

PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY

Archives Division

REGINA, Saskatchewan,  
October 20th, 1954.

Mr. W. H. S. Gange,  
Red Deer Hill, Sask.

Dear Mr. Gange:

We are gathering material for a radio program about CHRISTMAS in the old days, in the area that is now Saskatchewan. We want to tell about the real, prairie Christmas of pioneer days as it was experienced by individuals who actually enjoyed it, either as men and women or as children.

A selected number of the persons who answered the Folklore Questionnaire are receiving this letter asking for information about Christmas celebrations. The answers will be preserved in the Archives along with your Questionnaire for future reference as well as for this particular project.

We should greatly appreciate your taking the trouble to think back a bit and write down details of your own old-time Christmases. The list of suggestions you will find enclosed covers the particulars we want to know about but you are under no obligation to follow it. Just put down whatever seems most interesting to you personally.

Yours faithfully,

*Lewis H. Thomas*

Lewis H. Thomas,  
Provincial Archivist.

P.S. Please print your name and address at the top of the first sheet of the attached paper and return your reply not later than November 1. We are asking you to send your reply to our Regina office, since this is where the research is being done for the broadcast.

L.H.T.

It would be appreciated if you could have Mrs. Ruth Giles and Mrs. Anna Giles assist you again in completing this form.

*Note, sorry I didn't  
get this report till  
Nov. 1st.  
Miss Ruth Giles.*

Suggestions for Information on CHRISTMAS in the Old Days:

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1. What preparations were made before Christmas?  
Was the house decorated? With what? Was there a Christmas tree? With what trimmed? Was a pudding made? Any ceremony about stirring? Did you say a verse? Do you remember the recipe? Were pies and other dainties made? What? Other foods laid in? What?
2. Was there a dish served at the Christmas dinner that you thought "It wouldn't be Christmas without"? What was it?
3. Did you have guests for Christmas dinner? Other families? Bachelors?
4. Who received gifts? Grownups and children -- or children only? Do you remember any gift you especially valued or that was strange and different? Were gifts made at home? Bought (where)?
5. Did you sing carols? Do you remember any first lines of carols you used to sing? Did you sing them Christmas Eve or Christmas Day? Both?
6. Did you make a point of writing letters "home" and did your family send them to you so as to arrive at Christmas-time? Did they send anything else -- cards, gifts?
7. Do you remember a Christmas when the weather altered plans for the day? Give details. (Blizzard, etc.)
8. Were there community celebrations in your district? Of what did they consist?
9. What were the amusements at Christmas parties in the home -- dancing? singing? playing games? telling stories? making taffy, etc.?
10. When you think back to the old-time Christmas celebrations, what seems to you to be the greatest difference between those and the Christmas observance of today? Explain both the differences and also your own feeling about them.

W. H. S Gange. Red Deer Hill, with the

MRS. RUTH GILES

1041- RIVER ST, West.

~~Collaboration with Mrs Ruth Giles of Prairie Albert~~

1. Our first Christmas in the N. W. Y. 1889. Preparations consisted, 1st the house had to be white-washed, both inside + out, then we children spent evenings making tissue paper chains, cut in inch strips + in red, white + blue, stuck to-gether with flour paste. While mother was busy cooking + sewing. The house was decorated with spruce boughs + paper flowers my mother made. We always had a Xmas tree + decorated it with some paper chains, rose hip chains + pop corn strung on thread. (corn came in our Xmas box from Grandmother in Ont.) We generally had a suet pudding with raisins + currants + spices. We always had both apple + mince pie, apples came dried in Xmas box + the mince pies were made with lean beef cooked + chopped, suet apples Raisins + currants + spices. She always made cookies, ginger snaps, + doughnuts + a Xmas cake, (at least we called it that) it would be a white cake with raisins + currants + molasses to darken it + spices we would have roast barn-yard chickens with dressing with good gravy + lots of garden vegetables. (We had hickory + Butternuts from the box)
2. Mince pie.
3. yes, my mother's Uncle + Aunt + their family, our only relatives in the N. W. Y.
4. Mother, father + we seven children would all have something off our Xmas tree. Something from the Xmas box, they made pop corn balls + made taffy + pulled it + made birds + twisted canes, some big + some small to suit the size of children. Even we older girls made hankies + jewel boxes + strung beads + made pin cushions out of bits of silk or velvet. There were mitts stockings, + clouds knitted from yarn from the box when we were away in dreamland. (Our school closed the last of October)
5. We always had singing, we had brought an old Melodion <sup>out with us</sup> + my mother played it. We sang mostly hymns, such as "Away in a Manger" "Gloria to God in the highest," + "While Shepherds watched their flocks by night" + others, also school songs. We would have a little programme of songs, recitations, stories. (my mother was a wonderful story teller) there were mouth organ selections + also my father played his fife.
6. Sure we always looked for the Xmas mails which was once a week from Loupelle + came by horse stage + often got parcels from the East.
7. No, - I can't remember the weather altering or interfering with our Xmas celebrations.
8. The neighbors often put on a Christmas Eve party, singing + dancing
9. Amusements consisted of singing, games, dancing, Games "Jolly old Miller", "Guessing game", "Dropping the Hat", + "Bunting game" telling by sound of voice when they went who he's caught in the ring.
10. The old-time Christmas, we made our own fun + amusement + I think the real reason of Christmas was more stressed then than now. The Christmas of to-day is too commercialized + people buy more than they can afford. I think we were happier then than now at Xmas.