



A Compilation of Our Favourite
Christmas Memories

Christmases Past:

1939:

Four years ago while preparing to move house, I came across a previously unread post 1939 Christmas note from our mother. She reflected on the sudden anaesthetic death of our father two years previously and our infant brother's untimely death as a result of bovine tuberculosis acquired from infected cow's milk. In that pre-antibiotic time, even simple infections could be disabling. The message was one of hope for our future despite the war which had started in September 1939. I had enjoyed my brand new tricycle, but was admonished to be a less finicky eater. My brother was to pay more attention in school. He qualified as a surgeon 20 years later.



1940:

I recall a small skinny chicken dinner (likely black market), "the blackout" with fines for allowing the smallest chink of light to escape, absolutely NO Christmas lights. Lights had disappeared from the Blackpool Tower.

It seemed that most fathers of young children were away in the armed services, many women became "single mothers" and many joined the war effort workforce." Operation Pied Piper" had evacuated over a million children from the southeast of England to places such as the Fylde coast of Lancashire (south of the Lake District and east of the Isle of Man) where there was less risk of bombing. Fortunately Hitler could not kill the spirit of Christmas.

Carols were sung in school and church as well as some door-to-door groups of carollers. Christmas cards celebrated the birth of Jesus unapologetically. Children looked for their special gifts on Christmas morning, perhaps with less expectation of the magical Santa who appeared to be unaffected by travel and fuel restrictions. We could forget about the blackout, sitting snugly by the typical open coal fire playing games or with toys.

On reflection, and thankfully, my family had a rather peaceful war. We had what we needed, without commercial or social pressures. In 5 ½ years only one bomb fell on the whole coastal area, and that was safely on a school playing field.

Peace on Earth

Tony Marriott





I spent a number of years in the small community of Mooresburg located between Desboro and Dornoch. We attended a one room school: SS#11 - the same school my grandparents and Dad went to. The biggest social event of the year was the Christmas concert. We kids practiced for weeks. Skits, songs, square dances which the boys hated because they had to partner with the girls. We got new clothes. My Mom made ours and I still remember those dresses.

On the big night the entire neighbourhood was there. It was a terrific show! Santa came and gave us a little bag of candy. We thought we really had something. Afterwards one of the gentleman farmers would haul out his fiddle and one of the ladies would sit at the piano and the dancing would begin. The older ones would celebrate for hours. All the ladies brought lunch and I am pretty sure some of the gentlemen slipped out for a quick "nip" by the pump. Very special memories from a time past but a time of great community gathering.



I also have a great memory of a lovely New Year's Eve we had last year. A pot luck supper and games night with friends. One of the most special times we have enjoyed. Sure hoped to do it again but maybe next year!

Barb Gledhill

One of my favourite Christmas memories is the making of a 'Nativity Movie' when I was in Sunday School at St. Paul's. Filmed in a stable!

Scott Saunders



I have happy memories of visiting Southampton at Christmas between about 1971 and 1981. Long before we they moved to town permanently, my parents spent Christmas at their home on Huron Street, and welcomed many people there. For a "city boy", seeing white snow (lots and lots of white snow) was a treat and helped form my enduring love for our community. We look forward to spending Christmas 2021 in Southampton.

Bill Bowden



Every Christmas Eve, after we moved to our second home, we would have 6 close friends from Church, along with all our family, for dinner. Then we would all go off to church together. One year, probably 1975, as I was getting the food on the table, the doorbell rang. No one offered to answer the door so I had to. To my amazement, there stood a delivery man with a Yamaha organ. Bob had purchased it for me in the Fall but part of the deal was to deliver it on Christmas Eve. Just imagine that poor salesman having to come out on Christmas Eve. Where do you put an organ when you have a Christmas tree and 14 people in your living room? Somehow we found a spot. Many years and several organs later, Bob has laid claim to the organ. I am very fortunate to enjoy an organ concert most days.

Karen & Bob Speight



One Christmas Eve when I was about 6 years old, my parents said I could stay up late. I was the baby of the family and always had to go to bed first, so I was very happy. Suddenly I thought I heard sleigh bells. My Mom said it sounded like the sound was coming from the dining room. When I went to look, there was Santa looking in the window. Boy did I go to bed in a hurry. I was sure that if Santa knew I was still up, he wouldn't leave his present. Back then there were no Santas in stores or in parades, so this was a really big deal. I can still see that face in the window, red hat and all.

Cassie Wallace

As a young child, my family was traveling to spend Christmas with my father's parents. I was somewhere around 3, making my sister 7 and my brother 10. My Gram had made my sister and I matching dresses (red taffeta) for Christmas, which we wore to church Christmas morning. I have a snap of us with the dresses on that morning, and revisit it each year. (We were also thrilled that Santa found us, even though we weren't at home!)

Cathy Janveau





I remember coming home from Christmas Eve service, sitting around the dining room table and having home-made meat pie and hot chocolate, turning the radio on and listening to Christmas music, then at midnight singing O Little Town Of Bethlehem in front of the manger.

Ted Rivest

Every one of our 15 nostalgic Christmases at Spruce Hall in Port Elgin was memorable. We loved living in that beautiful Victorian home. It was so much fun to decorate every room. Because of the size of the house, it tended to be the social gathering place for family and friends—parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, in-laws, church friends with no family in the area and even Rotary exchange students. It was not out of the ordinary to have 20 people around the Christmas dinner table. Christmas Eve was also memorable. Ralph's wife Janet brought the tradition of an Eastern European 12-course dinner, complete with sauerkraut soup, fresh fish, walnuts thrown into the corners of the room, and even bread wafers blessed by the Orthodox priest. I distinctly remember the first Christmas, before any of our renovations began, when a gale-force west wind blew through the barn at the back of the house, through the house and out the front door, taking all the heat from the three blazing fireplaces with it. (Remember, turn-of-the-century houses had NO insulation, other than the triple brick walls and dead air spaces in between.) That "minor" problem was resolved by the second year with insulation and a new ground-source heat pump! Also memorable was the fact that the Christmas turkey almost incinerated when the new Jenn Air oven "decided" to self clean while the turkey was still inside. Merriest of Christmases!



Anne Goar



We enjoyed a memorable Christmas when we lived in Oxford, England for the 1983-84 school year, while on a teaching exchange. I dreamed all fall of attending the service of Lessons and Carols at Christ Church Cathedral. The special day arrived, and I drove to the cathedral and got in line. At the door, I was asked for my admission ticket. Naively, I didn't know I needed one. They had been sold out for months! No ticket—no entry. I was about to walk away when the woman in front of me turned around

and offered me a ticket, explaining that her husband was ill and couldn't attend. I was so grateful! The colour-coded tickets indicated where you would sit in the cathedral, and I was surprised to be led to the choir stalls directly behind the Christ Church Boys Choir, where all of the parents and teachers of the choir were sitting. As it turned out, the ill man was one of the teachers at the choir school. I will NEVER forget that honour and experience!

Doug Goar

