

Although Christmas is based on the Christian religion, not all Christian groups celebrate the season. Among the Christian groups who do not celebrate Christmas and related traditions such as sending greeting cards are Jehovah Witnesses.

No Place More Christmas

Nothing could be more 'Christmas-y' than Christmas in LaScie in 1942.

With hardly a trace of advertisement and without any reminder that there were only twenty-odd days to Christmas, people knew how to get in the Christmas mood. There were no buying sprees of any account, because there was little unusual to buy locally anyway. A few extra things, perhaps, were to be had through Eaton's catalogue. However, there was a limit on that too. People could afford little for Christmas spending and in my case, since I was only getting a salary of thirty dollars (\$30.00) a month, and paying fifteen (\$15.00) a month for board, I had to be frugal with my money.

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On looking back though, I do recall that in Bartlett's shop and Chipp's shop and even in Pierce Morey's tiny shop; there were a few different kinds of candies in those tall big-neck bottles - candies other than the regular common sweets, union squares and banner caramels. There were jelly beans and glassy-looking striped kinds that had a genuinely enticing Christmas look about them.

Both the larger shops were decorated a week or so before Christmas.

It wasn't overdone. Down at Chipp's they had a huge colored paper Christmas bell slung from a stanchion above, and which took about two seconds to put up. It had obviously survived many Christmases - faded and a bit worn - but every time I looked at it or ducked

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The scent of real Christmas trees is the reason they are so popular. But as they stand silently in their decorative wonder, they also are providing another benefit. The Christmas Tree Association says the amount of oxygen produced on a daily basis by one acre of Christmas tree is enough to provide enough oxygen for 18 people.

[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!

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underneath it, it reminded me of the immortality of the Christmas spirit.

Bartlett's shop was a bit bigger and it was built on a landward extension of their wharf. It deserved, perhaps, a little more sophistication in decoration. At any rate, behind the long counter was a large colored tissue-paper Santa Claus, also worn by many years' usage, and a bright new tinsel "MERRY XMAS", stretching half-way along one side of the shop.

Wine - Cheese & Cheers Gift Basket



This any occasion gift basket features a California Chardonnay, accompanied by gourmet snacks that are ready to enjoy. With Almonds, Cheese Spread, California Crisps Crackers, and Ghirardelli chocolate, it's a memorable gift they are sure to welcome.

Price: \$ 45.00

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In both shop windows were a few toys - dolls, little guns with caps, small tin musical horns, mouth organs, tin cars and Jews' harps. I remember so clearly looking at those familiar little mouth and thumb musical instruments, wondering whether I could afford to buy one for each of my pupils. What floored me as I first read the cardboard sign, "Going Cheap, Jews' Harps", was that they really weren't Juice sarps, as we called them in Winterton.

For a couple of weeks before Christmas, the shops (they were never called stores; that would confuse them with sheds in the back yard) 'stopped open' late, adding a kind of metropolitan air to otherwise deathly silent fall and winter evenings. If business reports were customary then, I suppose each shop would report a slight commercial increase in sales over those in November. Business was no doubt up a bit, in part because some of the young men working at the American base in Argentina and the one in Harmonfield (Stephenville) were home for Christmas. Two young men from the

Royal British Navy were also home on leave.

The coming of the Kyle on her last trip that season helped too to create a Christmas atmosphere. The Kyle, now an eye-sore rotting on a mudbank in the shoals of Harbor Grace, presented a picture of light and beauty as she came into the harbor a few days before Christmas Eve. Never shall I forget the sight of those myriads of floating blinking lights coming in through the darkness pushing pan and slob ice out of her way as she steamed to Bartlett's wharf. It looked like a small city had appeared out of the ocean.

All that freight, and mail, (for me there were great bundles of Evening Telegrams and Daily News, sent by loving friends in St. John's) and the sound of happy laughing voices in the darkness as crew members joked with friends on the wharf, stirred within me Christmas feelings that were truly spiritual. It all seemed to blend with the snow on the surrounding hills and fade into the stillness of the night to produce LaScie's own kind of 'peace on earth and goodwill towards men'.

There was a fierce loneliness too, as late that night she steamed away for the last time that year, and she barely made it beyond the Horse Islands when, within a day or so a strong northeaster closed navigation, and heavy Labrador ice locked us in tightly until April or May. The only travel contact with the outside then was by dog-team.

Once a week Skipper Harry Lacey on his dog-team would take off up through the country on the three-day journey to Badger for the mail. So once every five or six days the community would gather in regular postal ritual to the little wooden office building near the landwash. What a thrill it would be to hear the sweet musical voice of Ivy Boone sing out your name!

It was mail day on Christmas Eve that year. The yapping of Lacey's dogs coming over the hills and the sound of their collar bells as they scurried in the twilight toward the tiny post office gave me that feeling I used to get when I was in bed as a little boy on Christmas Eve, and heard my father, after jingling the dampers on the Improved Ensign stove, yell, "T'anks Sandy Claus b'y for stoppin' off."

Even if I could have gone home for Christmas, duty forbade it. Being a teacher (in charge of school and church) I was very much compelled to respect tradition, which demanded that I organize and 'put off' (never 'put on') a concert on Christmas night. This responsibility was great and I had to shoulder it with the dignity it rightly deserved. Although I had just turned nineteen I had had lots of experience in practicing (now called 'directing') Christmas concerts. Everybody in Winterton grew up with taking part in and later helping teachers to practice the concert. So now I was in charge of this sacred operation since early December. Every week night we would meet in the school to go over the parts and to revel in exciting anticipation of what it really would be like on Christmas night. Every youngster in the school had to have a part or two as did several of the adults in the community who had established reputations for being 'lovely hactors'.

Most of the items were composed by the pupils, myself and the adult participants, and included a generous supply of references to local people and places within the community. This, as they said, would bring the house down.

On Christmas Night, the Orange Hall (the largest building in the place) was crammed - about two hundred people. Some were turned away. Admission, I remember, was five cents for children and ten cents for grownups and, of course, proceeds went to the Church.

I can, after all these years, recall some of the items. For example, the opening song sung by all participants jammed together on the stage (music supplied by me on Uncle Bill Swyers' old cornet):

We welcome you from every nook,
From here to Shoe Cove Brook.

And the recitation rendered by a talented, chubby, little grade two boy, destined to become a successful boat builder and later captain of a long liner:

When I'ne a man
I manes to bey
A carpenter as you will sey

I'll 'ammer wit a busy ' an'
An' build da best boats in Newfoundlan'.

Oh, there was pupil involvement, teacher involvement, community involvement, total involvement! Everything was psychologically sound. About two hours of recitations, dialogues, songs and musical numbers ended with Santa's visit and the distribution of gifts from the huge fir tree on the back (the stage). I remember so many of the gifts were handmade. I can't remember how many sheep's wool (meaning locally grown, carded, spun and knitted) cuffs (mitts), gloves, socks and vamps I got. LaScie women used to knit neat little vamp-like slippers which everybody wore indoors. I understand the art is not lost there yet.

As I wended my way back to my boarding house on Shoe Cove Road, I could still hear snatches of Christmas songs breaking the late night's silence, from people strolling home from the Hall across frozen meadows and along the narrow snow-covered gravel road which wrapped itself around the shore. Beautiful Northern Lights flashed their majestic colors from Boone's Hill to the Horse Islands. It was easy to believe that night that 'God was with man' and the singing which floated my way was as beautiful as the song of the Heavenly Hosts over the Hills of Judea.

The beauty and joy of Christmas night was but an extension of the experience created on Christmas Eve. I recall going to Tommy Gillingham's shortly after supper on Christmas Eve. He had one of the few radios in LaScie. Like everybody else in Newfoundland at quarter to eight PM I wanted to listen to the Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin, that local newscast on radio station V.O.N.F. which nightly plunged the whole island into mute attention. Wherever there were radios people gathered, often to smoke and chew, in silence while Bob McLeod's deep baritone voice shared the news with us all, ending in a ritualistic benediction-like finale, "Offered on behalf of the stores in (Leading Ticks) where Wampoles and other stocks of Gerald S. Doyle products are always procurable"; and then signing off with that mysterious war-time code, " ... N for nuts. A for apples". There was even a Christmas-y feeling about the wording of that strange code. Following the news, Tommy turned off the radio like he did every night to save the 'juice'.

I then visited the homes of all my pupils to wish them Merry Christmas and to share with them little gifts I had for them and to drink tumblers of raspberry syrup and eat loads of figgy and lassy cake. Come to think of it, I do not recall having heard of any alcoholic beverages being around. (Although I am sure a few toddies were shared and some of the boys no doubt had a quantity of vanilla extract and Beef Iron and Wine.)

I finally ended up at Wes Budgell's and helped make their usual Christmas supply of home-made ice cream. I listened to the old men, especially Skipper Jarge Ryan, regale each other with Christmas stories about White Bay and Green Bay long, long ago. They finally got around to ghost stories. I left Budgell's late that night, perhaps as late as ten thirty or eleven, and out into the pitch blackness of a cold LaScie winter night. As I cut across the gardens towards Shoe Cove Road the only sound I heard was a tinkle tinkle tinkle of the neck bell of a lonely cow in some far-off stable. I was afraid the next sound would be the screams from the headless woman Skipper Jarge had been talking about. The only sights penetrating the darkness were the stars, dim lights from kerosene-oil-lit windows and millions of flankers streaming off into the night, and there was I with every hair on my head standing in a vertical position beneath my ear-flapper cap.

The warmth of the Hewlett's huge inside room made me again feel so thankful that I had such a comfortable boarding house. When I got home the gaiety, and the hurry in decorating the tree and preparing for the big meal on Christmas Day, and in making fat pork buns for the future, made me think of Winterton and childhood and the simple joys that Christmas brings. But the most vivid memory I have after getting in out of the darkness and cold was the sight of Skipper John Hewlett still up at that late hour, relaxed for the first time, that fall, I 'llows. He was stretched out on the couch with his feet up on the wood box playing his old button accordion, or 'carjo' as he called it, and Neta and Mrs. Hewlett busy as bees, and singing or humming to his erratic playing "While shepherds watched their flocks by night".

Hundreds of young teachers around the coast of Newfoundland that year were doing what I was doing, spending Christmas away from home and helping the youngsters have a good Christmas, and getting so much Christmas joy themselves.