service, while the choir sang anthems, the Lovefeast was served. Usually the food offered was simple and consisted of a lightly sweetened bun and coffee served in mugs with cream and sugar already stirred in. When everyone was

served a blessing was said and the minister and congregation ate together.

Christmas Day, December 25, at dawn the birthday of the Saviour was announced instrumentally, with the sound of horns filling the air. Then at 9 a.m. a Liturgical service for the confirmed members of the church was given with a sermon on the text of the day. Preaching services occurred next at 10 a.m. This service was usually held in German and English for outside visitors. That afternoon prayer services were held for individual choirs. Around evening time a service for the whole congregation was held. This included choir music and the Christmas sermon.

On Christmas Day the

church was decorated with a few precious figures which were set up along with illuminations of scenes of Christ's birth and beautifully written lines of scriptures. It has been concluded that, in Wachovia, this was the first "putz" (from the German word putzen which originally meant to decorate and was usually applied to the decorating churches.)

With the coming of the Christmas season, Old Salem, Inc. has been busy decorating the restored area and planning seasonal activities depicting the old time Moravian Christmas. It will be fun to imagine ourselves back in the 18th century as we walk through decorative Old Salem and early await the Holidays.