LOOKING BACK

by Hague Historical Society Board Members Shelly Gautreau and Nancy Young

For this issue, we decided to look back at various fun facts and Christmas traditions.

Americans have shown a preference in the past for girthy, round Christmas trees, the bulkier the better. The 1st Christmas tree "lot" opened in 1851 by New York woodsman Mark Carr.

Partner and friend to Thomas Edison, E.H. Johnson first came up with the idea to string bulbs around a tree in New York in 1882. Christmas tree lights were being mass produced by 1914.

Lametta, a type of tinsel manufactured in Germany was made of lead alloy foil with tin bonded on the top. Other tinsel was ultra-flammable paper-covered aluminum. (Beware children and pets)

Yule Logs were part of ancient winter solstice celebrations.

Around 1920 scotch tape had not yet been invented. Gift wrappers had to make do with decorative, lick'em adhesive seals.

America's Christmas flower, the Poinsettia, is native to Central America and was brought to the US in the 1820's by J.R. Poinsett. (hence the name)

Although wreaths have been around since Greek and Roman times, the evergreen Christmas wreath, decorated with boughs of holly, is most often seen as a secular winter tradition.

The first official Christmas card debuted in 1843 in England. This greeting caught on in the US with the "Kansas City based Hall Brothers" (now Hallmark) creating a card with envelopes in 1915.

Candy Canes date back to 1670 in Germany. They arrived stateside in 1847 when a German-Swedish immigrant in Wooster, Ohio placed them on a tree.

While leaving treats for Santa and his reindeer dates to ancient Norse mythology, Americans used the tradition as a sign of showing gratitude during a time of struggle during the Great Depression in the 1930's.

Although the yuletide cocktail, Spiked Eggnog, stems from "possit", a drink made with hot, curdled milk and ale or wine, American Colonists made it popular by adding rum.

The Germans lay claim to starting the Gingerbread House tradition when German Brothers Grimm wrote "Hansel and Gretel".

The iconic dance troupe, The Radio City Music Hall Rocketts, were first known as The Missouri Rockets in 1925.

The Nutcracker Ballet first premiered in 1892 in Russia. It was first performed in the US in 1944 by the San Francisco Ballet.

Poet Clement Moore of New York wrote the classic The Night Before Christmas on Christmas Eve in 1822 and was inspired by his sleighride home.

It's a Wonderful Life, the classic Christmas film, debuted in 1946 starring Jimmy Stewart.

The actual song, ,The 12 Days of Christmas, is Christian and refers to a timeline from December 25 to January 6 and was published in 1780. In 2019 the PNC Christmas Price Index showed a bill of $38,993.59 would cover everything from the partridge in a pear tree to twelve drummers drumming.

In 1891, San Francisco Army Captain Joseph McFee wanted to raise money to offer free Christmas dinners to 1000 of the city's most destitute. He set up a kettle to hold coins tossed in by people to help the poor. Thus, the Salvation Army Bell Ringers was started.

A Charlie Brown Christmas aired in 1965. "I never thought it was such a bad little tree", Linus says in the special. "It's not bad at all, really. Maybe it just needs a little love".

Christmas, Friday, December 25, 1925, was week 52, day 359 of that year. It was approximately 36,483 days (about 100 years) ago!

As this holiday season descends upon us, let us remember those we have lost, be thankful for those we still share this world with, remember the best gifts are friendship, sharing, and love and continue to hope for a future that allows our loved ones and us to have health and happiness. Happy Holidays!

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