

TELL TALES

"One Man Plus The Truth
Constitutes A Majority"

(Continued from page 1)

wreaths, tinsel and lights.

An occasion that was originally celebrated by just those of the Christian faith, now finds other sects, religions and beliefs looking forward to and rejoicing in the spirit of Christmas.

The metamorphosis of Christmas was not a straight, smooth road from the way it was to what it is. There were bypaths, drawbacks, tangents, and obstacles created by the natural course of history through the ages.

While Santa Claus is obviously a result of creative imagination, the thought was derived from and patterned after a real, historical person. During the 4th Century, Nicholas, an eight year old orphan, but independently wealthy, spent his life being kind and generous to the less fortunate in his native town in Asia Minor. He was elevated to Bishop of Myra and in the 9th Century was canonized. His Dutch name was Santa Claus.

The furthest reference to a Christmas tree is a legendary story of a wounded Swedish officer being cared for by the people of Leipsig during the 30 Years War in the 17th Century. As an offer of gratitude he set up a lighted tree in a church on Christmas Day.

The Christmas tree was introduced to America in 1747 by Germans settling in Pennsylvania. Five years later the Moravian sect decorated their trees with lighted candles. Catholic and Protestant colonists from Holland introduced the annual St. Nicholas visitation to America.

Early colonists were divided in the recognition of December 25th. Members of the Church of England, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian and certain German sects honored the holiday. Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians and Puritans ignored the date. It was on the night of December 25, 1776, George Washington crossed the Delaware River to defeat the Hessians celebrating Christmas at Trenton.

Fantasy had Santa arriving in a cart, a wagon,

on mule, drawn by goats and other means of transportation until Clement Moore's "A Visit From St. Nicholas" in 1922, and thereafter the popular conception was a sled drawn by reindeer. In 1847, the first classroom Christmas tree was decorated in New York City Episcopalian Sunday School.

The individual states commended declaring Christmas a legal holiday. Alabama, which like all southern states celebrated December 25 with fireworks a la Fourth of July, was the first, in 1836, and the rest followed suit: California, 1851, Nevada, 1861, Utah, 1881, etc., with Oklahoma being last in 1890.

As late as 1855, all religions were still not in accord in their tolerance of the holiday. The December 26 edition of the year's New York Times stated: Churches of Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists were not open yesterday. They do not accept the day as a Holy one, but Episcopalian, Catholic and German churches were open. Inside they were decked with evergreens. However, by 1880, all evangelical churches were accepting Christmas.

Passing of Christmas gifts in those days was not emphasized, except the wealthy were expected to be generous to the poor. In the middle of the 19th Century, due to the influence of Charles Dickens' writings, singing of Christmas carols became prevalent, and the sending of cards began in 1875.

The classic editorial which began, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus," in response to a child's query, was written by Francis Church for the New York Sun of December 21st, 1897.

In recent years Santa Claus has become to be known as a communal folk figure. A Pennsylvania judge ruled in 1936 that any doubters of Santa Claus who appeared before him would be held in contempt of court. The court citation reads: Santa is not a figment of the imagination but an actuality. He is the symbol of kindness, a token smiling charity and a badge of all that is cheerfully benevolent.

Commercial exploitation of Christmas has

become systematic and thorough, impelling Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians and Jews, to band together in Milwaukee in 1949 and decree to put Christ back into Christmas.

Meanwhile, millions of non-Christian homes in scores of non-Christian countries, including Japan and India, have taken unto their own the kindness and charity and cheer of Christmas and proudly display decorated and lit trees on December 25th.

All this prove the true sense of Christmas has not waned -- its just that the Spirit of Christmas has overwhelmed and is about to inundate all humans in the four corners of the earth.

Shomrim Group News

The next meeting of the Shomrim Group of Hadassah, the Business & Professional Women's Group, will be held on Thursday, January 3, 1985 at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at Tybe's home. Her phone number is: 458-4765.

For further information call Marta, who is in charge of membership, at 362-0601. You can also reach Lenore at 732-4270.

Our last meeting was held at Fay's home. We had a lovely Hanukah meeting. Everyone exchanged gifts. We were all served delicious Hanukah Potato Latkes and coke and coffee.

PARIS (WNS) — Syrian President Hafez Assad has angrily denounced an international conference held here that accused Syria of holding its Jewish community "hostage." In a Damascus radio interview, Assad denied that there was anti-Semitism in Syria and accused the conference of meddling in Syria's internal affairs. The conference organized by the Representative Council of French Jewish Organizations, the World Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, urged for Syria to allow its Jewish community freedom to emigrate to Israel. There are some 5,000 Jews in Syria.



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