

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
01 December 1991

Victorian tea celebrates Christmases of past
by Joe Getty

You are invited to attend the Historical Society's annual Victorian Christmas Tea this afternoon from 1 to 4 p.m. Each year, our members and friends get together for an open house to celebrate the holidays and share friendship and stories about Carroll County's holiday traditions.

We will have on display Victorian ornaments and other holiday artifacts from our collection. Educational videotapes about holiday customs produced by the Historical Society will be shown. In addition, books on local history topics, a good gift idea, will be for sale.

To set the stage for a Victorian holiday social, we offer in our column today a review of how our communities celebrated 100 years ago, as reported in the *Democratic Advocate*, Jan. 2, 1892:

Finksburg, 1891: "At the close of our public schools for the holidays, there were literary exercises, and the pupils received their Christmas treat. In return, they presented their teachers, B.S. Hayden and Miss Mary Carr, each with a silver mug and napkin ring."

Bankert's Mill, 1891: "The holiday season in this locality was spent in the usual way. Several quiet weddings took place, which brought out a number of old horns and tin pans for serenading purposes.

Manchester, 1891: "Our mayor and council prohibited the use of fire arms and shooting crackers in the celebration of Christmas. Their action is endorsed by the people, who want less worldliness in the Christmas demonstrations."

Berrett, 1891: "The entertainment at Bradenburg Church on Christmas Eve was a success in every respect. Notwithstanding bad roads and the fact that a similar entertainment was in progress at the Lutheran Church, the house was crowded and yet nothing occurred to disturb the exercises. The program was well arranged and admirably rendered. The recitations and singing surpassed, if possible, any former occasion."

Brummel, 1891: "A party of twenty masked ladies and gentlemen surprised Mr. and Mrs. Jere. Shaffer on Christmas night. Music was furnished by two violinists and dancing was continued until a late hour, when all were invited to partake of cake, wine and cider.

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Frizzellburg, 1891: "Christmas was a very dull day in this place. We would have scarcely known it was Christmas had it not been for some masqueraders. On Christmas night the rattling band gave Mr. and Mrs. William Arthur a grand (wedding?) serenade. After the happy couple presented themselves before the audience, and the serenaders had congratulated them, all were very liberally treated to nice cakes and cider."

Marston, 1891: "Christmas day passed off very quietly in our small village. Although the weather was very unfavorable, both married and single indulged in mark-shooting and playing baseball. The little boys and girls amused themselves by shooting fire crackers."

Shipley, 1891: "The holiday season here was very bright indoors, but dull and inclement without. Christmas day was like Sunday, but merry makers going the rounds, playing Santa Claus, and giving the children a general good scare."

Wakefield, 1891: "Christmas day was observed in a very pleasant manner at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Eckard, near Wakefield, their children giving them a surprise dinner. At an early hour, one by one the children and grandchildren began to arrive, each one bringing a basket laden with the good things. Preparations at once were made for dinner, which was served at 12 o'clock, and consisted of oysters, meats, salads, sauces, pickles, pies, etc., the menu ending with cakes, candies, nuts and fruits. It was a day enjoyed by all, especially the father and mother, whose hearts were made happy by the love and kindness of their children."

The Victorian Christmas Tea is Sunday, Dec. 1, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 East Main Street, Westminster. For more information, contact 848-6494.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County

Photo caption: A group of Manchester residents engaged in the holiday tradition known as 'Kris Kringling' stopped to pose for this late 19th century photograph.