

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Historical notes from the Big Butte Historical Society
Recollections of Charleen Brown

CHRISTMAS IN THE 50's



The biggest difference between today and Christmas' past is that the "commercial" season was much shorter than it is today. Stores didn't start decorating or selling Christmas items until after Thanksgiving. Nothing like 2008, when many stores started putting our Christmas items before Halloween.

In the 50's, we celebrated family traditions much the same as today. However, we didn't decorate our homes with outdoor lights or yard decorations. Except for a wreath on the door, the decorations were all inside the home. The Christmas tree was strategically placed in the largest window facing the street so the lights could be seen by passers-by.

Our holiday traditions always began with a trip to the woods, no permit required, to select the perfect tree. When we got it home there was the process of getting it placed properly so that it was straight with the branches even on all sides. This of course took much turning, adjusting and snipping until it was just perfect. Do any of you remember a branch being wired into a spot to fill a gap? Decorating started with the strings of colored lights placed on the tree just so. This was especially true of the bubble lights that clamped onto the branches. These had to be placed so they stood up on the branches because they wouldn't bubble if they were tilted and they somewhat resembled lighted candles. Next came, the beautiful glass ornaments that had to be handled ever so carefully and evenly spaced. Many of these ornaments were very fragile and had been handed down for several generations. The handmade popcorn garlands were next, well, at least what had not been eaten the night before during the stringing. When the lights, ornaments and popcorn garlands were in place, the final touch was added. Silver tinsel strands that had to be very deliberately placed on the branches, one (boring) strand at a time. Each strand had to hang evenly and could never be allowed to tangle. Heaven help the child who put it on in gobs or worse yet, threw it at the tree. But, at least that would be the end of your tinsel hanging until next year.

School activities included decorating a class Christmas tree with handmade paper chains and ornaments and a class party with a gift exchange at the elementary level. There was always a Christmas program followed by a visit from Santa Claus complete with a gift bag of goodies that included an orange, apple, candy cane, ribbon candy, hard candies with soft centers and a popcorn ball. More candy than many of us had seen all year. The high school had a Christmas Banquet that was prepared by the Home Economics. Class. Since we had so few students we had an all school gift exchange. We drew names which were supposed to be kept secret but of course there was much negotiating until you traded for the name you wanted. By the time the gifts were opened after the banquet, there were no surprises.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - \$5.00 per household	
NAME	_____
ADDRESS	_____
_____	_____
Send to:	BIG BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY P.O. BOX 379 Butte Falls, OR 97522