



Nurungi

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

email: chs@concordheritage.asn.au

www.concordheritage.asn.au

EDITOR

PRESIDENT
TRISH HARRINGTON
9764-3296

PUBLIC RELATIONS
TRISH SKEHAN
9743-4172

SECRETARY/TREASURER
LOIS MICHEL
3 Flavelle Street
(P.O. Box 152)
Concord 2137
Phone: 9744-8528
Fax: 9744-7591

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MEETINGS

General Meetings

2nd Wednesday of month
at 7:30 pm in the
Concord Citizens' Centre

Executive Meetings

4th Wednesday of month
at 7:45 pm in the
Concord Citizens' Centre

Walker Estates Committee

1st Thursday each month
(please contact to confirm)
Concord Bowling Club
Clermont Ave, North Strathfield
Graham Packett, 9743-3007

Other Committees

As arranged
Watch the newsletter

Museum

Fred Stansfield, 9743-1866

Archives/Local History

Kate Skillman, 9706-7479

Heritage

Bill Barlow, 9743-3662

Oral/Family History

Lola Sharp, 8753-0659

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**CONCORD
HERITAGE MUSEUM**
5 Wellbank Street

Open 2:00 - 4:00 pm
Wednesday & Saturday

No. 93

December 2003

The Man Behind the Story of Father Christmas

St. Nicholas was a Bishop who lived in the fourth century AD in a place called Myra in Asia Minor (now called Turkey). He was a very rich man because his parents died when he was young and left him a lot of money. He was also a very kind man and had a reputation for helping the poor and giving secret gifts to people who needed it. There are several legends about St. Nicholas, although we don't know if any of them are true!

The most famous story about St. Nicholas tells how the custom of hanging up stockings to get presents in first started! It goes like this...

There was a poor man who had three daughters. He was so poor, he did not have enough money for a dowry, so his daughters couldn't get married. One night, Nicholas secretly dropped a bag of gold down the chimney and into the house. The oldest daughter was then able to be married. This was repeated later with the second daughter. Finally, determined to discover the person who had given him the money, the father secretly hid by the fire every evening until he caught Nicholas dropping in a bag of gold. Nicholas begged the man to not tell anyone what he had done, because he did not want to bring attention to himself. But soon the news got out and when anyone received a secret gift, it was thought that maybe it was from Nicholas.

Because of his kindness Nicholas was made a Saint. St. Nicholas is not only the saint of children but also of sailors! One story tells of him helping some sailors who were caught in a dreadful storm off the coast of Turkey. The storm was raging around them and all the men were terrified that their ship would sink beneath the giant waves. They prayed to St. Nicholas to help them. Suddenly, he was standing on the deck before them. He ordered the sea to be calm, the storm died away, and they were able to sail their ship safely to port.

St. Nicholas was exiled from Myra and later put in prison during the persecution of his Emperor, Diocletian. No one really knows when he died, but it was on 6th December in either 345 or 352 AD. In 1807, his bones were stolen from Turkey by some Italian merchant sailors. The bones are now kept

in the Church named after him in the Italian port of Bari. On St. Nicholas' feast day (6th Dec.), the sailors of Bari still carry his statue from the Cathedral out to sea, so he can bless the waters and so give them safe voyages throughout the year.

How Nich Became Santa

In the 16th Century in Europe, the stories and traditions about St. Nicholas became very unpopular.



But someone had to deliver presents to children at Christmas, so in the UK, he became 'Father Christmas', a character from old children's stories; in France he was known as 'Père Noël'; in Germany, the Christ Child or 'Christ Kind'. In early

USA his name was 'Kris Kringle'. Later, Dutch settlers in the USA took the old stories of St. Nicholas with them and Kris Kringle became 'Sinter Klass' or as we now say 'Santa Claus'!

Some countries such as Holland still celebrate St. Nicholas' Day on 6th December.

St. Nicholas became popular again in the Victorian era when writers, poets and artists rediscovered the old stories. In the new stories and pictures about him, his Bishop's robes soon became the hat and coat that he wears today — but as you can see, he went through a few colour changes!!

No one knows how St. Nicholas' traditional white horse became a sleigh and pack of reindeer. A picture in a Victorian book show



Bulletin Board

**December 10 - Christmas Barbecue
at Rhodes Rotary Park, 6:00 pm
No General Meeting in January**

them: and the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas", written in 1882, by Dr Clement Clarke Moore for his children, describes the eight reindeer and gives them their names. They became really well known in the song "Rudolph the Red nosed Reindeer", written in 1949.



The UK Father Christmas and the American Santa Claus became more and more alike over years and are now one and the same.

New stories and customs about Santa Claus were written in the 1900s and they still exist today.

Some people say that Santa lives at the North Pole. In Finland, they say that he lives in the north part of their country called Lapland. But everyone agrees that he travels through the sky on a sleigh that is pulled by reindeer, that he comes into houses down the chimney at night and places presents for the children in socks or bags by their beds, in front of the family Christmas tree, or by the fire place.

Most children receive their presents on Christmas Eve night or early Christmas morning, but in some countries they get their presents on St. Nicholas' Day, December 6th.

Christmas Barbecue

The end of the year is fast approaching and so is our annual Christmas Get-Together.

Wednesday, 10th December is the date – 6:00 to 8:00 pm is the time – Rhodes Rotary Park is the venue – cost \$10.00 per head, children free. Make a note in your diaries NOW!!

So that we can arrange the catering we need to have the names of those joining us by 1st December.

Contact Lois on 9744-8528.



The Walkers at Warwick (June 2003)

Earlier this year Trish Skehan travelled to Warwick via Tenterfield for the 90th birthday of Miss Kathleen Walker, who contributed so many photographs and documents for our first book, *The Walkers of Yaralla*. Over 100 relatives and friends had been invited to celebrate this happy occasion.

Trish was delighted to accept Mrs. Judith Lord's invitation to return to Warwick for the weekend to surprise Kathleen.

This journey also gave her the opportunity to meet with Mr. Tom Walker and Fergus & Barbie Walker, who now run Coolootai Station.

Trish was invited to come back later in the year to stay at Coolootai and inspect documents and diaries still kept in the old safe. Tom is eager to have more family history recorded, with suggestions for a book titled *Tales of Coolootai*.

Miss Kathleen was presented, on behalf of the Society, with flowers and a framed photograph of her famous relative, Dame Eadith. Everyone remarked on the striking resemblance of Mr. Tom Walker's head of thick, fair hair to that shown in Dame Eadith's portrait. Lots of family photographs have been taken.

Scotchie Walker and Mrs. Kathleen Walker (wife of Tom Walker), who is still in demand for her veterinary skills, were other members who made Trish feel so welcome at this family function. Her niece, Mrs. Betty Armbruster, whose home is high on a ridge overlooking Warwick, hosted the party.

Many other kith and kin connected to this famous family were present. A special cake, decorated with a picture of Coolootai Homestead, was served after the smorgasbord and drinks.

Tenterfield Traveller

On the way to Warwick, Trish stopped at Tenterfield Museum. This is now sited in the old home of Mr. S.A. Donaldson, an early pioneer, politician and friend of Federation father, Sir Henry Parkes. The home has been faithfully preserved, with rooms decorated in period furniture, pieces of clothing and family portraits.

Like many museums, it is filled with treasures and rare artefacts of the surrounding district, in particular Tenterfield Station. A metal "baby cage" horrified local school children on one visit, until it was explained that it kept snakes and dingoes away from infants, and stopped them crawling into the creek.

Also on site is Petrie Cottage, an old workman's hut. Three volunteers, Mrs. Daphne Struck and Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Rees, kindly guided me around. Alvin and Daphne are pictured in the kitchen of Petrie Cottage, donated by Val Gardner.

A small bark hut that won first prize in an exhibit at the Festival of the Willows in 1969, plus an art gallery and a large collection of farm memorabilia, will keep you enthralled for hours. Do visit if you are in the Tenterfield area.

One interesting piece is a rare wardrobe covered in kangaroo hide, believed to be the only one in existence. This was delicately carved about 1880 by Luke Whitton of Leech's Gully, for his wife Anne. For years it remained at Deloraine, a gracious Tenterfield home, before being donated to the historical society by Mr. Walter Sabine.

Another interesting piece is a well preserved illuminated address to John Holmes Read, Esq., dated May 1888, regarding the Glen Smelting Company.

Merry
Christmas
to you and
yours from
all of us.



Camden Museum

On Saturday, 22nd November a small group of our members paid a visit to the historic town of Camden.

The main reason for the visit was to tour through the Camden Museum, which has done a wonderful job in displaying their many artefacts and we collected many ideas for our new museum, when we eventually get it.

The gentleman on duty was ex-



tremely helpful in showing us around and showing us many of their innovative ideas for displaying material.

This is certainly going to be very helpful when our time comes.

We also had time to stroll around the many historic buildings in the area before wending our way home.

If you're down that way - or even make it a special outing - call in at the Museum which is in John Street, Camden.



The Customs of Christmas

Singing Christmas Carols

A carol is defined as a song of rejoicing, usually associated with festive occasions and religious celebrations.



The first Christmas carol was sung by the angels who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. Since that time many carols have been sung to honor the birth of Jesus. In fact, more than 500 English carols from the 15th century still survive, with the earliest printed copy of a carol that still exists being the "Boar's Head" carol.

The custom of singing carols declined during the mid-1600's because the Puritans, who were in power in England at that time, disapproved of feasts and celebrations. They felt they were a waste of time that could be used to serve God. Interest in singing carols revived as the Puritans lost political power.

Candy Canes

During the 1800's a candy maker in Indiana decided he wanted to make a special piece of candy for Christmas that would be a symbol of Jesus and point others to the reason for Christ's birth. Here are some pictures of Christ that we can see from the candy cane.



1. The candy cane is in the shape of a shepherd's staff. Jesus is our Good Shepherd, and we are His sheep. (John 10:11; Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:11)
2. Upside down the candy cane forms the letter "J", the first letter of Jesus' name. (Luke 1:31)
3. The candy cane is made of hard candy to remind us that Jesus is the Rock of our salvation.
4. The wide red stripes on the candy cane represent the blood He shed on the cross for each one of us so that we can have eternal life through Him. (Luke 22:20)
5. The white stripes on the candy cane represent the virgin birth, sinless life, and purity of our Lord. He is the only human being who ever lived who never committed a single sin, even though He was tempted just as we are. (1 Peter v22)
6. The narrow red stripes on the candy cane symbolize that by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3)
7. The flavoring in the candy cane is peppermint, which is similar to hyssop. Hyssop is of the mint family and was used in Old Testament times for purification and sacrifice. (John 19:29, Psalm 51:7)
8. When we break our candy cane it reminds us, just as communion does, that Jesus' body was broken for us. (1 Cor. 11:24)
9. If we share our candy cane and give some to someone else in love because we want to, it represents that same love of Jesus because He is to be shared with one another in love. (1 John 4:7,8)

Tinsel

Putting tinsel on the Christmas tree began in Germany as thin strips of beaten silver. Later the present form of tinsel was developed. It was cheaper and lighter than the beaten silver so more people could obtain it and it would not break the trees.

The story is told of a poor woman who was unable to provide decorations for her children's Christmas tree. During the night, spiders lodged in the tree and covered it with their webs. The Christ Child, seeing this, realized that the woman would be saddened to see the disappointed faces of her children upon seeing only spiders' webs on their tree. He turned the spider webs into silver, and the next morning the poor family was dazzled by the brilliant tinsel that shone on the tree.

Christmas Greeting Cards

Christmas cards are tokens of friendship and good will and have become the means by which people and families keep in touch with those far away. The first Christmas card was made in 1843 by an English illustrator named John Calcott Horsely. Sending cards at Christmas became quite popular in Europe and America during the next few years.

The first Christmas cards appeared in America in 1846, but they were expensive and not affordable for the masses. They became popular in the U.S. when, in 1875, a German emigrant printer, Louis Prang, started providing economical Christmas cards that everyone could buy. These first cards pictured flowers, plants, and children and contained simple greetings of the season. In 1915, John C. Hall and two of his brothers got into the card business when they established Hallmark Cards.

A study of Christmas cards of the past is a study of history as they reflect the times in which they were created. In the 1920's, Christmas cards showed stylish flappers, good times, and roadster-driving Santas. Cards of the 30's spoofed the poverty and made light of the bad times that the Great Depression brought on while looking forward to better times. War and patriotism characterized the cards of the 40's. In the 50's Santa was seen relaxing in front of a television set or flying around the world in a space rocket while thoughts of the Cold War loomed in the background. The 60's and 70's brought images of peace and brotherhood as seen by the frequent use of doves, flower children, and youngsters joining hands around the world. The 80's and 90's saw pictures of silent, snowy scenes and a return to more traditional themes and nostalgic looks at past Christmases.

Christmas cards have truly become a tradition of Christmas. Nearly 3 billion

Christmas cards will be sent through the U. S. Post Office alone, not counting the ones sent via the internet. So get out your pens, flex your tired fingers, and think, "Who have I forgotten this year?"

Nativity Scenes

Many homes put up at least one nativity scene every Christmas. To Christians they are a picture of the poverty and squalor into which Jesus Christ was born and a way to remember the Reason for the season. The first nativity scene was set up by Francis of Assisi on December 24, 1223. These scenes were most commonly found in southern Europe where the Catholic faith was strongest.

Nativity scenes are made in all fashions from the simple, hand-made creches to fancy store-bought dioramas. No matter what form the nativity scene takes they all display the manger, the star of Bethlehem, angels, shepherds, wise men, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. More elaborate scenes may contain animals, houses (sometimes forming a miniature village), and additional people. Also popular are painted nativity scenes, living nativity scenes, and dramas portraying the birth of Christ. In Mexico, people participate in Las Posadas, a commemoration of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem and their search for lodging.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

In 1939, Robert May, a copywriter for Montgomery Ward in Chicago, was asked to write a Christmas story that could be given away to all their customer's children as they visited the store Santa Claus. He started working on the story but found it difficult to concentrate on his writing. His mind kept wandering to his cancer-stricken wife and his four-year-old daughter, Barbara, who did not understand why Mommy could not play and go places with her. He also thought of his own childhood where other children made fun of him because he was tall and thin and the youngest in his class at school. Then he decided to write a story to comfort Barbara and all the other children who felt left out and different from their peers, a story with an unhappy beginning and a triumphant ending with an underdog for the main character.

Since his boss said the story should be about an animal, Robert thought that there was no better Christmas animal than the reindeer. After all what animal did more to help Santa make his yearly ride,

but this reindeer had to be different. Santa would need a reindeer that was strong, fast, and able to fly in terrible weather. Giving him the ability to see in the dark would not make him different from his fellow reindeer; so May decided to give him a big red shiny NOSE to shine in the dark and light the way for Santa.

When the story was finished, May read the story to his little girl and her friends. It began, "Twas the day before Christmas, and all through the hills, the reindeer were playing,,,enjoying the spills of skating and coasting, and climbing the willows...and hop-scotch and leap-frog (protected by pillows)." They and millions of other children loved the new Christmas story. Over 2 1/2 million copies were given out to the children during the 1939 Christmas season; and after World War II over 3 million more copies were given away.

In 1949, Robert's brother-in-law, Johnny Marks, wrote the song "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" based on the story. Gene Autry recorded the song, and by 1950 the song was the most popular Christmas song on the radio. For children of all ages the story of Rudolph still brings a special feeling of good cheer all because Robert May remembered how it felt to be different.

The 12 Days of Christmas

We all sing about the 12 days of Christmas, but how many of us know what the 12 days of Christmas really are? The 12 days of Christmas is the period of time from the day after Christmas to Epiphany, or January 6. Epiphany is, traditionally, the date that the wise men arrived to give their gifts to the baby Jesus. Many countries, especially in Europe and South America, do not give gifts on December 25th; they wait until January 6th, the 12th day of Christmas.

The Night Before Christmas

*'Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring,
not even a mouse;....*

These words begin one of the most widely known poems of all time. Every year the reading of "The Night Before Christmas" is a tradition that millions have come to enjoy, but not very many know how the poem came to be.

Clement C. Moore was a professor of Oriental and Greek literature at the General Theological Seminary located in New

York. He was well known for his publications on Biblical and historical histories, including a Hebrew lexicon. He was also a clergyman, a linguist, and a father of nine children.

It was Christmas Eve, 1822 and Moore set out in his sleigh to pick up some holiday supplies and last-minute gifts. As he drove along that crisp December morning, he was thinking about the special gift that he had promised to give his six-year-old daughter, Charity. Maybe it was the sight of new-fallen snow, or a jolly, fat man he saw as he made his rounds that finally gave him the inspiration he needed for his gift. Moore returned home and retired to his study to write the poem that we all know and love.

The poem would have remained a family secret, but Charity treasured her father's gift and proudly recited it to a friend several months later who then sent a copy of it to the Troy Sentinel. The piece appeared in the paper the following Christmas. Moore was chagrined by the publicity the poem received. After all he was known for his serious works. Within a few years the poem was reprinted in periodicals everywhere. Finally in 1837, Moore reluctantly acknowledged its authorship.

<http://www.geocities.com/customsofchristmas/>



Some Special Dates to Remember . . .

Four Winds Fountain Dedication - Sunday, 7th March

Yaralla Open Day - Sunday, 4th April

Walker Family Reunion - Sunday, 2nd May

Rivendell Open Day - Sunday, 23rd May

Put them in your diary or calendar now so you won't double book the dates.

And please give some thought to becoming a tour guide - we need you.

Dates for your Diary . . .

☛ **Thurs. 4th December** - Walker Estates Meeting, 7:30, Bowling Club

☛ **Wed. 10th December** - CHRISTMAS BARBECUE PARTY