

The tradition of Christmas gifts seems to have started with the gifts that the wise men brought to Jesus. The exchanging of gifts between people started in about the 1800's.

Letters from the West



Dearest Gill:

The happiest of New Years and all the best to both of you. We loved the parcel of books that arrived just the mail before Christmas. We didn't open them until Christmas morning; books are a real joy to get here and your selection was delightful, suited all our tastes. Joe retires into Robbery under Arms every evening now, and there is never a peep out of him. It will take him weeks to read for he is a slow reader; fortunately Billie read it first or he would have been annoyed at having to wait so long. I haven't read it, just glanced through it, but I don't think it is much my style; I prefer the less "bluggy" ones. Thank you so much for them, you certainly need not have apologized for sending books in place of some things more useful. We would rather have books than anything, so send along as many as you like, and as often as you wish.

Read more fun facts about holidays and traditions from around the world at our [HChristmas Idea Blog](#)

- [HAdults](#)
- [HKids](#)
- [HHoliday Shopping](#)
- [HChristmas Cheer](#)
- [HCorporate Giving](#)
- [HRecipes](#)

We had a very nice Christmas Day, though I was disappointed at getting no home parcels or letters. We had quite a lot of English parcels from friends but they were not quite the same; still they made our breakfast table look very festive. Joe had never seen parcels on a breakfast table before. I rather doubt if he has had many presents before and he was quite thrilled at those we gave him and very distressed that he had none for us, but he has not been to Calgary since he was in to meet us. Billie, the young spendthrift, had all sorts of things for me and made my pipe, slippers and book for him look very humble.

2B1B0B



Did you know why Holly became a nativity tradition? The sharply pointed leaves were to symbolize the thorns in Christ's crown and the red berries drops of his blood.

[Christmas Gifts & Gift Baskets](#) is your online source for Christmas presents. We're open year round, and we've got a huge selection of Christmas gift baskets, gourmet food towers, and more. Whether you need gifts for your kids, spouse, or an important corporate business client, our huge selection of seasonal gifts is sure to give you plenty of great ideas. Order online or contact us toll free 24 hours a day for great prices and friendly customer service. We're here to help you make their Christmas wishes come true!

Christmas Gift Ideas

- [Christmas Gift Baskets](#)
- [Christmas Towers](#)
- [Christmas Cookie Gifts](#)
- [Wine Gifts](#)
- [Gourmet Cakes](#)
- [Popcorn & Nuts](#)
- [Chocolate Gifts](#)
- [Christmas Gifts for Women](#)
- [Christmas Gifts for Men](#)
- [Christmas Gifts for Kids](#)
- [Family Gifts](#)

I had a tremendous spread, had been cooking for days and the old hens came up to scratch and I take back all the nasty things I said about them in my last letter! After a huge dinner we went skating on the creek. Joe, as most Canadians, is a really good skater. I can manage to keep going fairly but Billie is a perfect menace on skates; he wobbles in every direction, his arms going around like windmills.

He goes where his skates take him, clutches at all and sundry, and finally sits down with the most awful whack, is up again and on in another direction. I keep clear of him for a very little thing upends me. We had a jolly time and returned home ravenous to eat huge quantities of cold turkey, pudding, mince pies and trifle, and after washing up we sat down to eat fruit, nuts, and chocolates, and to read your good books. It was a happy thought on your part to send them. Thank you again.

On Boxing Day, Joe drove to Priddis and oh joy! Returned with my missing parcels, and parcels for Billie from Ireland. Just as we had unpacked everything and the room was knee deep in paper, all the Mortons arrived. Such a mess, but I bundled the

paper away and left them to look at our gifts while I got them a meal. As it was a cold day I gave them hot soup as a starter and then cold scraps of everything that was left over. They only stayed about three hours as they had a long drive and the nights are very cold. It's down below zero nearly every night now. My parcels from home were lovely. Mother and Father still think that we are more or less on the verge of starvation and that we can only get the absolute essentials out here in the way of wearing and household goods and I have no intention of disillusioning them at present.

Our love to you both, Monica

A year later, in December of 1910, Mrs. Hopkins sent the following note to the same friend.

Dearest Gill:

I think I told you that Helene and I were going to have a few days in Calgary. We had a very nice time, though we were pretty well on the "go" all the time. We had so many presents to buy, not only for ourselves but we had been given several commissions by neighbors as well, and it's hard to do

shopping for other people. The shops looked very festive and there were lovely things to buy, had we the money, which needless to say we had not. Still, we managed to get some quite nice things to send home. Last year Billie and I sent so many pairs of moccasins that one would almost think our people were centipedes!

Holiday Goodies to Go



This is a great holiday gift to give to just about anyone, as they are sure to love the assortment of tasty treats inside. This fun little candy cane striped box is stuffed full with caramel popcorn, mixed nuts, chocolate nonpareils, Smooth & Melty Mints®, pretzels and cookies.

Price: \$ 23.00

[Buy Now!](#)

We felt we couldn't send any more this year so we got them gauntlet gloves made by the Stoneys, with lovely bead work and fringes. If they don't care to wear them they will make very nice souvenirs. It was fine but cold and a democrat is not the warmest of conveyances. One is so high up the wind seems to catch you from every corner of the globe.

While Helene and I were waiting at the store in Priddis for Billie to come for us, a motorcar drove up and two people got out tourists we imagined them to be. Everything seemed to amuse them: they laughed at a saddle horse tied to a rail, at a wagon standing outside. They even laughed at the outside of the store, which certainly to my mind is nothing to laugh at; it's ugly enough to make the angels weep! Then they came into the store and evidently found the inside and its occupants even funnier than the outside. That they were Yankees was evident, not young, around forty I would say. He was a nondescript sort of man, while his wife looked as if she had been dissolved and while liquid had been poured into her clothes and allowed to set - what they called in the States "A Stylish Stout."

They wanted some cigars and candy and they asked Mrs. Dennis how she ever sold anything in this "neck of the woods." Mrs. Dennis was splendid, instead of getting annoyed as I should have done, and giving them back as good as they gave, she answered them quietly and politely and when the female asked her "For the land's sake, what do you do here in the winter?" Mrs. Dennis told her there were dances; the young people skated and went visiting. Just as if life was one long social round. The lady sniffed unconvinced and said, "It may suit you but it would drive me off my nut. I guess you have to have been used to nothing else to be able to stand it." Then, eyeing Helene and me, who were standing quite close by and simply fuming at her rudeness, said to Helene, "I suppose you were born here?" Helene drew herself up and asked in an imperious voice, "Were you speaking to me? If you were, it may interest you to know that I come from Sydney, Australia, and that I love this life." The lady looked a little subdued and asked me if I was born here, to which I replied in my very best "Oxford voice" that I was English but hoped to make Priddis my home, and that I, too, loved the life. The couple prepared to leave, the lady slightly deflated, but after all she got in the last word, for as she was going through the doorway she said in a loud voice, "I wonder you don't die of green mould!" and neither Helene nor I could think of anything worthwhile to say, so we remained silent.

Since our return we have not been out. We both caught wretched colds in our heads and have sniffed and sneezed in the most trying manner, and wallowed in camphor and eucalyptus, in hopes of loosening our colds and preventing others in getting them. So far the men have escaped and we are feeling better. We have made the puddings and cakes, also the mince meat. During the summer when eggs were plentiful, I packed several hundred in water glass so that now I am able to make my cakes without waiting for those miserable old hens to condescend to lay an egg. I am able to thumb my nose at the old wretches when I go in to feed them and find devil an egg in the nest boxes and so, out of pure cussedness, the old brutes have started to lay!

Our parcels from home arrived some time ago and are reposing in the bathroom and every day I go in and shake them and sniff. I hope I shall be able to hold out until Christmas Day before I open them. The declaration forms read most delightfully, all sorts of nice things to eat and wear! They were so distressed to hear last year that the parcels were late that evidently they made up their minds to be in good time this

Christmas. Billie has a parcel from Ireland and Helene one from Australia - nothing from you yet - wretch - but there are nearly two weeks so I haven't given up hope yet.

I must leave this now, the dogs are barking and Helene has just said there are riders at the west gate.

Three weeks since I started this letter and Christmas and New Year's are over, and we have all recovered from the extra "festive fare" and all the work that it makes. Harry provided the main part of the dinner. The turkey, which he won, curling at Priddis, was a whopper, twenty-nine pounds and my very largest dish only just held him (the sausages had to be served separately); he was delicious and so tender. The pudding and mince pies were voted a great success. The Christmas cake iced with angelica and cherries really looked quite professional. I was very proud of it. Christmas Day was cold and blustery and we didn't go out at all, ate, slept, and ate again! In the evening we played cards. Our parcels took a long time to open, everyone at home had excelled themselves, and the mild hints that I have been sending all through the year had evidently fallen on good ground and multiplied themselves accordingly! Bless them!

Good-bye and good night, and our love to you both. Monica.