

Photo of the Month

Rogers Yuletide



Girl with Christmas Tree and Gifts, c.1910
Neg. # 018776

"We get most of the enjoyment of Christmas out of dreams that come before and after. Oh, to dream of it before it comes, to enjoy it while it is here, and to appreciate it when it is gone!" The little girl in the photograph at right certainly seems to have had a Merry Christmas and the memory of that morning probably stayed with her throughout her life. The photograph was taken in approximately 1910, but unfortunately we don't know her name.

A child in the early twentieth century might wish for toys such as a doll and doll house, a hobby horse, a "teddy" bear, or a toy wagon. The Rogers Democrat also reported at this time that stores were carrying an ever increasing number of mechanical toys. These toys would delight children with "all kinds of antics

when wound up and placed on the floor or table..." Just as we see a never ceasing progression in the sophistication of toys and computers today, the article pointed out that these mechanical wonders were quite limited in earlier years and something the parents of the early 1900s children wouldn't have received as presents in their own childhoods.

Fruit, nuts, and candy also represented special treats during the holidays. Oranges, bananas, and figs, for example, often were not as readily available in markets one hundred years ago as they are today and children eagerly looked forward to receiving them in their stockings. Of course, Santa Claus was a well-established tradition for children, or anyone else willing to believe in him for that matter. The image developed by Thomas Nash in the mid-1800s of the happy, fat, red-suited holiday visitor continued to capture many imaginations as children pinned their hopes for a Merry Christmas on good behavior in the previous year.

But children didn't have all of the holiday fun. Adults reveled in the season as well. Decorating the Christmas tree grew in popularity as a family tradition and glass ornaments became a popular holiday feature as seen in the photograph. Christmas cards were also considered a passing fad in the early 1900s, but were sent and received by a great many people and local merchant Tom P. Morgan was credited with the sale of fifteen hundred holiday cards in 1906.

The downtown community also received Christmas decorations and the shopping season was as important to local businesses then as it is now. Ladies from the Presbyterian Church decorated the window of the Rogers Hardware Co. with dishes and "a pair of white ducks, swimming around in a pool of water." And as people hurried to purchase gifts for their loved ones, the Rogers Democrat published a "Christmas Bargain Directory" to help shoppers find such items as furniture, candy, cut glass, jewelry, books, and toys. Rogers Hardware Co., Stroud Mercantile, Cash Notion Store, Kaleidoscope, and McSpadden were all prominent advertisers during this time period.

The holiday is certainly a sentimental time when people are brought together in common hopes for the future. Children believe in the impossible and adults hasten to keep traditions alive. But as the Rogers Democrat "Yuletide Musings" of 1908 reminded its readers, "no Christmas present is so useless that you can't pass it on to someone else next year."