

Christmas in Days Gone By

One week from today will be Christmas; the children will be playing with presents that Santa left for them. People will be gathering with family and friends to celebrate. This column includes a few miscellaneous articles about past Christmases in our area. I hope you'll enjoy reading what the times were like then.

The first two columns were printed in the 1891 Monroe Sentinel. The first one, from December 23, reminds me of how thoughtful and generous our community was already then. "While you are enjoying Christmas Cheer, do not forget the poor. If you know of a neighbor or someone who lives within the reach of your help, do not neglect your duty in making Christmas a little brighter and happier for such. Remember the parting admonition of the great and good master who went about doing good, and that the giver who gives quickly is greatly blessed, for verily it is more blessed to give good gifts than to receive them. To be able and willing to give, is better than to be needy and have no gift. But he that is able, and giveth not to the needy, is not, cannot be happy."

Unfortunately, the second one from December 30 brings us back to a different reality. "A couple of young men possessed of the spirit of Old Harry, on Christmas Day created a very unpleasant sensation, which began of course in a whiskey saloon in Karlen's Block. These chumps were set upon by officer Abendroth, who gave a lively chase before he caught up with his man near the corner of the Ludlow. A quickly gathered mob of a hundred men collected, who took no further interest in the manner than to crown upon the officer and greatly interfered with the club swinging exercises, usually necessary in such cases. Officer Abendroth finally secured his man and marched him off to jail, and later in the day Police Justice Dunwiddie listened to a "plea of guilty" and imposed a light fine upon both the man who first created the row, and the brother who interfered in the arrest. But for this episode Christmas Day in Monroe might be set down as a very quiet one."

The next three articles came from The County Journal with the first two coming from the December 18, 1894 issue. From the Juda column: "Baptist, German, and Methodist Christmas trees will be in the evening of December 24. A fine program is being prepared at each church." The second article says, "The Postville folks will hold their Christmas tree and entertainment on Tuesday evening, Dec. 25. All are cordially invited to attend."

One week later a column stated things that wouldn't have to be said in today's society, yet some of the businesses were open for part of the day on Christmas. "The Post Office, the banks, the printing offices, the County offices and some of the stores will be closed part or all day of Christmas and how nice it would be if every store and salon [sic] in the city would close and the day given to the appropriate ceremonies of Christmas."

The next one came from a paper on December 19, 1900 and is hard to understand, probably because of typos, but humorous. "A tombstone is rather a gruesome Christmas present to give once wife. No matter how nicely it is polished and carved with flowers all at the same date of birth marriage etc. and the date of death left blank."

This article came from the Monroe Evening Times. I hear people complain now that Christmas merchandise is put out too early but this article from November 16, 1901 shows that they were putting merchandise out before Thanksgiving more than a century ago. And, of course, the editor throws in a plug that the businesses who take out advertisements in the paper are more successful. "Christmas goods are beginning to arrive in town, and already some of the merchants are beginning to prepare displays for the holiday trade. The steady and persistent advertiser, who has the goods to back his advertisements, is the one who will capture the lion's share of the holiday trade."

On December 17, 1906 a few letters to Santa were printed. His little friend, Catherine Grant wrote, "Please bring me a set of dishes and a nice new friend." And then his loving friend, Minnie Van Horn, said, "I would thank you very much for a set of furs and I have a sister that would like some too." And then John Sheldon wrote with his imperfect grammar, "Me and Jimmie want two pounds of the 10-cent candy at Young's, and ma wants one of those pretty dishes for 25 cents at Young's. Say Santa, Jimmie wants to know if you are married, he said he never heard of Mrs. Santa Claus. Just leave a note in Jimmie's stocking if you are married or not."

Finally, something from December 16, 1914 warms our heart reminding us again how generous our community is. "Twenty-seven baskets will be distributed by the Women's Relief Corps among the

worthy poor of this city the day before Christmas, according to plans perfected at a meeting of the corps last evening. Each basket will hold a good, substantial Christmas dinner, consisting of one chicken, cranberries, celery, coffee, tea, sugar, butter, fresh pies, nuts and candy, and will feed from four to eight people." It went on to say that, "The relief committee, Mrs. B. C. Wells, chairman, will have charge of the filling of the baskets and their distribution."

WE WISH YOU A
MERRY
American
CHRISTMAS

Let our faith in the true significance of the Yuletide give greater strength to our peace loving hearts. Let us renew our efforts toward a lasting peace and from it

enjoy the full benefits of the American way of life. The measure of happiness we can glean from such an attitude is great indeed, and worthy of our every effort.

LUDLOW HOTEL
Mr. and Mrs. L. J. Goethals

Since there will be no paper the next two Saturdays, I want to wish you a safe and merry Christmas and the best in 2022. I, again, thank you for the feedback that I have received about the column; it warms my heart.

This ad for the Ludlow Hotel appeared in the December 22, 1945 issue of the Monroe Evening Times and contained the following significant message that needs to be heard again today, "Let our faith in the true significance of the Yuletide give greater strength to our peace loving hearts. Let us renew our efforts toward a lasting peace and from it enjoy the full benefits of the American way of life. The measure of happiness we can glean from such an attitude is great indeed, and worthy of our every effort."