

Historic Ivinson Mansion

Laramie Plains Museum Newsletter

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Laramie Plains Museum Association

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The Historic Ivinson Mansion Laramie Plains Museum Newsletter

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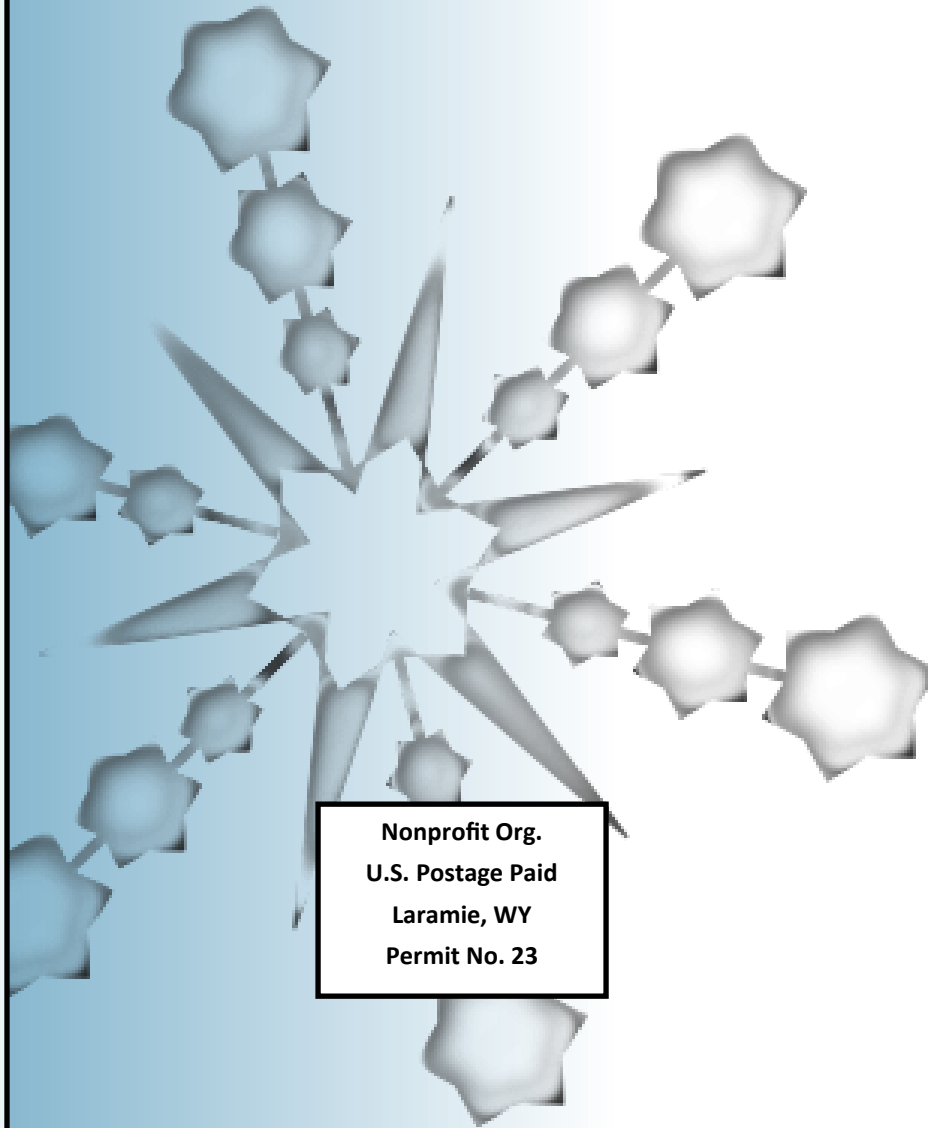
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Children at Christmas Party, Western Public Service Co., 1929

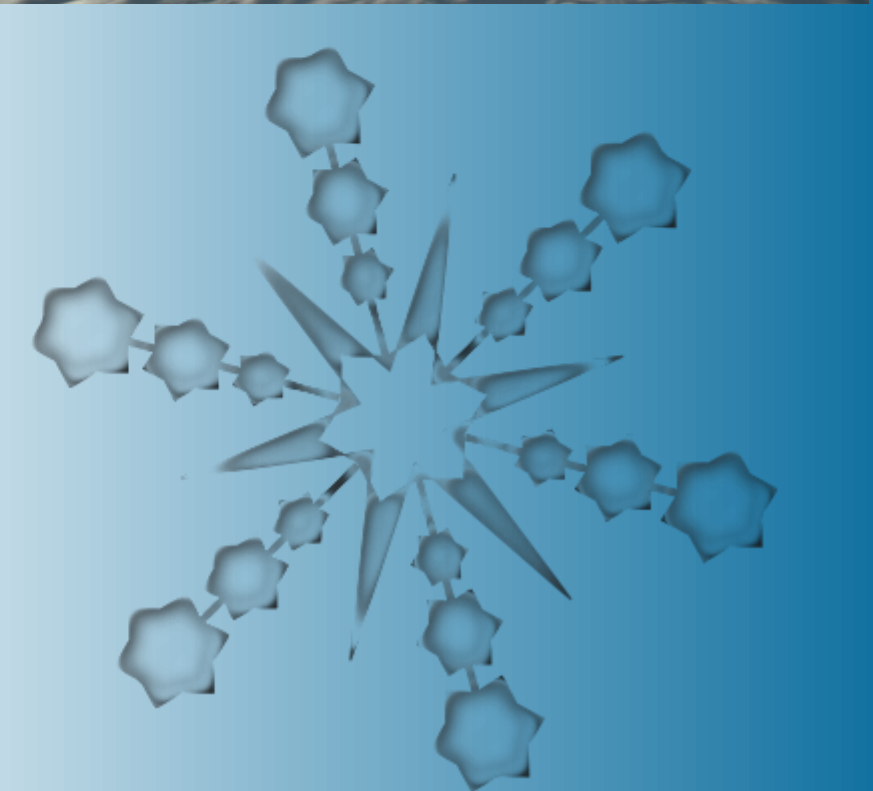


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Laramie Plains Museum at the Historic Ivinson Mansion

Winter Newsletter December 2022



'Tis the season...

Holiday Greetings from The Laramie Plains Museum:

It is late Autumn and we are about to embark on the Holiday Season. The season of Christmas, Chanukah, Solstice and many other ancient festivals that signal the start of winter.

Here at the Museum Park the trees are dark and bare. The last remnants of falling leaves and pine needles are settling in to rest and nourish under a blanket of snow.

The lighting crew has completed their scheme for the complex and we are anxious to see and celebrate their work as we look forward to illuminating the buildings & grounds for the darkest evenings of the year.

Meanwhile, a small army of volunteers and decorators have come to the mansion to create the magic "Woodland" theme that will grace our stately house for the next few weeks. Elaborate floral bouquets are being assembled by Poppy's, The Wild Rose, and Killian's Florist. We are eager with excitement to see and share the finished tableau!

The ladies of The Laramie Woman's Club are working diligently to prepare for their annual Christmas Sale — the perfect place to find those special things you need to complete your holiday decorating. A terrific way to re-use and re-invent the holiday ambience that warmed your neighbor's home and hearth in years gone by. Who knows, you may end up bringing something home that you gave away years ago. After all, you loved it once before!

We hope you will come and visit Museum Park for our **Holiday Open House** on **December 10th and 11th**. If you cannot come by those days, please walk by the mansion or through the grounds to share the magic and light.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and all the blessings of the Holiday Season. Whatever your custom, it is our wish that you will join us in hoping for kindness, unity and purpose in the coming year.

With thanks and gratitude and an abundance of Holiday cheer!

Matthew Blakeman and the dedicated Staff of The Laramie Plains Museum at Ivinson Mansion, Laramie, Wyoming

The music box was donated to the museum by two descendants of the Hunt family. It was requested that if the museum were able to have the music box repaired, that we do so. The LPM is delighted to report that the music box has been repaired by volunteer extraordinaire, Scott Morton, engineer, clock repairman, and as we can now say, music box repairman.

Together, the Hunt family descendants and the LPM staff learned that the music box can play six tunes. Its beautiful chiming sound resonates in whatever space it is played in and is a delight to the ear. It brings ones back to earlier times, simpler times, for this music box does not operate on electric power.

The Hunt family music box will be on exhibit at this year's Holiday Open House. You can find it on the second floor in the Foyer. We'll be periodically playing the refurbished music box, so be sure to listen for it!

We have some exciting news! The staff of the Laramie Plains Museum is proud to announce the reopening of the

Hortense Nelson Research Library on the second floor of the Alice Hardie Stevens Center. The Nelson Library has been

revamped as a space dedicated to genealogical research using our wonderful museum resources. The Research Library will be equipped with internet access, computer, and printer for research purposes.

Access to our museum archives or city directories can be also be arranged by appointment. Call the Carriage House or the Curatorial Office to inquire about availability.



The Hortense Nelson Research Library. Our museum staff is working hard to make this a great workspace for members of the community interested in family history.

Konnie's Corner

At this year's Holiday Open House, the curatorial department and LPM volunteer Scott Morton have come together to bring a very special part of our collection to the spotlight, the Hunt Family Music Box.

Before the advent of radio, music boxes were the easiest way to bring music into the home, short of inviting a musician to play for your family. The music box could be simple or ornate which made them affordable for many families. The style of this music box dates to the 1870s and is descendant from musical snuff boxes common in the 18th century. These earlier boxes were originally referred to as *carillons à musique* French for "chimes of music."



The Hunt Music Box, circa 1856.

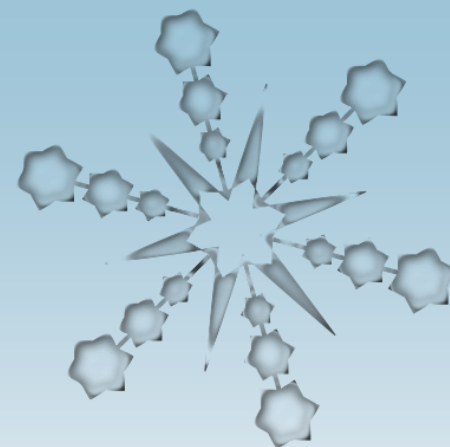
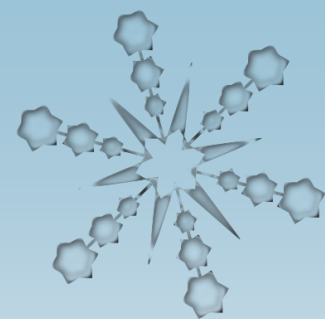
The hunting scene decoration (shown in detail below) is a typical design for this style of box and serves as an example of the many styles found today on these antique boxes.

This particular box has the date 1856 written underneath. It is unclear who wrote that date, however it belonged to Mary Ellen (Beacham) Hunt who was born in Danville, Pennsylvania in 1852. She married James "Jim" Fletcher Hunt in 1871. It is unknown exactly when the Hunt family moved to Laramie, Wyoming, but the 1892 Laramie City Directory shows James F. Hunt residing at 364 Fifth Street with his

profession listed as "foreman rolling mill." James and Mary had ten children: Mary Elizabeth, Harriet Eliza, George J, William Joseph, James Fletcher, Jessie Pearl, Alice Amelia, Adelaide, and Dorothy Marie.



Hunting scene on top of the Hunt family music box.



Join us for our annual
Holiday Open House

December 10 & 11th

Saturday 3-6 pm

Sunday 1-4 pm

Come tour the mansion
and shop the holiday bazaar in the
Alice Hardie Stevens Center

Who Resided Here?

This charming house at 707 S. 4th Street was the home of one of Laramie's early and most admired school teachers. She was so well thought of that a grade school was re-named in her honor. It still bears her name today. The school was originally built in 1920 and was re-named in May of 1936. Do you know who lived here? Find the answer on our website or feel free to call the Carriage House.

If you have an historic resident you would like featured in our next newsletter, send us a picture of it and the name of the celebrated Laramie resident who lived there.





Putting Up Christmas, Grand Avenue, circa 1955



County Courthouse December, 1940



Holiday Party, 1922



Texaco Station, Third & Grand, 1939



Svenson Building at night, 1919

Laramie Christmas

Years gone by...



Union Pacific Christmas Party, 1936



Children's Pageant Moose Lodge, 1926



Holiday Shopping, 1923



Dress a Doll Program-1974

50 Dolls were sold with the proceeds providing Christmas gifts for children

L to R: Woody Haines, Mike Beaver, and Germaine St. John

All photo credits:
The American Heritage Center

To take a closer look at these photos or to see more images of past Christmases, please visit the American Heritage Center's website.

WHAT-IZ-IT?

In the fall newsletter, our board member and all around handyman extraordinaire Scott Morton asked our membership if they could identify a mysterious "Orange Plastic Donut," he bought in the 1980s. Check out Scott's answer below.

"To put it bluntly, I don't know for sure, but here is how I've evaluated it and what I think it is.

The center hole with a key arrangement indicates this item went on a shaft and either turned, or something turned relative to it. The lower portion of the outer sides of the donut are inset, so there is a slight flange at the top of this section, indicating it slipped into a circular recess. There are sixteen small wheels arranged around the perimeter of the donut, which rules out it being any sort of timing device. The teeth on the small wheels are triangular, not gear teeth, so these wheels are most likely thumb wheels and don't mesh with anything else. The thumb wheels move threaded rods up and down in the hollow centers of the shafts, and those rods are prevented from rotating by a key in axial slots in the lower section. These rods are connected to a continuous spring around the inside of the bottom of the donut. This action changes the contour of the spring relative to the radial plane of the donut, making this item essentially a variable cam.

The materials of this item, plastic, pot metal, and a spring, all indicate it was not built to sustain significant forces. The fact it was in a hardware store, the era it is from, and the color indicate it might have been made by Black and Decker. The fact the pot metal rods and spring are only very weakly magnetic indicates they are rust resistant, so this might have been part of an outside item.

Therefore, my best guess of what this item is – are you ready for this? – a part of an obsolete, adjustable-pattern, rotary sprinkler. The sprinkler head would have a cam follower which would ride on the spring and vary the angle of the sprinkler spray nozzle, thereby changing how far the water would spray. What do you think?"

A quick reminder about our Holiday hours...

The Ivinson Mansion will be open for tours 1-4pm, Tuesday through Saturday from after the Thanksgiving holiday until December 17th. We'll be closed from December 18th to March 1st, 2023 for our annual maintenance and cleaning activities, but you can always get a hold of us at the Carriage House at 307-742-4448 or by email. We are always here for you!

Our all-around employee Helen interviews Museum Friends

Shirla and Danny Walker

Helen: How did you become involved with the museum?

Shirla: I took care of [former director] Dan Nelson's father. Dan Nelson talked me into coming.

How long have you been volunteering at the museum?

Shirla: Since 1999. I gave tours, though I was hesitant. Now it's old hat. After that I got into helping with the teas, and washing the dishes. Way back when, before there were regular employees, I'd work the gift shop as volunteer.

What do you do at the museum?

Shirla: I give tours of the mansion, help with the three teas we host every spring, I have helped with the newsletter, and I play the accordion at different events like the Christmas Open House, The Evening, and Art Fest on the Lawn.

Danny: I photograph events both here, and at the Women's History House. I give tours of the Women's History House, while Shirla works as a docent here at LPM. Shirla and I work hard to decorate the third floor for Christmas every year.

What's your favorite part of working for the museum?

Shirla: Well aside from hanging out with Helen every Saturday... As I enjoyed hanging out with Mary, and now Matthew! I like that you can choose what you want to do. You don't have to be cornered into one thing. You can do anything!

Danny: I agree.

What is your favorite task?

Shirla: I just like it all.

Do you have hobbies?

Shirla: I play the accordion, collect fairies, and enjoy volunteering to help the elderly. I just like to see people happy.

What's your favorite room in the Mansion?

Shirla: Definitely not the third floor! [Even though we decorate it every year for Christmas.] I like the sewing room. You get to see some beautiful clothes.

Danny: Yep! Not the third floor. I like the library or the smoking room.

What's the coolest object in our collection?

Danny: The steer horn that's carved like a fish!

Where are you from?

Shirla: I'm from Utica, Kansas, and Danny is from Kingman, Kansas.

How did you come to be in Laramie?

Shirla: Danny's first job was curator at the Geology Museum. I followed him out here, even though we were still only dating. He tried to get me to marry him for a year until I finally said yes.

Danny: *Sitting in the corner, with his arms crossed, nods vigorously.*

Shirla: My first job was a key punch operator, then I moved to admissions at UW. When I got tired of that, I went home to look after our family. It was then I started volunteering at the rest home, which connected me to Dan Nelson, who got me to LPM. Then of course, I started doing tours. I'm not brave but I try to make myself brave.

Danny and I have been married 51 years now. Danny is so wonderful. He is the most patient, kind, helpful... He's always there!

Our thanks to Shirla and Danny for their years of service. Tune in next newsletter for another interview with more volunteers, docents, and friends of the museum.



Shirla and Danny pose next to their ingenious gingerbread house on the 3rd floor of the Mansion. Shirla and Danny always do a fantastic job!

A Peek of Christmas Past

by T R Blakeman

A list of all the things one does for the holidays can be daunting. Cleaning, shopping, wrapping, baking, cooking, mailing, decorating, oh my goodness so many verbs, while most of us are still working. All of these things will get done in each person's own way according to their time, religion, preferences/traditions, family or pocketbook.

So I decided to look back at the holidays in 1922, using a couple of my favorite websites, American Heritage Center (AHC) and Wyoming Newspaper Project (WNP). Holidays meant Christmas in Albany County as Hanukkah was first written about in 1951 with a very general description and then skipped again to the mid 1960's. Kwanzaa was not written about until the mid 1990's. The winter solstice from which many "traditional Christmas" customs have been taken, has been mentioned several times but usually as the shortest day of the year. The 1922 Boomerang said the day was 7:57 am to 5:09 pm. This year it will be 7:24 am to 4:36 pm.

The AHC photographs of Christmas, include a couple that are around 100 years old and mostly of Christmas trees. It seems Christmas trees haven't changed all that much except that these are not perfectly shaped. The ornaments are homemade and store bought, but there aren't a ton of them. The popcorn and cranberry strings are on a couple but there are also tinsel strings. I can't decide on whether the candles on one tree are real or electric. One picture shows the Cortell grandchildren (1920) nicely dressed sitting next to their tree with a special toy being held or near them.



On to the newspaper (WNP) website. I put in 1922, with Christmas and Albany County as my parameters. Starting in January 1922, a few last notices of where people had spent Christmas 1921, when school would begin after Christmas vacation and a farewell ceremony for the Christmas tree at the Trinity Lutheran Church. There is also a quiet little article where a family had a few things stolen from their home only to find the culprit had stolen them to give to his family for Christmas. When the thief was found, the items were returned, the story was told and the charges were dropped. People were also pitching in to raise money and give items to a Bosler family that lost their home to fire on Christmas Eve.

February had an article that reminded me that 1922 was in the Prohibition era as the government was dealing with the aftermath of the Sweetwater County raids around Christmas where 66 arrests were made.

In March a little tongue in cheek was used to motivate someone to get the still standing community Christmas tree of 1921 taken down. One ladies guild was already planning next year's Christmas bazaar. Also a notice of how successful Christmas Seal sales were in 1921 and will fund the continuing anti-tuberculosis work.



Keyes Residence, Christmas 1929

That community Christmas tree, which by April 3rd, was still standing and the tone of the writer was much more scolding. He said it gave the community a black eye by remaining for months after the celebration and what a shame to let the electrical wire and sockets go to waste. April also saw a woman salesman hawking Christmas goods for 1922 with store merchants placing orders.

April thru November shows notices of all the ladies clubs and guilds sewing on all the projects for the upcoming Christmas season. Including the one club that decided to do a bake sale instead of sewn items that year.

September started organizing for the annual Christmas Seal drive. October the first ad in the newspaper for Christmas by a bank that wanted you to start saving for Christmas. The post office said that small Christmas cards are discouraged as it "causes incalculable delays" with the need to hand cancel and other distribution problems. They were looking for bids to remodel the post office window to handle the Christmas packages.

Early November sees the first Christmas ads for engraved Christmas greeting cards and photographs of family presents. The election was held for Governor and Democrat William B. Ross was elected by a slim margin. He was inaugurated in 1923.

About mid-November the ads for all things Christmas start. Ice skates, clothing, furniture including Victrolas, Ivory Pyralin items, luggage, Christmas candy, fruit, nuts, toys and electrical gifts like lamps, percolators, irons, washers and vacuums.

Thanksgiving that year was on November 23rd and after that all those well planned Christmas bazaars started to appear, as well as a countdown on shopping days left until Christmas. Most of those Christmas bazaars had several tables of items. Some of the items for sale included fancy work, doilies, lunch cloths, gingham and fancy aprons, pillow slips, dolls, doll clothes, and baby clothes. Items were crocheted, knitted, embroidered, and hemstitched.



Some sales included baked goods, candy or even luncheons.

The Grade Festival in 1922 was going to be held on Thursday December 7th at the Empress Theater with nearly 500 children taking part in the entertainment. The children were the pupils of all the public schools up to 6th grade. It would cost you 75¢ for a seat on the first floor and the first three rows of the balcony and 50¢ for the remainder of the balcony.

Balsam trees, considered a weed then, were to be given away for free and all other trees would cost 10¢. The Forest Service wanted to assure everyone that there were plenty of trees available this year. Christmas Seals were once again for sale in December.

Early in December another editorial came up that should resonate today. It was an article on catalogue shopping and buying at home. The editor wrote "money that you spend with your home town merchant comes back to you." In other words, "buy local". Bill Carlisle, the infamous train robber, wanted to sell some of the items he was making while inside the penitentiary. He made dresser scarves, centerpieces and stand covers and thought they would be pleasing Christmas gifts.

DON'T
Wait Till
The Last
Day to
Do Your
Shopping.
Get Some
of These
Values
Today

**MEN'S
SILK
HOSE**
Box of 3
Pair,
Guaranteed
for 3
Months.
All Colors
\$2.25

**FANCY
HAND-
KEE-
CHIEFS**
Box of 3
Initial or
Fancy
Border
\$1.00

GLOVES
"Tuf-Nut"
Driving
Gloves
\$5.00
Lined
Dress
Gloves
\$2.00
A Pair

**SHOES MAKE A
PRACTICAL GIFT**

Men's Shoes at
\$3.00, \$4.00, \$5.00 and \$6.00

Boys' Shoes at
\$2.50, \$3.00, \$3.50 and \$4.50

Wyoming Men's Store
301 So. 2nd S. E. Cor. 2nd and Grand

The middle of December saw many days of frigid weather here in Laramie which made possible the start of the winter's harvest of ice. It also saw the need to add more cars to the train to handle all the Christmas mail and packages. In fact they had to open a third receiving depot in the post office to handle all the mail.

There were festive small parties, large parties, club parties and church programs. There were movies playing, dances given and local musical recitals. UW classes ended on December 20th, Santa Claus made several appearances and two marriage licenses were granted. Governor Carey announced three Christmas pardons and a woman, Madame Reno, staying in the Connor Hotel, would read your palm for one dollar.

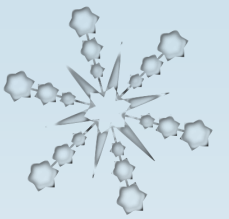
Laramie's poor were not forgotten. The Salvation Army gave each poor family 25 lbs of flour, a pound of coffee, a half-pound of tea, apples, potatoes, a loaf of bread, an assortment of canned goods and a roast or a rabbit. The rabbits were furnished by members of the local post of the American Legion. The children could gather at the Army Hall on South Second Street for the Christmas tree celebrations. After a brief program the kids would get a bag of candy and nuts.

THE HOLIDAY GIFT SHOP

ELECTRIC IRONS
Give your wife a useful gift. We have a wide assortment at
\$5.00 to \$8.50

Southern Wyoming Lumber Co.
Elks Building **Guaranteed Quality**

Of course there were more personal notes of where people would be at Christmas or whom would be visiting them. The best of these states, "Miss Brunk will come just before Christmas and will spend the holidays here. She is said to be an unusually attractive young lady, who will charm the charmers." Another great listing says that the "Education Club will give old time country program" and that "Christmas spirit will reign that night, so leave dull care at home and practice saying Merry Christmas".



Ivinson Mansion with sleigh and reindeer

That year the Federated Shop Crafts Union was on strike but the good citizens of Laramie helped give the children of the strikers, a wonderful Christmas as well. The children received a large sack of candy and nuts, a nice big red apple, an orange, a popcorn ball and two toys given by Santa Clause at the Labor Temple.

You could get a Christmas Dinner around town for \$1 - \$1.25 at a couple of different cafes, one of the menus is listed here.

The post office would deliver mail on December 24th and Christmas morning. The movie theaters would show movies on both of those days as well.

Businesses had advertising right before Christmas wishing their patrons Merry Christmas or thanking them for their business. Clubs and groups thanked the citizens for attending and buying at their bazaars.

So all those verbs that started this journey, cleaning, shopping, wrapping, baking, cooking, mailing, and working were still happening. The "season" seemed to wait, for the most part, until after Thanksgiving. Horrendous things were still written about in the 1922 newspapers but, without TV, wide spread radio, computers, people seemed to have more time to enjoy each others company and they seemed more grateful for the little things that this season can bring.

Merry Christmas!

Manhattan Cafe
MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1922

**CHRISTMAS DINNER
Menu...**

Special Christmas Dinner \$1

Oyster Cocktail

Pascal Celery Queen Olives

Cream of Tomato

Stuffed Young Turkey with Cranberry Sauce

Roast Suckling Young Pig, Baked Apple

Young Spring Chicken, Maryland

Young Chicken Fricassee, Asparagus Tips

VEGETABLES
Candied Yams

DESSERT
Ice Cream and Home Made Cake

TO OUR PATRONS
Kindly allow us to take this means of wishing each and every one of you a most Merry Christmas and a Happiest New Year, and at the same time to thank you all for the very liberal support you have given us the past year.

THE MANAGEMENT.