

## Cards came late in Yule traditions

Many of today's Christmas traditions began somewhere in the dim past, but the practice of exchanging greeting cards is just a little over a century old.

In 1848 William Maw Egley, a "starving" young English artist, came up with the idea of designing a Christmas card and reproducing it on pieces of pasteboard for the public to buy.

Egley's card showed a family Christmas dinner, formal dance, skating, carolers, alms-giving, a Punch and Judy show and other aspects of a celebration resembling the one in Charles Dickens' "The Christmas Carol," published a few years previously. Unfortunately, Egley's friends were not enthusiastic about his idea.

The "daddy" of all holiday cards was designed and etched in 1812 by J. A. Boerner, a young Londoner, who wanted to apologize to friends for his failure to pay a New Year's day visit. Mr. Boerner's card made it clear he was tied to his home by depicting him with his coat caught in the locked doorway of his house.

In 1843, Sir Henry Cole, a busy English "missionary" of culture, hit upon the idea of sending out little missives at Christmas. John Calcott Horsley of the Royal Academy, famous for his campaign against nude art, designed the cards and Sir Henry sent out 1,000 to friends.

It wasn't until the early 1860's that cards were issued for general distribution by a large English publishing company.

Christmas greetings were introduced into the United States by the Marcus Card company of London. They became popular immediately, and in 1874 Louis, a German immigrant, started a Christmas card business at Roxbury, Mass.

At the turn of the century he ceased publishing rather than compete with imports flooding the market. For the next decade or so the custom of exchanging cards fell out of fashion.

Only after World War I did American manufacturers begin to achieve success in the card business. Then inexpensive processes brought Christmas cards within everyone's reach.

Despite its relatively recent start in this country, the custom has caught the fancy of the American public to the extent that it sends out billions of Christmas cards every year.

*Reprinted from the December 19, 1963 issue of the Big Timber Pioneer.*



## Christmases in various lands

Devonshire, England, noted for its apples, boasts a curious custom. On Christmas eve the farmer and his son stand beneath the oldest and best apple tree, both bearing a jug of cider, and sing a certain folk song.

After passing the cider jug around they betake themselves home to a good supper and much merry-making.

The Jamaica negroes collect all bits of odds and ends of finery with which to array themselves on Christmas eve and, choosing a king and queen, follow these leaders about, making as much noise as possible.

The custom of giving gifts at Christmas came not from the presents of gold and silver given to the Christ Child, as many believe, but, from an old custom of priests putting on board of all outgoing ships a box of alms.

The box was opened at Christmas-tide and masses said for the givers of the alms.

*Reprinted from the December 23, 1915 issue of the Big Timber Pioneer.*

## Christmas with the pioneers held deep religious meaning

Christmas on the frontier, as new hands of pioneers pushed ever westward to carve an empire out of virgin plains and wildernesses, was in marked contrast to the present holiday.

There was more meaning then in the words of The Book concerning shepherds in a certain country watching their flocks by night. The solitudes, the closeness of the stars, the virginity of the new world and its humble people made one feel time had stood still. Christmas in those days somehow seemed much closer to that first Christmas.

Those bleak plains could be the ones the Wise Men crossed, this the Night and yon sleeping village, Bethlehem. The faith of the trail breakers was that of the Wise Men.

On Christmas Eve the pioneer folks would gather in a crude little church or schoolhouse where children recited their pieces and sang songs about the birth of the Christ Child. Santa would hand out mosquito-bar sacks of candy, a golden orange or an apple to each one, and childhood rapture would make that meager offering truly a gift of gold and frankincense.

Home-made sleds and sleighs skimmed over the snowy countryside with sleigh bells jingling accompaniment to the caroling of "Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells."

Except in the forest regions, few children enjoyed the sight of a Christmas tree. But always they hung up their stockings, an old custom of their forefathers.

It was a lucky boy who awoke Christmas morning to find a new jack-knife in his stocking; a lucky girl who received a string of beads or a calico doll from Santa Claus. But that doll, made from spare strips of bright cloth, probably was more treasured than any modern doll that can say "Mama," go to sleep and perhaps require a diaper.

Children who received a slate pencil or a shell-box, a little affair covered with shells and containing a small mirror, were the special favorites of Santa.

For goodies, no Christmas was complete without its pans of popcorn and ropes of molasses taffy. In rare cases there might be a bag of candy.

In the isolated cabins it wasn't so easy to gather with one's neighbors to celebrate. There were wolves in the timber and being caught in a sudden storm on the pioneer trails spelled death.

Christmas in some places meant

a bobsled ride or perhaps a square dance, often followed by a turkey dinner costing 25 cents.

Gifts, if any, generally were in the form of utilitarian mittens, mufflers or home-made boots. For the women there might be a piece of intricate handiwork to which some enterprising friend had devoted her spare time for months.

Throughout the holiday season a candle burned in the attic window, guiding late-faring travelers to shelter—the Star of Bethlehem on the frontier.

But with all these hardy folks had as much fun as their great-grandsons and daughters who again this year will celebrate by exchanging elaborate gifts, dancing to name bands, feasting with no worries that tomorrow there may be nothing in the electric refrigerator.

*Reprinted from the December 25, 1952 issue of the Big Timber Pioneer.*

## Birthday of Jesus an uncertain date

It is not surprising that the day and year of the birth of Jesus are uncertain, for methods of keeping track of dates during the era when Christ was born were not very reliable. For years, eminent scholars have been searching the scriptures, and all possible records to try to establish an exact date. So far, they have not succeeded.

Matthew states Jesus was born during the reign of King Herod which helps to establish the period of his birth and this is the starting point from which the scholars attempt to reckon the year.

The statement by Matthew that the wise men from the east, in inquiring "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" aroused Herod so that he ordered the massacre of all children two years old or less, is very significant. It is taken as proof that Jesus must have been born about two years before this infamous decree was issued.

No less an authority than the Catholic encyclopedia places the birth of Christ in the year which, by our modern methods of keeping track of dates, would be 7 B.C. Thus, Christ's birth does not exactly determine the difference between B.C. and A.D. date.

Most people, however, do not care if the exact day and year of Christ's birth are unknown. What matters most is the deathless vigor of the Christmas Spirit throughout the world.

*Reprinted from the December 25, 1952 issue of the Big Timber Pioneer.*

**Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays to you and your family!**

From Sally,  
Connie & Jill



**Hometown Realty**

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## It's Christmas!



Cheers to all our friends!  
Hope you have the best holiday ever!

## K-W FEED & GRAIN

*Paula, Jennifer, Jane, Jerry & Kevin*

## Season's Greetings

*We wish you all the peace and harmony the season can bring.*



## THE BIG TIMBER PIONEER

DALE	BECCY
CINDY	SHEILA
SANDIE	ROSALIE

We Wish you a Blessed  
and Merry Christmas  
from all of us at

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Season's Greetings

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