



## THE RESIDENT

Published by the Society Hill Civic Association, 503 Pine Street, Philadelphia / December 1969

### CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Christmas, lest we forget, is a religious holiday. The family parties and the gifts are one form of celebration of Christ's birth. Our neighborhood churches offer meaningful ways to join others in the search for peace and good will among all men.

At *Old St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church*, Willing's Alley, a Midnight Mass will be celebrated December 24th. Pastor Martin J. Casey, S.J. will be the celebrant. Masses will be held Christmas Day at 6:30, 7:30, 9, 10, and 11 a.m. and 12:05 p.m.

*Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church*, 6th Street below Pine, begins the Christmas season with its Annual Candlelight Service, December 14th at 6 p.m. A Cathedral Choir Christmas Musical Service follows at 3:30 p.m. December 21st. Christmas Eve services will be held at 11:45 p.m.

*Christ Church Episcopal*, 2nd above Market Street, begins Christmas week with a 4 p.m. children's service, Sunday, December 21st, The Feast of Light, an adoration of the Holy Infant and Creche. A Candlelight Communion service will be held at 11 p.m. December 24th at which Bach's B Minor Mass will be sung by the choir, with brass accompaniment. Christmas Day serv-



ice will be at 9 a.m. and the Nativity season will be concluded with an Old English Feast of Lessons and Carols December 28th at 11 a.m.

Just a few short blocks from Society Hill, at *Gloria Dei (Old Swede's) Episcopal*, Swanson Street and Delaware Avenue, the Sankta Lucia

Candlelight Festival has been an annual prelude to Christmas for many years. This colorful Swedish ceremony was again presented this year. A candlelight Choir and Communion service will be held Christmas Eve at 11 p.m. and a service Christmas Day at 11 a.m.

At *St. Peter's Episcopal Church*, 3rd and Pine, a Candlelight Communion service will be



held Christmas Eve with St. Peter's Choir, starting at 11:30. On Christmas Day there will be Communion services at 9 and 11 a.m. The Festival of the Nine Lessons and Carols will be held Sunday, December 28 at 11 a.m. This service, in which nine Old and New Testament lessons are read with Christmas carols sung in between, originated at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, England in 1918.

*St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church*, 225 S. 4th Street, will have Midnight Mass Christmas Eve, and Mass Christmas Day at 9, 10, and 11:30 a.m.

Christmas services at *Holy Trinity Catholic Church*, 6th and Spruce Streets, start with Midnight Mass Christmas Eve, and Mass at 7:30 and 12:15 Christmas Day.

*Old Pine Presbyterian Church*, 4th and Pine Streets, invites everyone to a "Come As You Are" Family Service of Christmas Carols and Stories, Christmas Eve at 7:30 p.m. The service will be conducted by Rev. David B. McDowell and will last about 45 minutes. Children are particularly welcome.

# THE CHRISTMAS FEAST



Christmas is trees and gifts and carols and midnight services, and smiles on every face. Christmas is bringing your own traditions to life again and introducing them to your children and friends.

And there's a special joy to celebrating Christmas here in Society Hill, where people have been celebrating it for two hundred and fifty years.

If these old bricks could talk, chances are they'd tell of hanging geese and roasting hams and turkeys, mince-meat and hard sauce and plum puddings ready for the brandy and flame. Loaves of Christmas breads in the oven, fruitcake aging, meat fermenting, housewives bustling to and from Head House Market. And finally, the feast itself. For food is a part of every one's Christmas. It always has been down here in Society Hill. So much so, that it seemed apropos to delve into our Colonial Heritage of Christmas Foods, aptly done by Betty Lou Henry, Home Economics Consultant, and a neighbor in the Towers.

Walking through Society Hill, I've often wished that I could see Ben Franklin striding toward me with a loaf of bread under his arm or the colonists shopping for their "viands" in Head House Square. Surely the Philadelphia heritage of good food began right here.

Early colonists must have relied heavily on recipes from their country of origin, for it appears that no cookbooks by American authors were published until 1796.

We do know that the Quakers who settled in Philadelphia were good friends with Indians in the area and learned to use Indian foods in their cooking — foods like corn and cornmeal, clams, shad, terrapin, elk, venison, turkey, passenger pigeons (now extinct), waterfowl, cranberries, and later, tomatoes.

Snapping turtle, for example, was a delicacy treasured by the Delawares. These terrifying creatures (the turtles), often weighing 20 pounds or more, were found in freshwater ponds up and down the Eastern seaboard. They later formed the base for delectable Snapper Soup — A Philadelphia original — and Snapper-oyster Pie. Colonists made their Snapper Soup with small chunks of turtle meat, turtle eggs, salt pork, onions and other vegetables and enriched it with Portuguese Madeira wine, imported in trade with Spain.

The Indians also prized salt-water turtles found in the waters of Chesapeake Bay that later were enjoyed in a Philadelphia dish, Terrapin.

If the recorded stories can be believed, Philadelphia Pepper Pot Soup was first prepared by General Washington's cook during that terrible winter at Valley Forge. With his men's spirits at their lowest ebb, Washington urged his cook to prepare an emergency ration of some hot, filling dish. The cook, who must have been superbly inventive, started with tripe — a gift of a Philadelphia butcher — and a handful of peppercorns and soon served up a hearty soup that was met with great approval.

Other contributions Philadelphia has made to the American heritage of good food include Philadelphia sticky buns (probably descended from the German "schnecken"), Philadelphia pepper hash and Philadelphia

scrapple. (Some people like it).

Philadelphia ice cream also is unique. It was originated as a frozen mixture of cream, sugar and vanilla and was not thickened with eggs or flour or cornstarch like French and other ice creams. This purely American version was served at the White House in Washington by Dolly Madison in the early 1800s.

Circa 1700 to 1800, meat dishes for Christmas dinner probably included roast pig and roast beef along with the traditional turkey. A recipe for roast pig recorded in the 1700s starts with directions for building a fire since all meats were spit-roasted at that time:

"Spit your pig and lay it to the fire which must be a good one at each end . . . Before you lay your pig down, take an herb sage shred small, a piece of butter as big as a walnut and a little pepper and salt; put them in the pig and sew it up with coarse thread, then flour it all over very well and keep flouring it until the eyes drop out, or you'll find the cracklings hard . . . Save the gravy that comes out . . . by setting basins or pans under the pig in the dripping pan. When the pig is enough, stir the fire up brisk; take a coarse cloth with a quarter pound of butter in it and rub the pig all over until the cracklings is quite crisp, then serve it up."

Carving directions for roast pig include "lay an ear at each end" (for decoration, no doubt).

Roast beef was done simply, on a spit. The recipe included wise directions, "do not salt the meat before laying it to the fire, or the juices will be drawn out".

Christmas dinner preparation must have been a two or three day job, because the cook didn't even have the benefit of gelatine for her molded desserts. Instead she had to boil calves' feet to obtain the jelly before she could start a recipe.

Vegetables for the Christmas feast probably included onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots and hominy. Here is an old recipe for *Hominy Fritters*:

"Take 1 pint of hot, boiled hominy. Add it to 2 beaten eggs, a saltspoonful of salt and a tablespoon of flour, thin the batter with a little cold milk. When the mixture becomes cold, add a teaspoonful of baking powder and beat very hard. Drop by tablespoonfuls into very hot fat — fry a little brown."

Even if they had been available in winter, the Christmas menu would not have included tomatoes, at least not until the late 1700s. Before Thomas Jefferson's time, tomatoes or "love apples" were considered to be poisonous and were used only as ornamental plantings by the colonists. Thomas Jefferson, an enlightened gourmet, grew tomatoes along with many other exotic vegetables and fruits in his gardens at Monticello and enjoyed them as food.

Desserts served on the Colonial Christmas board probably included pumpkin and apple pie along with English Trifle or Topsy Cake. An old cookbook titillated the appetite with a recipe for "moonshine", which turned out to be pudding laboriously made with calf's-foot jelly and molded in a basin. Tin shapes of half-moon and stars were placed in the basin until the pudding had set, then were removed, leaving the cut-out spaces as decorations.

*Topsy Cake* — an American adaptation of an English Trifle, has great possibilities:

"Layer a spongecake in a crystal bowl. Soak it with rum, brandy or sherry and refrigerate. In the meantime, make a thin custard sauce. Before serving, stud the cake with toasted almonds; pour custard sauce over the cake and top with spoonfuls of sweetened whipped cream. (If desired, before adding the custard sauce, spread the cake with jam.) (Speedy cooks will no doubt see possibilities of making Topsy Cake 1969 with a ready-made spongecake, a can of cherry pie filling, canned French vanilla pudding and refrigerated whipped topping . . . And why not?)

Colonists didn't lack for strong drink. Actually their slings, shrubs, caudles and possets sound more intriguing than cocktails and much more fascinating to prepare. A recipe for *syllabub* recorded in 1770 calls for milking the cow directly into the syllabub base to obtain the proper froth on top:

"Make your syllabub of either cyder or wine, sweeten it pretty sweet and grate nutmeg in, then milk the milk into the liquor; when this is done, pour over the top half a pint or pint of cream according to the quantity of syllabub you make."

You don't have to own a cow to make syllabub. Prepare this deliciously light and frothy beverage for the holidays according to the following up-dated recipe: If you prefer it, substitute 2 cups white wine for the cider and sweeten to your taste.

Mix 2 cups cider with 1/2 cup sugar, 1/3 cup lemon juice, 1/4 cup grated lemon rind and 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg. Let stand until sugar dissolves. In a separate bowl, combine 3 cups milk and 2 cups light cream.

At serving time, beat 4 egg whites until fluffy, then beat in 1/4 cup sugar until egg whites are stiff. Slowly add the cider-lemon juice mixture to milk and cream, beating constantly until frothy. Fold in egg whites. Pour the syllabub into a punch bowl and sprinkle liberally with nutmeg. Serve 12 to 15.

*Orange Shrub* — Benjamin Franklin had his own favorite recipe and probably made it for the holiday season. It called for rum, orange juice and sugar . . . to be mixed and put in a cask . . . allowed to stand for 3 to 4 weeks, then bottled.

*Fish House Punch* — a specialty of a famous Philadelphia fishing and social club founded in 1732. A visitor to Philadelphia in 1744 reported that he was welcomed at Gray's Ferry with a bowl of punch large enough to have "swimm'd half a dozen young geese." If you can maintain a clear head, you may want to try this potent brew for a holiday party:

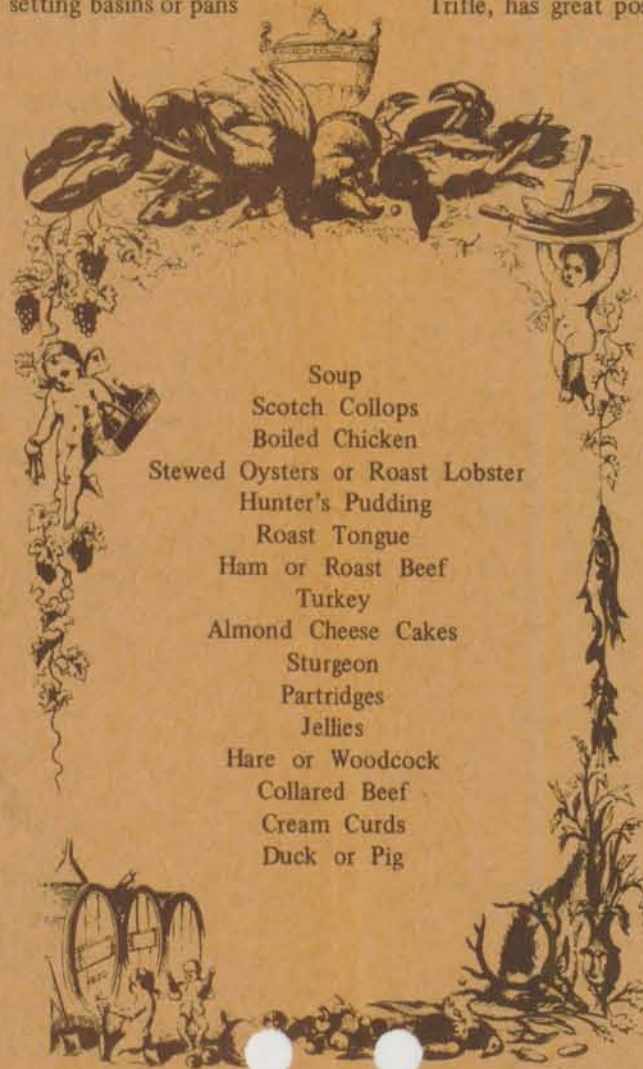
"One portion brandy, one portion of lemon juice, 5 portions of ice, two portions of Jamaica rum, two portions of crushed sugar, 4 portions of water and one gill (1/2 cup) of peach brandy." (According to some other recipes this recipe is heavy on the water and sugar.)

*Metheglin* — a fermented drink very much like mead and for some reason, unknown to the author and not explained in literature, is also called "perfect love".

"Take 48 to 50 pounds fresh honey. Boil it an hour in a third of a barrel of spring water. Skim. It should be so strong of honey that when cold, an egg will not sink in it. Add a small dessert spoon of ginger, also powdered clove and mace. Also a spoonful of yeast. Leave bung of cask loose until fermentation has ceased. Then stop it close. At end of 6 months, draw off and bottle."

Whether you enjoy a Christmas feast akin to the time of 1700 or 1969, you might do well to remember these words from Poor Richard's Almanac: "Keep your head cool by temperance; your feet warm by exercise, rise early and go soon to bed; and if you are inclined to get fleshy, keep your eyes open and your mouth shut."

\*We make no claim that the starred (\*) recipes have been kitchen-tested by the editors, authors or contributors to *The Resident*. You'll need to adapt and experiment as you go along.



Try this menu on your friends. First make sure they're not dieting, and that you can put them up for a day or two. We found it in a cookbook published in 1749.

- Soup
- Scotch Collops
- Boiled Chicken
- Stewed Oysters or Roast Lobster
- Hunter's Pudding
- Roast Tongue
- Ham or Roast Beef
- Turkey
- Almond Cheese Cakes
- Sturgeon
- Partridges
- Jellies
- Hare or Woodcock
- Collared Beef
- Cream Curds
- Duck or Pig

## A CAROL PROCESSION

A group of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches have joined forces for an Ecumenical Christmas Carol Procession and Service to take place on Sunday evening, December 21, starting at 7:00 p.m.

There will be two processions, one starting at Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church and the other at Old St. Joseph's Church on Willings Alley. They will wend their way through Society Hill, finally meeting in Delancey Park for a very short ecumenical service, led by clergymen of the participating churches.

Stanhope S. Browne, speaking for the planning committee, said: "We are contemplating something of rich variety, with each of the participating churches adding its special contribution to the event." Mr. Browne strongly emphasized that everyone from the historic area as well as the whole city is invited and encouraged to join in.

The participating churches thus far are Christ Episcopal Church, St. Mary's R.C. Church, Old Pine Presbyterian Church, Old St. George's Methodist Church, Old St. Joseph's R.C. Church, Gloria Dei (Old Swede's) Church, St. Peter's Episcopal Church and St. Andrew's Ukrainian Catholic Church.



## MORE CAROLING

Winter is surely not the city at its best. Society Hill is no exception. Come December and life in our neighborhood moves indoors. Dogs get shorter walks, and even the tourists are few in number. And yet, as Christmas approaches, there are some special joys to walking our streets. The soft glow of lit up trees behind the casements. Residents scurrying from nearby shops with gifts and wrappings. Cocktail parties and casual invitations to warm up at the ever-burning fireplaces of Society Hill. And Caroling.

One of the very few traditions that have been established in the last five years is the caroling group organized by the Pyles, and now under the direction of the Smiths. Ordinarily there are as many children in the throng as there are grown-ups, and the stops for Holiday spirits are frequent. This year the night is December 23rd. The time 8 P.M., The place, Smith's house at 314 South Third.

If you can't get out to sing with us, keep a window open and listen for us.

## GARDEN GUIDE FOR DECEMBER

The month of December is one of little outdoor garden involvement or activity. It is advisable, however, to take advantage of any crisp, sunny days to undertake some last minute garden work before the snow flies.

Many city gardens have small, shallow pools and fountains which should be drained to prevent any freezing damage. Some gardeners like to fill their pools with dry leaves and cover them for the winter.

An application of bone meal (a slow acting fertilizer) would be desirable spread around all garden evergreens in order to assist in winter root growth. Soil surfaces of the garden should be turned into a loosened state or condition so that maximum benefit can be obtained from winter freezing and thawing.

There are some other precautions which city gardeners should consider at this time:

1. Evergreens and other forms of plant material which have been placed close to a foundation may be injured by the heavy snow and ice falling from nearby roofs. Protection should be provided.

2. Beware of accumulations of snow on shrubs, particularly the heavy wet snows which cause breakage and disfigure plants. Remove newly fallen snow by striking the plant with the flat side of a house broom. Gently does it! Frozen snow and ice cannot be removed without causing serious damage.

3. Exercise considerable care if you use salt to melt ice on your city sidewalk. Calcium and Sodium Chloride, both of which are used to melt ice and prevent its formation are toxic to trees and shrubs. When these salts are washed into the soil surrounding the plants, they kill all the roots they contact. If the concentration is high enough, the plants will die, and unfortunately the injury may not become apparent until months later. Rely on sand or sawdust instead of salt near plants.

4. During the city garden's first year, freezing conditions may heave young, new plants out of the ground. Watch carefully, and press heaving plants back into place as necessary.

---

---

### THE RESIDENT

---

---

Editors: Georganne Mears, E. Matthew Miller

Contributors: Anne Leitch, Arnold Nicholson, Carol and Bud Skelly, David Stevens

Design: Joanne and William Surasky

Address correspondence to:

Mrs. William Mears  
108 Delancey Street  
Philadelphia 19106