



EGG-CITING CHIMES

Newsletter of

Elizabeth Van Lew Detached Tent 1
Haymarket, VA

Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, 1861-1865

<https://elizabethvanlewtent.weebly.com>



MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT—KAREN LYDDANE

Season's Greetings, Egg-stra special Sisters,

Standing in front of you as we face the future together, I pass along this message of great hope and victory. I expect we'll find many challenges and silver linings. I'm confident that you understand about silver linings-in changing and adapting to each new day, unexpected gifts come along that probably could not have happened as we went about in our way of life, pre-COVID. Our tent is so very successful and increasingly healthy, and YOU are the reason. This special edition of our newsletter, a gift from Karen Misiano and myself, is from our hearts and for your pleasure.

All credit is due to our dedicated Newsletter Editor, for through Karen Misiano, you are receiving these wonderful pages of seasonal delight. Only our imaginations can think of the struggles and silver linings found by our ancestors as they went from battle to battle, and often, back to the same battlefield.

The perfect photograph was found for this newsletter, as the words of Frederick Douglass truly ring for today: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." Your struggles in this challenging time are, I'm sure, offset by silver linings, and in adjusting to the new normal, you are doing exactly the same as your soldier ancestor(s). This newsletter chimes in celebration of YOU, and this season.

Huzzah!

Karen "Keep Green the Memory"



Your President with Michael E. Crutcher, Sr. aka Frederick Douglass of Historical Presentations, at a Sesquicentennial event in Pennsylvania.



NEXT MEETING:

JANUARY 23, 2021

11:00AM

VIRTUAL

GUEST SPEAKER:
ONE OF OUR ESTEEMED
NATIONAL OFFICERS

"Christmas Eve," an illustration by Thomas Nast for Harper's Weekly, January 3, 1863

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Retreat with a Recipe

Sour Cream Sugar Cookie Recipe

This recipe has been handed down in my family for generations, and dates back to at least the mid-1800s. People tend to either love this cookie or hate it, depending on individual tastes. We find that the non-frosted cookies are good to dunk in hot chocolate and the frosted ones are great by themselves. I hope you enjoy! Karen Misiano

Ingredients:

2 cups sugar
1 cup butter
2 eggs
1 cup sour cream
1 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. baking powder
5 cups flour (You will need more as differences have developed in milled flour over the years.)
Pinch of nutmeg

Directions:

- Bake at 350° for approx. 8-10 min.
- Place on lower oven shelf until the bottoms of the cookies begin to brown. Then, move the cookie tray to an upper shelf to brown the tops of the cookies.
- Allow to cool.
- These cookies can be served either plain (good to dunk in hot chocolate or milk) or frosted with a milk and powdered sugar mixture (modern addition).
- This recipe makes around 10 dozen or so cookies, depending upon the shape and size of the cookie cutter used (and the amount of dough eaten in the process).



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How the Civil War Changed Christmas in the United States

Updated: Jan 15, 2019 with Original: Dec 13, 2018

by Erin Blakemore

<https://www.history.com/news/civil-war-christmas>

As the Civil War's first Christmas neared, a pair of young lovers, Nathaniel Dawson and Elodie Todd, a Confederate soldier and his eventual bride, wrote to one another with increasing melancholy. They were separated by hundreds of miles, and their communication was often interrupted by delays in the mail and the desperation of the Civil War.

"I wish I could be with you at Christmas, the festal season, where age is rejuvenated and lives again in the merry carols of youth," Dawson wrote to Todd (sister of Mary Todd Lincoln) on December 22, 1861. On the holiday itself, he wrote to describe his regiment's rowdy celebrations. "Bad whiskey is abundant and pleasure and sorrow drowned in large potatoes," he said.

Dawson and Todd's lives changed dramatically during the war, as the Confederacy crumbled and their personal lives stretched to their limits. But they weren't alone in wishing they could celebrate Christmas together. As the fractured United States fought, the holiday took on new meaning.

By the end of the war in 1865, Christmas had gone from a relatively unimportant holiday to the opposite—a day rooted in an idealized vision of home. The way Americans observed the holiday changed too, setting the stage for the more modern Christmas holiday we know today.

Before the Civil War, Christmas was not an official holiday in the United States. Nor was it celebrated uniformly across the country. In early New England, Christmas was looked down upon by Puritans and Calvinists, who felt the day should be observed for strict fasts and rituals, if it was observed at all. During the 17th century, Massachusetts imposed a fine on colonists who celebrated the holiday, and after it became a state, its businesses and schools did not observe the holiday at all.



Christmas Boxes in Camp—Christmas, 1861.

Union soldiers opening Christmas boxes in camp during the US civil war, circa 1861.
American Stock Archive/Archive Photos/Getty Images

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Elsewhere, Christmas was celebrated in a variety of ways, most depending on the country of origin of the immigrants who celebrated it. But by the mid-19th century, the holiday's importance—and distance from religious tradition—was already starting to grow. Songs and carols like “Jingle Bells” (1857) and poems like “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (1823) set the stage for a fun, secular holiday that revolved around gift-giving and celebration with food and drink.

In the antebellum South, plantation owners used the holiday as a way to show off their paternalism toward the people they enslaved, write historians Shauna Bigham and Robert E. May. During lengthy Christmas celebrations, they gave enslaved people passes to marry, provided food and alcohol, and gave gifts.

Though enslaved people managed to create some of their own Christmas traditions, many of which incorporated traditions from Africa, they were also expected to help absolve slaveowners' guilt over the holidays by enthusiastically opening gifts and showing their gratitude. “So far as their owners could tell,” Bigham and May write, “most slaves played their prescribed role to the hilt throughout the holiday.”

But the Civil War disrupted not just the relations between plantation owners and the people they enslaved, but those within families and communities. As both sides shifted their resources to war, the ability to give gifts and celebrate was dramatically curtailed. People cast their decision to have more modest Christmas celebrations as a patriotic one, and children got in on the act, too. Instead of giving and receiving store-bought gifts, they made more humble gifts like popcorn balls or crude homemade toys. And they learned to temper their expectations of Santa.

“A crotchety slave told the Howell-Cobb children not to expect a visit from St. Nick because the Yankees had shot him,” writes historian James Alan Marten, “while other parents offered more sensitive explanations. As a Yankee, Santa would be held up by Confederate pickets or perhaps Union blockading vessels had interrupted his journey.”

Meanwhile, those children's mothers, aunts and sisters experienced Christmas as an agonizing reminder of the danger faced by men who had gone to war. Civil War-era diaries and letters document how many women felt anxiety, grief and depression around Christmas. In 1861, Margaret Cahill wrote to her husband, Thomas, a Union officer, that she felt so “nervous and lonely” that she could not write to him on Christmas. “Will you say? Why did you not write to me on Christmass [sic] Day” she wrote. “Well to tell you the truth I was not able.” “Never before had so sad a Christmas dawned upon us,” wrote Sallie A. Brook, a Confederate woman from Richmond, of Christmas 1861.

On the battlefield, men on both sides tried to celebrate Christmas by giving gifts, eating and drinking, and taking time off. In his memoir, James A. Wright, a sergeant in the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment, recalls eating beef soup and greeting his fellow soldiers on Christmas in camp. “The men had been allowed as much liberty as consistent with discipline and were ‘circulating around’ among their acquaintances in other regiments,” he recalled. “I was frequently invited to ‘smile,’” or take a drink. In 1863, a Confederate soldier from North Carolina wrote to his mother asking for a bottle of brandy and some sugar so he could make eggnog for his fellow soldiers.

Popular media did its best to increase the morale of both soldiers and their families at home around Christmas. Harper's Weekly, the most popular periodical at the time, published a variety of Christmas stories and illustrations during the war. The most famous were drawn by illustrator Thomas Nast, who portrayed not just sad wives and husbands but happy Christmas Day traditions. He is credited with solidifying how the nation imagined Santa Claus with illustrations of a jolly, bearded St. Nick who handed out good cheer to soldiers and families alike.

Though individual traditions still varied, the upheaval of the Civil War made the holiday seem more and more important to separated families. “The Christmas season [reminded] mid-19th century Americans of the importance of home and its associations, of invented traditions,” writes historian David Anderson.

When the war ended, the magazines and newspapers that had underlined the importance of the holiday kept promoting it, and reunited families, devastated by the losses of the war, kept cherishing it. In 1870, in the aftermath of the war, Congress passed the first federal holiday law and made Christmas an official holiday. Four years of war had changed the holiday from a loose celebration to an essential one.



Chatham Manor, witness to the Battle of Fredericksburg (December, 1862), overlooking the Rappahannock River, has welcomed a period-dressed Santa to educate and entertain visitors. Although the current COVID precautions have prohibited his visit this year, it is hoped he will return in future years.



Christmas on the home front illustration: Thomas Nast for Harper's Weekly, 1863

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Christmas Letter of Tally Simpson, 3rd SC Volunteers

From: Tally Simpson, Camp near Fredricksburg
To: Anna Simpson

Camp near Fred'burg, Dec 25th, 1862

My dear Sister

This is Christmas Day. The sun shines feebly through a thin cloud, the air is mild and pleasant, [and] a gentle breeze is making music through the leaves of the lofty pines that stand near our bivouac. All is quiet and still, and that very stillness recalls some sad and painful thoughts.

This day, one year ago, how many thousand families, gay and joyous, celebrating Merry Christmas, drinking health to absent members of their family, and sending upon the wings of love and affection long, deep, and sincere wishes for their safe return to the loving ones at home, but today are clad in the deepest mourning in memory to some lost and loved member of their circle. If all the dead (those killed since the war began) could be heaped in one pile and all the wounded be gathered together in one group, the pale faces of the dead and the groans of the wounded would send such a thrill of horror through the hearts of the originators of this war that their very souls would rack with such pain that they would prefer being dead and in torment than to stand before God with such terrible crimes blackening their characters. Add to this the cries and wailings of the mourners - mothers and fathers weeping for their sons, sisters for their brothers, wives for their husbands, and daughters for their fathers - [and] how deep would be the convictions of their consciences.

Yet they do not seem to think of the affliction and distress they are scattering broadcast over the land. When will this war end? Will another Christmas roll around and find us all wintering in camp? Oh! That peace may soon be restored to our young but dearly beloved country and that we may all meet again in happiness.

But enough of these sad thoughts. We went on picket in town a few days ago. The pickets of both armies occupy the same positions now as they did before the battle. Our regt was quartered in the market place while the others occupied stores and private houses. I have often read of sacked and pillaged towns in ancient history, but never, till I saw Fredricksburg, did I fully realize what one was. The houses, especially those on the river, are riddled with shell and ball. The stores have been broken open and deprived of every thing that was worth a shilling. Account books and notes and letters and papers both private and public were taken from their proper places and scattered over the streets and trampled under feet. Private property was ruined. Their soldiers would sleep in the mansions of the wealthy and use the articles and food in the house at their pleasure. Several houses were destroyed by fire. Such a wreck and ruin I never wish to see again.

Yet notwithstanding all this, the few citizens who are now in town seem to be cheerful and perfectly resigned. Such true patriots are seldom found. This will ever be a noted place in history.

While we were there, Brig Genl Patrick, U.S.A., with several of his aides-de-camp, came over under flag of truce. Papers were exchanged, and several of our men bought pipes, gloves, &c from the privates who rowed the boat across. They had plenty of liquor and laughed, drank, and conversed with our men as if they had been friends from boyhood.

There is nothing new going on. I am almost dead to hear from home. I have received no letters in nearly three weeks, and you can imagine how anxious I am. The mails are very irregular. I hope to get a letter soon. Dunlap Griffin is dead, died in Richmond of wounds received in the last battle. Capt Hance is doing very well. Frank Fleming is in bad condition. (He has been elected lieutenant since he left.)

Write to me quick right off. I wish to hear from you badly. Remember me to my friends and relatives, especially the Pickens and Ligon. Hoping to hear from you soon I remain

Your bud
Tally

Pres Hix cam for the remains of Nap his brother and Johnnie Garlington yesterday and will take them to Richmond today. They will be carried on home immediately. Tell Aunt Caroline Jim is getting on finely. Howdy to all the negros. I have received the bundle of clothes sent to Columbia. The bundle contained one shirt, one scarf, and two pairs of socks. At least I suppose it is the one you sent to Col[Columbia] to be sent to Barnwell at Richmond. I am a thousand times obliged. When is Harry coming? Oh! that peace may soon be restored to our young but dearly beloved country and that we may all meet again in happiness.

This letter is excerpted from a book titled *Far, Far From Home*. a collection of letters of Dick and Tally Simpson, members of the 3rd South Carolina Volunteers and printed on the web at <https://web.viu.ca/davies/H325%20Civil%20War/letter.TallySimpson.htm>.

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Hanukkah, A Festival of Freedom

<https://civilwartalk.com/threads/hanukkah-a-festival-of-freedom.140985/>

Thred starter amweiner
Start date Dec 5, 2017

The threads discussing Christmas during the War made me curious about the extent to which Hanukkah was celebrated by Jewish soldiers. The short answer is - not much.

A little background for anyone who isn't too familiar with the holiday (please forgive me if you know all this):

Hanukkah (or Chanukah or סַחְנָנִיָּה however you spell it, depending on where you're from) is a Jewish holiday commemorating the victory of Jewish rebels over the Syrian Greeks in about 167 B.C., as well as the rededication of the Jewish Temple. It's always been a minor holiday. Early Jewish rabbis wanted this downplayed, as the Maccabean rebels set up their own kingdom and emphasized the military victory instead of recounting the supposed miracle in which the oil for the Temple menorah, enough for only one day, lasted for eight. The most common customs are lighting a special menorah, or candelabra, adding a candle each successive night, eating foods fried in oil like potato pancakes or fried doughnuts, and giving small gifts of money to family members or those in need. Pretty simple, right?

From everything I can find, Hanukkah remained a very minor, unimportant celebration in 1860s America. Part of this was the proximity of the holiday to Christmas, as well as mixed feelings of American Jews about fully assimilating. This ambivalence can be seen in several period anecdotes. A New York journalist, Mordecai Noah, reportedly hung Christmas stockings in his home, despite being an observant Jew, to celebrate "Christmas as the birthday of the religion that had spread monotheism around the world". The New York times reported in 1856 that "in most European countries, however repugnant it may be to their sentiments, we find the Jews giving presents on Christmas," while in New York, "they are released from this awkward predicament, for they can give their children presents at New-Year's". Reportedly Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the rabbi who helped establish American Reform Judaism, published in 1860 a serial short story about the Maccabees. "He stretched it over 39 weeks, so it became an American melodrama about Jews and religious commitment and the importance of fighting for your religious commitment, and about the importance of women in all of this.", according to Dr. Di-
anne Ashton.

Despite this, the enthusiasm for Hanukkah as a separate holiday was minimal. By the 1880s, one rabbi wrote, "The customary candles disappear more and more from Jewish homes", while a Jewish newspaper practically begged readers to light Hanukkah candles "if just for the experiment".

I couldn't find articles that addressed this specifically, but was curious about why Jews during the Civil War didn't embrace Hanukkah more; for Jews in the Confederacy, I would imagine a story about rebelling against powerful invaders would have appealed to them, while Jews in the Northern states could have been drawn to a fight for freedom. Although just a guess, it seems that the tension between the religious aspects and secular aspects of the holiday prevented this from gaining more widespread observance, a tension that was finally resolved after World War 2.

<http://jewishstandard.timesofisrael.com/chanukah-in-america/>
<https://www.americanheritage.com/content/merry-chanukah>



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I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day



This is a favorite of Christmas carols but the modern version, notably sung by Bing Crosby, leaves out verses specific to the Civil War. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow penned this poem which was later set to music after enduring grief and sorrow for the previous two and a half years.

Fannie, Henry's wife, died due to her injuries from an accidental fire in July, 1861. She had been cutting the hair of one of their seven children when hot wax dripped on her dress, which was then ignited when a gust of wind blew through. Although she and Henry attempted to put out the flames, she succumbed to her injuries and Henry was severely burnt on his face, arms, and hands (leading to him growing his famous beard).

Henry's oldest son, Charles, left their Massachusetts home in March, 1863, by sneaking out of the house, so he could join the Union Army. Later that year, he was severely injured during the Mine Run Campaign, with the bullet closely missing his spinal column.

Henry wrote this poem at Christmas 1863, with the memories of his wife, the relief for his son's survival, and the hope of the future echoing in the verses.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-story-of-pain-and-hope-behind-i-heard-the-bells-on-christmas-day/>

<https://gettysburgcompiler.org/2015/12/23/from-tragedy-to-a-christmas-carol-the-story-of-longfellows-christmas-bells/>



**I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!**

*And thought how, as the day had
come
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!*

**Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men!**

*Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men!*

**It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good will to men!**

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."*

**Then pealed the bells more loud and
deep.
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to
men!"**



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