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**BITS OF BIRMINGHAM**

**SPECIAL MESSAGE—NORTH POLE!** Santa wants to assure Jane Adams, Jimmy Swink, Billy Kim Bailey and Mickey Turner that he had had their letters. However they arrived to late for him to return them to The Eccentric for publication.

**Oak street widening project** will be worked out this winter on the drafting boards in the city engineering office. City Manager Donald C. Egbert said. The widening involves that stretch from Woodward to Lakewood, and includes widening of the Oak street bridge at the head of Quanton lake.

**An announcement** this week from Albion college stated that Jim Carson, son of Mr. and Mrs. James K. Carson, 2123 Northshire received his letter in football this past season. He is a senior.

**The Boy Scout "Salute of the Week"** went to Kent Rowbridge, 16236 Marguerite and Arnold Issett, 15222 Elizabeth, for heroism. Kent jumped into a water-filled excavation to rescue his little sister, Missie, who had fallen into the hole. He was unable to drag himself up the steep bank after saving Missie and was, in turn, rescued by Arnold. Announcement of the "Salute" was made by William F. Church, assistant executive of the Detroit Boy Scout headquarters.

**How long will it be before** the Detroit police department takes out Sgt. Henry Timm away from us? The genial sergeant has been doing a swell job with the microphone the past few days, telling motorists and pedestrian alike to look and live. Seated in a second-floor office of the Briggs building, he has a clear view of the Woodward-Maple intersection and broadcasts many words of warning to the careless. Between times Timm turns disc-jockey and keeps Birmingham ringing with the well loved Christmas music and carols.

**Walter Moreland** of the Birmingham Federal Savings and Loan, recently elected to the board of directors of the Federal Home Loan bank board, has received his certificate of election. He will make monthly trips to Indianapolis in performing his new duties.

**A very fitting climax** to the annual Christmas program of the Birmingham Male chorus occurred last Thursday evening. At the conclusion of the regular program, the capacity audience started to applaud for encores. But the accompanist, Mrs. Jean Whalley started to play familiar Christmas carols and the entire crowd began singing.

**We couldn't help noticing** the little youngster in Wilson's late last week who wasn't overlooking any chances as Christmas Eve drew closer. This crafty two-year-old was walking around the edge of a table holding Christmas cards, carefully kissing each of the large-sized Santas on the paper decorations.

**The three extra machines** which the city rented for the Nov. 1 election resulted in practically no change during voting hours, city commissioners agreed Monday night. Believing the extra machines should be permanent city property, they instructed City Clerk Irene Hanley to draw up a resolution for the machines' purchase to be acted upon next Tuesday.

**Birmingham's water production** during November was 10 per cent above the corresponding month in 1949, City Manager Donald C. Egbert said this week.

**Ancient Customs from Many Lands Influence Our American Christmas**

By ALICE E. MORGAN

Monday will mark the 175th Christmas of the United States of America, as a recognized nation. It was celebrated through years of war and peace, through famine and feast, through wealth and poverty.

Like all other nations, it has created many of its own Yule traditions even while it has clung to those which date back hundreds of years.

The first Christmas celebrated by the infant nation was a grim affair. Washington's army was at its lowest morale. Defeat after defeat had dogged its trail in every encounter with the British.

The weeks before Christmas found a ragged, sick, dirty "mob" camped on the Delaware river, across from Trenton. Every day men stole away from camp, deserting making their way back home. Conditions grew worse as food and clothing, even medical supplies, became scarce.

On Christmas Eve, Washington rallied what was left of his army and crossed the Delaware. One of the women who thought she was left behind that night. Whatever they were, the Continental Army received its first Christmas present — a smashing victory in that engagement.

breath, while Mom tacked the stocking over the mantel, or being one's best, it is the fact of one's best? "

St. Nicholas (who has become synonymous with Santa Claus) was a wealthy man who lived many years ago. His greatest joy, so history tells us, came from helping the poor without being known. He went to great lengths to give his gifts and remain completely apart from them.

One Christmas, wishing to give a purse of gold to an old man and his little daughter, St. Nicholas climbed to the roof and dropped his gift down their chimney. Instead of landing on the hearth, however, the purse fell into a stocking hung to dry, and was found there the next morning.

**NATURALLY**, the father and daughter told of their great good fortune, and others began hanging up their stockings on Christmas Eve also. Begun among the poor, who knew of St. Nicholas and his kindness, the idea spread until rich and poor, all over the world,

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**IT IS QUITE** probable that many of those deserters left to get to their homes and families for Christmas.

Their minds pictured home celebrations, close family circles, gifts from their children and the bustle and bustle that goes with Christmas, no matter how meager it will be.

Many of these men were of German or English stock, and the same traditions filled their celebrations as those of the men whom they were to do battle. Each group, no doubt, recalled the days of peace and contentment.

We, today, still cling to the customs brought to this country by these same men. By the men of both armies, including the Hessians, paid soldiers of England.

**IN THE EARLY** days, Christmas was not a time of feasting and merriment, but one of fasting and penance. Their joy poured forth at the Epiphany, Jan. 6, which commemorates the coming of the Magi as being the first manifestation of Christ and when His divine nature was revealed to the world.

Three other old traditions play a great part in our observance of Christmas: the Christmas candle, the Christmas tree and the Christmas stocking.

The Christmas candle originated in England and through the years has become an integral part of Christmas in nearly every land. At first it was a church ceremony, known years before the "Middle Ages." Gradually a lighted candle appeared in the windows of homes.

In Ireland it has become nearly the most important symbol of Christmas, and the candle is always large enough to burn on Christmas, New Year's and the Twelfth Night.

In the Scandinavian countries the candle must burn all night with what remains in the morning serving as a charm of good luck throughout the year.

**TODAY THE MOST** popular candle is the bayberry, about which a widely-known verse says: "A bayberry candle burned to the socket Brings health to the home And wealth to the pocket."

Popular tradition ascribes the Christmas tree to Martin Luther, the Great Reformer. However, it is a symbol of Christmas which has come to us from Germany, where, in the beginning, only the trees still growing in forest and field were used.

At that time tapers were fastened to the boughs, with the largest placed at the very top to typify the Star of Bethlehem.

Later the trees were cut and brought into the house to hold gifts as well as candles (and today, of course, electric lights). The decorations used have gradually changed from crude designs of the season to the elaborate designs of metal and glass which deck our modern trees.

*Merry Christmas From Us . . .*

- \* Jerome F. Benjamin
- \* Lloyd H. Stephens
- \* Burt Van Maaren
- \* "GJ" Goode
- \* Eugene R. Page
- \* Joseph C. Grinnell
- \* Lottie E. Holton
- \* Carol Lehr
- \* "Bud" Folin
- \* Helen Shaver
- \* "Billie" Allen
- \* "Pat" Hall
- \* Margaret Randall
- \* Helen Giddings

\* I. H. Benjamin Co. Architect - Builder

*Here to serve you again in the future:*

*Merry Christmas To Your Family*

*Merry Christmas 1950*

Despite a World of Woe and fear  
May Christmas Joy Be yours all year;  
May no mishap  
Your door come nigh  
And may your hearts  
Like ours, be high!

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