

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
06 December 1992

It's yesterday today at Christmas Tea
By Joe Getty

From the Melrose correspondent, *American Sentinel*, Dec. 17, 1892:

"Recently we heard two Christmas wishes, one by a boy, the other by a girl. The boy's was as follows:

'I want a gum ball
To play with in school,
And if I don't get it
I will break the rule'

"The girl's was:

'I want a nice book
With pictures all through;
And when I'm done with it
I'll send it to you.'"

The tradition of gift-giving at holiday times has changed significantly through our local history. As shown by these two verses of 100 years ago, holiday gifts are a reflection of our culture. In our own lifetimes, the changes of technology in modern culture has dramatically altered the pattern of gift-giving between families and friends.

This is one of many holiday themes that the Historical Society explores in our local history research. Other holiday traditions will be on display today at the society's annual Victorian Christmas Tea. Carroll County Christmas decorations and memorabilia from the Historical Society's collection will be on exhibit. Videotaped programs about holiday customs produced by the Historical Society staff will also be on display. The Victorian Christmas Tea will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E. Main St. in Westminster.

A traditional gift idea that is still popular today is books and publications. We will have a book table of local history themes and Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House miniatures available for gift purchases. The most popular book from this year's selection is *Choice Maryland Cookery*, the reprint of a cookbook first published in 1898 by the ladies of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Uniontown.

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National publishing companies would take out advertisements in local newspapers in order to sell books and publications at holiday times. Local business also would feature special advertising of their special holiday stock. A review of the advertisements of the 1892 *American Sentinel* show the popular gift items 100 years ago:

"Christmas Bargains! S. Kann, Sons and C'os. – Our offering of suitable goods for the holidays, this season, is double that of last year and our prices one-third lower than any house in the state, we being the only house in the state that buys all goods direct from the factory, both domestic and foreign. Special Christmas bargains in Toys, Dolls, Games, Fire Engines, Musical Instruments, Books, Ornaments, Glassware, Sleighs, Wagons, Carts, Dressing Cases, Blackboards, Banks, Cloaks, Blankets, Shawls, Muffs, Rugs, Carpets, Oil Cloths, Gloves, Neckware, Pocket Books, Jewlery, Umbrellas, Underwear, Linens, Chair Scarfs, Corsets and a thousand and one other useful and ornamental articles suitable for holiday presents. Bring the children to see our artistic Holiday Show. It will please them.

"Christmas is Coming at Oak Hall, New Windsor. History says Columbus discovered America, but the people of Carroll County have and are still discovering that the proper place to buy your Winter Goods is Oak Hall. Greater bargains than ever will be offered during the holidays in all our Winter Goods. Our Christmas display will break the record and consist of Lamps, Vases, China Tea Sets, Chamber Sets; a beautiful line of Silverware, extra cheap; Plus Goods in great variety, Toilet and Manicure Sets, Albums, Clocks, Wall Pockets, Picture Frames, Oil Paintings, Pastel Pictures, Toys, Games, Books for the children. Our display of Handkerchiefs, including Silk and Linen, will be beautiful. We have a splendid line of Blankets and Robes, Goat, Smyrna, and Axminster Rugs, very cheap. A full line of Candies, Raisins, Nuts, and everything to make you happy. Geo. C. Anders.

"Jewelry for the Holidays! Right now we are ready with an immense assortment of Christmas Gifts. The presents you want, at the prices you like, are all included in our splendid line of Watches, Clocks, Jewelry, Diamonds, Silverware, Novelties, &c. We have a great variety of appropriate presents for Ladies, Gentlemen and Children. A.H. Wentz, Westminster.

"Christmas has Come at J. Traub & Bro's., Clothiers, Union Bridge. Grand Opening, December 6, 1892. Gent's Furnishing Goods, Hats Caps, Boots and Shoes, and a big variety of Trunks, Satchels, Umbrellas and Ladies' and Gent's Gum Coats.

"Christmas Liquors! Rum for Mince Meat. Apple and Peach Brandy. All kinds of Wines and grade of Whiskies. The only place to suit your taste and pocket. A.C. Strasburger, 73 E. Main St., Westminster.

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"Christmas Cakes! J.P. Wohlgemuth, Baker, has a fine assortment of large, small, plain and fancy cakes for the holidays at his stores, Nos. 67 and 243 E. Main Streets. Also a large and fine selection of all kinds of Confectionery. A call is solicited.

"Christmas Toys and Holiday Goods – at Wm. T. Wilson's, 28 W. Main St., Westminster. I have the largest and finest line I have ever exhibited. By dealing with me you have a chance in two grand free gifts, a DOLL and a DRUM. See them in my window, and read conditions. Vases and Fancy Goods.

"We are in it, with Christmas goods. Call and inspect our line of Albums, Toilet Cases, Shaving Sets, Collar and Cuff-Boxes, in leather and Plush Goods. Pictures and Easels, at all prices; One special gallery for the same and no extra charge to look at them. Fifty styles of photograph frames to select from. We make a specialty of Holiday goods and prices. Remember the place is – Matthews and Myers, 43, E. Main St., Westminster.

"A look at our Windows – will convince you that we are prepared for the Holidays, with prices to suit the times. Nuts of all kinds, Tobacco and Cigars, Dried Corn, Peas, California Lima Beans, Soup Beans, Snowflake Hominy, and Canned Goods. Homemade Mince Meat and our Grocery Stock is complete. Goods delivered in the city. John J. Reese, East End Grocer, Westminster.

"The Grand Holiday Opening of John D. Bowers is simply Wonderful. Raisins, Currants, Citron, Figs, Prunes, Apricots, Dried Apples and Peaches, Oranges, Lemons, Bananas, Nuts of all kinds, Confectionery, Canned Goods, Flour and Bacon, Tinware, Queensware, Fresh Roasted Peanuts Dialy, Tobacco and Cigars. Country produce taken in exchange. John D. Bowers, 45 E. Main St., Westminster."

If you would like additional information about the Victorian Christmas Tea, please call the Historical Society at 848-6494.

Photo credit: Times photo

Photo caption: Holiday books from the Historical Society collection are examples of poplar gifts in Carroll County during the late 19th century.