

Ebb Tide Muses

Linda Norby, Editor—304-856-2524—e-mail lindanorby@frontiernet.net—http://peachythings.com/—on-line Issues can be read aloud on computer with Adobe Reader 8



Photo by Crazy Frankenstein

Montgomery-Ward created **“Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”**

Pope Julius I decided that Christmas would be on December 25.

The first commercial Christmas card was made in 1843.

NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) tracks **Santa Claus’ sleigh ride across the globe.**

Cities easiest for Santa to visit are those with lots of snow, of course. According to the Statistical Abstract of the United States, the average snowfall each December in the following locations is more than two feet, making them the easiest for Santa to visit:

- * Valdez, Alaska
- * Yakutat, Alaska
- * Blue Canyon, California
- * Marquette, Michigan
- * Muskegon, Michigan
- * Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan
- * Mount Washington, New Hampshire
- * Syracuse, New York

(Don’t worry— Santa puts down his skateboard landing gears when there’s no snow.)

Which One is Really Our National Christmas Tree?

National Christmas Tree —Outside the White House



First Lady Grace Coolidge allowed the first cut Christmas tree (a balsam fir) to be displayed on the South Lawn of the White House in 1923. Fifty years later President Nixon responded to anti-cutting protests and planted a live tree for the ceremony in 1972. Since 1978, the same living Colorado blue spruce has been this National Christmas Tree. Planted on the Ellipse, the tree is tended and displayed by the National Park Service with a lighting in early December.

National Christmas Tree—Inside the White House



The official White House Christmas Tree has been selected each and every year since 1966 from trees grown by members of the National Christmas Tree Association. The holiday tree is prepared and presented for display in the White House Blue Room. The

White House Chief Usher, Superintendent of Grounds and other staff select the national winning tree. The tree is then decorated by the White House Floral Department and presented on Thanksgiving weekend.

Delivering the White House Tree



National Holiday Tree— Outside the Capitol

This National Holiday Tree has been a tradition at the U.S. Capitol since 1963 when a live Douglas fir was planted on the West Front lawn. After several live tree plantings died, the United States Forest Service started providing the Capitol with cut Christmas trees from National Forests. The Capitol Architect’s Office oversees the tree’s display and lighting service. That service and tree lighting is in early December.



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Nation's Christmas Tree - General Grant Sequoia, Sanger, California

In 1926 Congress formally designated California's "General Grant" Sequoia as the "Nation's Christmas Tree." In 1949, nearby Sanger, California was designated as the "Nation's Christmas Tree City." A third honor was awarded on March 29, 1956, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed the "Nation's Christmas Tree" as a national shrine to the war dead. During a Christmas ceremony each year, park rangers place a large wreath at the base of the tree. http://forestry.about.com/od/christmastrees1/p/national_xtree.htm



Hoppin' John

In the Southern United States, it's traditional to eat black-eyed peas or cowpeas in a dish called hoppin' john. There are even those who believe in eating one pea for every day in the new year. This all traces back to the legend that during the Civil War, the town of Vicksburg, Virginia, ran out of food while under attack. The residents fortunately discovered black-eyed peas and the legume was thereafter considered lucky.

Hoppin' John Recipe

Get some dried black-eyed peas or shell some field peas or crowders. Either way, wash them, put in a big pot and cover with water. Add fat back, **side meat or any kind of seasoning you like.** Simmer 'til just tender—DO NOT OVER COOK! Serve over rice that was cooked according to package directions, took way too long to cook, and comes out sticky anyway no matter what you do—eat on New Year's Day to make sure you have good luck for the whole year.

OR

Do what I do. Get some Minute Rice® and a can of black eyed peas. Fix the rice, open the can, put contents in a pot or bowl, heat on stove or in microwave, plopp the peas over rice and still have good luck all year!! Note: I usually heat mine in a pot on the stove to make it seem like I've done a little work.

Winter Ocean

by Linda Norby

Cold white winter seas
framed by red hot blazing sun
recalls aeon past



Mark Twain—

"New Years Day...now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual."

F.M. Knowles—

"He who breaks a resolution is a weakling.

He who makes one is a fool."

Eric Zorn—

"Making resolutions is a cleansing ritual of self-assessment and repentance that demands personal honesty and, ultimately, reinforces humility. Breaking them is part of the cycle."

Jay Leno—

"Now there are more overweight people in America than average-weight people. So overweight people are now average... which means, you have met your New Year's resolution."



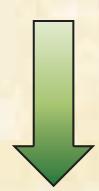
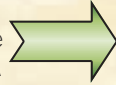
12 Days of Christmas

Legend has it that the "12 Days of Christmas" song was written by a Catholic in order to provide a "coded" Catechism lesson during the Anglican period in England when, supposedly, Catholics were imprisoned or beheaded for practicing their faith. Remember Henry VIII? NOT TRUE!!

"It is possible though that "The Twelve Days of Christmas" has been confused with (or is a transformation of) a song called "A New Dial" (also known as "In Those Twelve Days"), which dates to at least 1625 and assigns religious meanings to each of the twelve days of Christmas (but not for the purposes of teaching a catechism). In a manner somewhat similar to the memory-and-forgets performance of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," the song "A New Dial" was recited in a question-and-answer format. Ref: <http://snopes.com>

This is the way most of us know it, along with meanings attributed to each gift.

What are they that are but one? We have one God alone In heaven above sits on His throne.	What are they which are but seven? Seven liberal arts hath God sent down With divine skill man's soul to crown.
What are they which are by two? Two testaments, the old and new, We do acknowledge to be true.	What are they which are but eight? Eight Beatitudes are there given Use them right and go to heaven.
What are they which are but three? Three persons in the Trinity Which make one God in unity.	What are they which are but nine? Nine Muses, like the heaven's nine spheres, With sacred tunes entice our ears.
What are they which are but four Four sweet Evangelists there are, Christ's birth, life, death which do declare.	What are they which are but ten? Ten statutes God to Moses gave Which, kept or broke, do spill or save.
What are they which are but five? Five senses, like five kings, maintain In every man a several reign.	What are they which are but eleven? Eleven thousand virgins did partake And suffered death for Jesus' sake.
What are they which are but six? Six days to labor is not wrong, For God himself did work so long.	What are they which are but twelve? Twelve are attending on God's son; Twelve make our creed. The Dial's done.



- 1 Partridge in a Pear Tree—Symbolic of Jesus Christ protective of and sad for Jerusalem
- 2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments
- 3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity-- the Theological Virtues
- 4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists
- 5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which relays the history of man's fall from grace.
- 6 Geese A-laying = the six days of Creation
- 7 Swans A-swimming = the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven sacraments
- 8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes
- 9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- 10 Lords A-leaping = the ten commandments
- 11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles
- 12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed



Old Eyes, Young Heart

by Linda Guglielmo Norby

The holiday season is generally thought to be magical and exciting,, mostly to children, with adults providing the props needed to complete the illusion.

As one grows older, and the props start to fall away, at first slowly, then quickly, most come to understand that the holidays can be anything but magical and exciting. What once was the joy of decorating a tree becomes a chore as the years pass. Shopping, thank heavens, can be mostly done on-line these days, thus avoiding pepper-spray-shooting maniacs in the stores; but even on-line shopping starts to become somewhat of a bother, as "thinking" of just the right gift to give becomes too stressful. Besides, whatever is chosen will probably not be what is wanted by the recipient. Not to mention the possibility of identity or credit card theft.

However, the transformation of one's perception of the holidays that takes place with age is one of beauty. Eyes may not see the price on the price tag that was deliberately left on the gift to prove how much someone loves you in terms of money, but an older heart sees the beauty of the holiday season in terms of love.

May we all also think of those who are in need and lend our support and help whenever possible, and our love always, and may you all have a wonderful and blessed Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Happy Holiday! May you all see the world through a child's eyes!

