



Then AND NOW by VICTOR MEEKINS

OLD CHRISTMAS—PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The "Old Christmas" festival at Rodanthe was the theme of a front page feature in the Charlotte Observer, illustrated with photographs, on Jan. 13, by "Chuck" Hauser, a staff member who has been to the event for the past two seasons. This article is typical of the fast growing and widespread publicity that accompanies the festival from year to year.

It may be of interest at this time to review the Old Christmas celebration in the old days, as compared with the situation now. From time immemorial, and until 50 years ago, the observance of Old Christmas on January 6, often accompanied by a public program the night before, was more or less general in the communities of the N. C. Coast. It was a survival of the general observance in England and other countries which from earlier days had observed this date before the calendar change moving the new Christmas date some two weeks earlier.

The old timers didn't like the idea of changing their Christmas time. They argued, despite all laws which legally said an event could be on a different date from the one they had always known and revered, they would hold to the "proper" time. Laws, they said, could not change facts. We recall in more recent years when the last Thursday in November was discarded as the Thanksgiving period in this country, and earlier dates substituted, it didn't seem like Thanksgiving any more.

So it was with Christmas, and while the reverent old Coastlanders saw their neighbors all about them yielding to the new trend; while the entire nation under the pressure of the commercialized newer event adopted our December 25th; they reluctantly gave in and went along. But without fail, come each January 6th, they felt they had not done their duty, and had not paid allegiance to old customs, old memories and due reverence to their forebears, if suitable note were not paid "Old Christmas," as it came to be known.

Many of us recall when observance of this date was more general. While no elaborate observance took place, there was observance of a sort.

A person would say: "my folks always 'kept' old Christmas." Gifts might be exchanged, or a special dinner prepared, or work would give way to visit to neighbors.

Of all the communities of the

"A DAY APART" PROGRAM HELD AT WANCHESE JAN. 15

"A Day Apart" was observed January 15th in Bethany Methodist Church, Wanchese, sponsored by the Wanchese W.S.C.S. All Societies in the sub-district were represented which includes Kitty Hawk, Manns Harbor, Manteo, Stumpy Point, and Wanchese. The leader was Mrs. F. J. Dupressey of Gates, North Carolina, Secretary of Spiritual Life of the W.S.C.S. Elizabeth City District, who gave food for thought pertaining to every day living and how to overcome every trial and temptation by taking God as one's constant companion. Visitors included Rev. F. J. Dupressey, Mrs. Orlando Whitehurst and Mrs. C. B. Lee of Gates. Each person brought a sandwich. Dessert was furnished by the Manteo Society, and coffee by the host church. A day of prayer, meditation, and fellowship was enjoyed.

outer banks "Old Christmas" lasted longer in the two communities which comprised Rodanthe, and for a good reason. These people have long been neighborly and independent people. They are friendly and hospitable people. They share with each other; they return gifts and favors as something that is a duty as well as a pleasure. They do not take from one what they are unable to return in kind. There has always been marriage and kinship between the two communities. It was long their custom to visit and share gifts and meals between the communities at Christmas time, and all the gifts and fine things that were shared between the communities during the universal Christmas on December 25, were again revived and shared on Old Christmas. Then, on January 6th, all accounts were squared, all gifts repaid, all visits returned, and all had fared alike in both the north and south neighborhoods.

The quaint custom has merit of high order. It is an inspiring and wholesome thing. It should be practiced in other places. It does good because it makes for happier people. In a world devoted too much to commercialism and greed, where in many places so many of the finer things of life are apparently forgotten, it comes as a heart-lifting and inspiring thought to those who do not like to forget; to those who treasure old memories of childhood and other days; to those who cherish the traditions of their forefathers.

So from year to year interest throughout the land has grown. It has caused many people to come from afar to witness the celebration, until today visitors bring new problems. For many years there has been a program arranged by people of the communities, and the room which was sufficient for the neighbors, is now completely inadequate to seat any large portion of the visitors. The work and expense entailed in putting on the celebration, the oyster roast, etc. cannot be afforded by the few people and limited resources of the community.

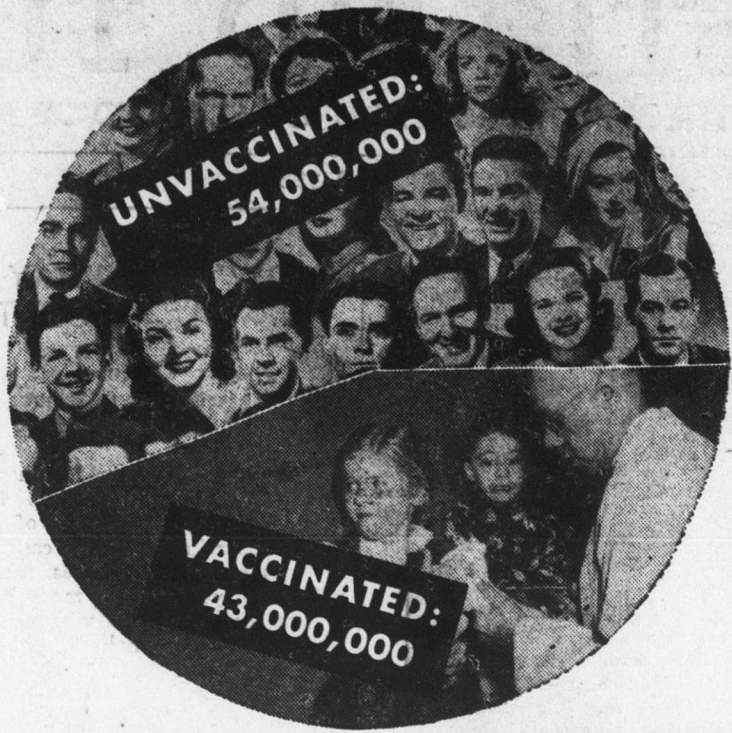
Moreover, the type of entertainment rehearsed and staged, while having served its purpose in other days, bringing as it did colorful and comical novelty to people who had few opportunities to get away for amusement, is not now sufficiently comprehensive for the visitors; nor for homefolks who have opportunity to see a wide variety of features on TV, or by way of the good roads which take them quickly to towns and cities, with modern shows.

Heretofore, the very things which visitors wish to witness, have not been incorporated in the program at the old schoolhouse. The neighborly deeds, the numerous tableaux of community life, the neighborhood caroling and visits by young and old have not been rehearsed upon the stage, for they would not have been new and interesting to the residents. And only residents then could see them.

But these things now, reminiscent of by-gone days, would be of tremendous interest to all. So the people of the community are beginning to discuss the possibility of bringing a number of these old things together, and starting in time, unite the talent of the community, in putting on a show that would be worthy of even two or three presentations for the enjoyment of the visitors. There has been proven a great popular demand for such a production, both locally and from afar. There is only one road block now, and that is the problem of financing the enlargement of their building, and making possible better accommodations for the larger crowds in all sorts of weather. Putting on the celebration and the free oyster roast, and other things that follow will call for more labor and expense, and that is what is giving concern to the mere handful of people who up to now have carried the burden. A small admission charge this season, paid expenses only because the people did not charge for their work. The charges would not have paid for the oysters alone, at any place where oysters are usually sold.

Washable silk becomes weak in water, so it should not be rubbed, twisted or wrung.

POLIO: UNFINISHED BUSINESS



By mid-October, 1956, fewer than half of the 97,000,000 Americans who should be protected against polio by the Salk vaccine had started the prescribed course of three inoculations. The vulnerable age group is from six months to 35 years. You can help bring about the final victory over this crippling disease by getting vaccinated and by giving to the March of Dimes to help those for whom the vaccine is too late.

SLADESVILLE PERSONALS

Herman Smith of Washington was here Monday.

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Gray and Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Richards were in Washington Monday.

Garry Berry is a patient at Duke Hospital, Durham. Mrs. Berry is there with him. Sammie Cuthrell is a patient there too.

Mrs. Edgar O'Neal is a patient at Fowle Memorial Hospital, Washington.

J. C. Bishop and W. P. Hodges are in Park View Hospital in Rocky Mount.

Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Pope of Magnolia and Mrs. Troy Sawyer of Belhaven visited Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Flowers Sunday.

Those attending the banquet Saturday night at Creswell, Mr. and Mrs. Odia Williams, Frances, and Brice Williams, Mrs. Archie Carawan, Elvis Carawan and Kenneth Gray, who report an enjoyable event.

Misses Anne Sawyer, Miss Patsey Cutrell of Belhaven visited Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Flowers Saturday.

Oscar Berry spent the week end in Durham with Mrs. Berry and son Garry who is a patient in Duke Hospital.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Green in Ransomville Sunday visited Mr. and Mrs. Bill Boswell and Miss Annie Powell.

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Bell and Mr. Dave Evans of Henderson visited Mrs. Ethel Gibbs and Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Windley Saturday evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Ted Cutler of Washington attended the wedding of Miss Cutler's niece, Miss Gracie Carawan and Willie O'Neal Saturday.

Royce Carawan and Garland O'Neal of Hampton spent the week end at home. Mr. and Mrs. Sam Spencer were in Belhaven.

Victor Jennette visited his brother, C. E. Jennette, in Grifton.

W. O. Howerin of Norfolk is now at home.

Mrs. Griff Gray of Pantego is visiting her son, Kenneth Gray's family.

Capt. Johnnie Moore is in Washington with his daughter, Mrs. Ted Cutler.

Blood donors for Garry Berry at Duke Hospital were Vernon and Floyd Midyette, Henry Spencer, J. D. Sears, Dickie Newman.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Gibbs spent the week in Durham.

June Jennette and Annie Mae Pittman spent Saturday night in Belhaven with Mrs. Mabel Sawyer.

Mrs. Archie Carawan and Mrs. Daisy Moore visited Mr. and Mrs. Medford Daniels in Belhaven Sunday.

Mrs. Clint Waters, Ponzer, and Mrs. Gilbert Sawyer of Pantego visited Mr. and Mrs. Griffin Sawyer.

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Mervis Credle and Myron Garish visited Plymouth Thursday.

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VEPCO NOW HAS MORE THAN 3/4 MILLION CUSTOMERS

The number of customers served by Virginia Electric and Power Company passed the three-quarter million mark in the year just ended.

Vepeco President Erwin H. Will said the utility at the end of the year was supplying electric service to 685,000 customers and gas service to nearly 89,000 customers for a combined total of 774,000. This represents an increase of 35,000 customers during the year.

The company serves Norfolk and Newport News areas, and throughout most of Virginia, the Eastern fringe of West Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina.

Customers served by Vepeco have nearly doubled in the past ten years. Electrical customers on December 31, 1946, numbered 385,000 and gas customers 54,000 for a total of 439,000.

Will said the average residential customer in 1946 used 1,442 kilowatt hours of electricity. During the twelve months ended in October, the latest 12-month period for which comparative figures are available, the average residential customer of the company consumed

here Saturday.

H. D. Club Meets

The Home Demonstration Club met at the home of Mrs. Earl Topping on Jan. 8th and presided over by Mrs. Linwood Lupton. Mrs. Topping gave the devotional. Mrs. Jeff Credle acted for the secretary, Mrs. Harvey, who was absent.

After the business discussion Miss Woodley, the agent, gave an interesting demonstration on "Buffet Meals, How to give a party and enjoy it yourself."

Mrs. Topping entertained with a game, Mrs. Frank Fortescue the winner. The hostess, Mrs. Topping, served refreshments to the following members: Mrs. Edgar O'Neal, Mrs. Linwood Lupton, Mrs. Frank Fortescue, Mrs. Jeff Credle, Mrs. Sam Spencer, Mrs. Charlie Ayres and Miss Jean Woodley. The meeting adjourned to meet again Feb. 12, this meeting will be family night with covered dish supper at seven o'clock at the lunch room.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Spencer were in Belhaven.

Victor Jennette visited his brother, C. E. Jennette, in Grifton.

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