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 masses and smiles and on every face. Christmas is bringing your own traditions to life again and including your family and friends.

And there's a special twist to celebrating Christmas here in Society Hill, where people have been celebrating it for two hundred and fifty years. If these old traditions can still stand, then there are reasons to be happy.

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 "Friends" in Head House Square. Surely the Philadelphia heritage of good food began right here.

My earliest memories have relied heavily on recipes from their country of origin, for it appears that no cookbooks by American authors were published until 1860.

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.

Stepping turtle, for example, was a delicacy treated by the Delaware. These terrifying creatures (the turtles), often weighing 20 pounds or more, were found in freshwater ponds and down the Eastern seaboard. They formed the basis of a delectable Snapper Soup. A Philadelphia original — and Snapper-cress pie. Colonists made it with the turtle, small chunks of turnips, meat, turtle eggs, salt pork, onions and other vegetables and enriched it with Portuguese Madeira wine, imported made with Spiced Rum.

The Indians also prized saltwater 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 who cooked it during his tea party at Valley Forge. With his men's spirits at their lowest ebb, Washington used the cook to prepare an emergency ration of some hot, filling dish. The cook, who must have been superlative inventive, started with tripe — a gift of a Philadelphia butcher — and a bit of bacon and soon served up a hearty soup that was met with great approval.

Other contributions Philadelphia has made to the American heritage include their names for stubborn buns (probably descended from the German "schnecken"), Philadelphia pepper hash and Philadelphia scrapple. (Some people like it.)

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

For food is a part of every one's Christmas. It always has been down here in Society Hill. Too much so, that it seemed proper to delve into our Colonial Philadelphia Christmas Foods, aptly done by Betty Lou Henry, Home Economics Consultant, and a neighbor in the Tewers.

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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 wind 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 Ukranian 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

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