

Yule Log Tradition Fades, But Its Meaning Lives On

When you've settled quietly in your easy chair before the fireplace on Christmas Eve, close your eyes for a moment, then squint them open into the flickering flames. Perhaps the elves of St. Nicholas will conjure a picture for you.

They will take you back a few hundred years to another Christmas Eve and give you a glimpse of a line of laughing, brawny men and youths hauling a huge oaken log through the snow to a reveling baronial castle.

Once one of the most important of Christmas ceremonies, this custom of bringing home the yule log has been, unfortunately, almost forgotten in America. Often, in the dim past, the entire trunk of a tree was used to provide Charles Lamb's famous "large, heaped-up, all-attractive fire" that was so necessary to light and laughter at Christmastide. Whole families went out to bring in the log, a carol was sung, and a prayer made for fer-

tility in field and fold, house and vineyard for the coming year.

Almost everywhere it was the custom to preserve a remnant of the log to kindle the new log next Christmas. Sometimes the remnant was kindled afresh on Candlemas Eve (Candlemas Day, February 2nd), and then quenched to be preserved as a charm against fire and other misfortunes.

The ashes of the Christmas log were regarded as a universal panacea, with properties to give fertility to the soil, cure toothaches, prevent diseases among the animals, protect the house from fire and ill luck, and stave off lightning.

The yule log is no more, but the spirit of Christmas prevails. And, as you open your eyes wide and look into your cheerful fire, perhaps the elves of St. Nicholas will bless you, and bring good fortune to your household this year just as much as they did in years gone by.

St. Nicholas Makes a Mistake

St. Nicholas was resting from his Christmas work at last, the gifts had all been given, the Holidays were past, and dozing in his armchair, with his cat-upon his knees, Old Nick found an easy chair and took his honest ease.

But something roused him quickly! He started from his seat! A soldier bold, a maiden fair, were kneeling at his feet. "St. Nicholas!" the maiden cried, "Behold my fearful plight! These wounds have been inflicted since that dreadful, dreadful night when you left me in the stocking of a being I dare not name—" She paused.

The soldier raised his voice, and said: "I blush with shame to stand before your saintship in the dress you now behold, but the way I have been treated makes my very blood run cold. I've been nursed and kissed and cuddled, I've been rocked and sung to sleep; oh, were I not a soldier still I'd almost like to weep!"

"Ah," mused the good St. Nicholas, "I think I understand." And he smiled a merry little smile, and

Charles Dickens found Christmas a feast of roast duck and turkey. He left it a festival of human kindness. More than any other one man, Dickens is responsible for the restoration of Christmas to its original spiritual significance.

He could not, being the man he was, have done otherwise. The sympathies of Dickens embraced everything human. He laughed at his characters, scolded and loved them, and in book after book he combined the tenderness, the mirth, and the indignation that made up his nature. His indignation was aimed at selfishness, inertia, and stupidity, and when he found these things surrounding the Christmas season, he swept them away with a startling, revolutionary, and haunting book, "A Christmas Carol."

The "Carol" has become a tradition. But in the author's own time it was a sensation. Long before Dickens was born, the Merry England of earlier days had disappeared. The Puritan suppression of the Christian celebration had broken the continuity of rejoicing. So people ate. They ate enormously. But they had forgotten the fellowship of good will that we today regard as the very spirit of Christmas. In that time, manufacturing was enjoying its first successes, and was crude, cruel, and blatant. There actually were men like the grasping partners, Scrooge and Marley.

Toward such men, Dickens hurled the challenge of Marley's self-

—J. McDermott (Reprint).

The Man Who Made Our Christmas

reproachful lament. "Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the big ocean of my business."

Nothing could be more expressive of Dickens' own attitude than the words he put in Marley's mouth. Their expensiveness, their touch of extravagance, their sweeping nobility, are as fresh and significant today as when the ink was still wet on the pen that wrote them.

To the world at large, Dickens' "Carol" restored the spirit of

Breakdown on Breakdowns
Cuthbert, Ga. (AP)—When the weekly Cuthbert Times appeared late recently, Hal Herrin, the editor and publisher, printed this front page notice: "We're a few hours late with the paper this week. The linotype broke down Friday, the press broke down Tuesday, and we broke down Wednesday."

Christmas. For the man at Christmas time, it has a special significance.
—Adapted from The Depictor.

Merry Christmas

May all the joys of the season dwell in your heart and in your home on Christmas and throughout the year.



MANSFIELD LUMBER YARD
MOREHEAD CITY

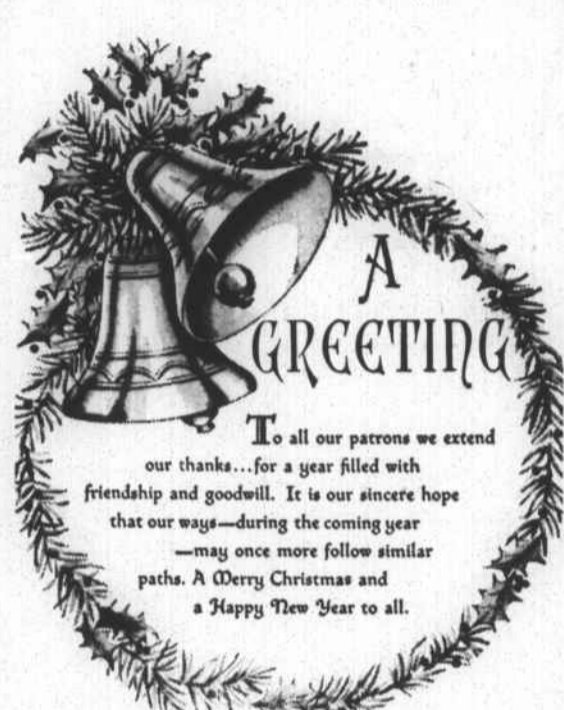
Merry Christmas



Make merry, be happy, have fun for this is Holiday time! There's joy in the air, warmth in our hearts—and a very Merry Christmas on our lips.

D. A. FREEMAN
UPHOLSTERY MOREHEAD CITY

A GREETING

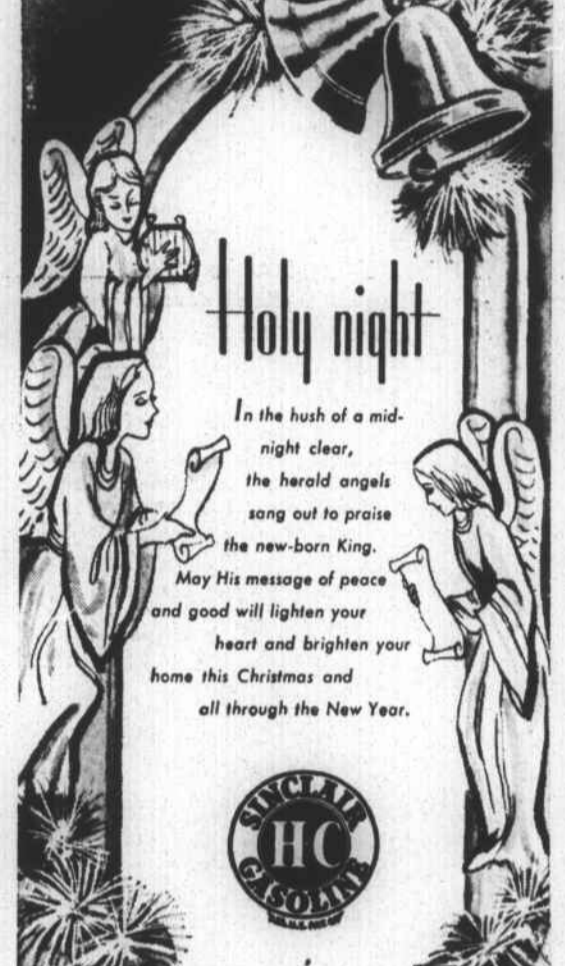


To all our patrons we extend our thanks...for a year filled with friendship and goodwill. It is our sincere hope that our ways—during the coming year—may once more follow similar paths. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

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Holy night

In the hush of a midnight clear, the herald angels sang out to praise the new-born King. May His message of peace and good will lighten your heart and brighten your home this Christmas and all through the New Year.



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Warm Wishes at Christmas

We, at the Mobley Buick Company, want to make a Christmas wish for each and every one of you fine people in Carteret County. It is our wish that you have the very best Christmas yet and that all the fine things will come your way in 1954. We have enjoyed serving you in 1953 and hope to see many of your during the holiday season so that we can extend a very warm, personal greeting to you . . . MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR.



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