

## North Carolina Christmas Years Ago Recalled

Stella Story Perkinson  
to be expected that New Year would eclipse other seasons in the observance of Thanksgiving.

## GREETINGS and Best Wishes

by the cheerful glow of Christmas candles be reflected in your heart and brighten the New Year with joy and contentment.

EAGLE'S 5c & 10c STORE

"Lib" Leatherwood, Mgr.

## Christmas Blessings

On Christmas Day and throughout all the days of the coming New Year may the blessings of Peace, Good Will and Happiness be with you and your beloved ones.

Balentine's Superette  
Branner Ave.  
Phone 814

mas is perfectly delightful. It thrills me more and more each year that I live through it.

My first Christmas in Dixie, now over 40 years ago, was spent in the country in Carolina. I missed the lights and the music to be heard in large city churches (before the days of radio) and I missed the Christmas trees in the homes, and my church, but there was a leisuress, a friendliness, a warmth of hospitality which was lovely and long to be remembered. There was no tinsel, few bought gifts, but neighbors exchanged what they had, and is there any better gift than some country sausage, some old ham, or a home made cake or some home made pickles? May be some watermelon rind preserves flavored with ginger. Everybody was prepared and expected guests to walk in at any time from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day.

### Preparation

The preparation for the great holidays began about the 18th of December. The crops were made and laid by, part of the tobacco sold, and it is time to take holiday and get ready to eat and drink and be merry. So about a week before hand the hogs were killed, weather permitting, the sausage made, the lard dried up and the fresh meat salted away—except that which was to be divided among the neighbors.

Next it was time to clean the house and sweep the yards, get enough wood chopped to last a week and to begin to cook enough food to last the octave, for although the colored girl, called "The cook" was willing to help with the preparations, very few could come back to prepare any meals after Christmas Eve. It was the same with the wood choppers. "Cooks" worked for five dollars a month in those days, and the price paid for cutting wood was 10 cents an hour.

One of my greatest thrills then was to be able to walk a short distance into the woods and gather holly and bayleaves, running cedar and other greens to my heart's content. Mistletoe was hard to get for it grows in the tops of dead oaks, and one has to climb for it. I used to make wreaths of holly and cedar and send to my Yankee kin. They were much appreciated, but now the gathering of holly is restricted by law, else it would have been extinct long ago.

### Two Customs

Two customs, then prevalent, I could not understand. One was the use of fireworks, which most children thought they should have at Christmas, and the other was the idea that Christmas was the one time in the year, when a man was privileged to get drunk.

"You are getting Christmas mixed up with the Fourth of July," I used to say, for that is the day Yankees did both of these things. Now fireworks are largely of the past, and I am glad, for it seemed incongruous to use them on the holiest day of the year, celebrating the Birth of Our Savior.

I wish I had space to describe that hog killing, as I remember it. It began as soon as it was light in the morning by building a huge fire and drawing many tubs of water from the well. Large rocks were heated in the fire, then thrown into the scalding tub, making the water hot enough to scald the hair from the hogs.

I had been used to seeing New England women clean house in the spring and fall. They did it very thoroughly, washing all wood work with soap and household ammonia, polishing windows etc., but this cleaning house for Christmas was new to me and amounted almost to a ritual among my southern neighbors. They did it very well.

This was the time they purchased new curtains and a new chair or so, cleaned windows, and scrubbed floors with sand and lye until they were almost white.

I missed the snow very much, and could hardly fit Santa Claus with his sleigh and reindeer into the picture of a green Christmas. I believe the airplane is his modern mode of travel which fits into any scene.

Seldom did snow prevent the yards from coming in for their share of the preparations. They were swept with a "brush broom" made of green dogwood branches. All refuse, such as leaves and twigs and acorns were swept into piles and burned. The "brush broom" was in far greater favor than any kind of rake. Although laborious, the results were very satisfactory

and yards were clean indeed.

The hogs were killed, the sausage made, and the lard put away, the house was clean and the yards were swept and the wood was chopped. The greens were put over the picture frames and on the mantels a day or two before Christmas Eve, so they would dry as little as possible before the week was gone.

Now it is time to begin the preparation of the goodies. Right after the hog killing, cucumbers were taken out of the brine and put a soak to be made into pickles for the table. This was done by putting them into a brass kettle to restore their green color, then adding vinegar and sugar and spices and bringing them to a boil. Then they were packed into jars ready for use. They were usually served with Christmas cake which was a new

idea to me. Ever try pickles and cake together? It is a good combination.

The Southern housewife excels all others in the making of fruit cake. It is rich, expensive and delicious. It is usually made right after Thanksgiving and put into an earthen crock or closed tin box so that it will keep moist, and a few drops of home made wine is sometimes poured over it from time to time.

As many other cakes as one could afford were made and wrapped in cloths and kept in a cool place. The best cakes I ever tasted were made by a neighbor, rich layer cakes into which went from a half to a pound of butter each. She made coconut and devil's food and pound cake and yellow cakes and white cakes with a variety of

fillings and icings. She always gave me a plate full of her cake and it was much appreciated.

Besides fresh spare ribs and a fresh ham, everybody tried to save or buy a large old ham for the holidays. Most families raised or bought a turkey as well.

Chess pies were new to me. These pies are made with butter and sugar and egg yolks and flavored with lemon or vanilla or perhaps some coconut, and then poured onto a thin short crust. Ambrosia is another holiday delight peculiar to the South, made with oranges and sugar and grated fresh coconut.

Sweet potato pies were also prepared. I do not recall many mince pies.

I had never tasted a yam and thought they were soggy at first. Those country people used to bake

an oven full for the holidays, and eat them cold or candied. They would be so full of sugar that it would run out into the stove.

### Memories

All I seem to remember about that first Christmas in my own house was that I was all at sea, a bride of a few weeks, about what was expected of me by way of Christmas preparations. The cook had to do what was done, and what a time I had learning to make those good hot buttermilk biscuits. I would either get too much or too little soda in them and make them either too stiff or too soft. I do remember that my husband kept asking me how many chickens or hams I wanted killed, I did not know, and I did not know what to do with the four or five he brought in. Just

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## GREETINGS

Always at Christmas time, there comes that special delight in extending to our many friends the greetings of the Season. This year, more so than ever before we appreciate the good will and close friendship that exists between our patrons and ourselves. It is with this fine relationship in mind that we wish you the fullest measure of Yuletide cheer and happiness and a prosperous and healthy New Year.

# American Enka Corporation

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## Season's Greetings

To All Of You at CHRISTMAS TIME

We extend to everyone our warmest wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a New Year of good health, prosperity and the happiness of many lasting friendships.

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