



December 2010 Issue

The Publicist' Corner

The Valley of Rutland meets once a month on the fourth Thursday evening at 7 PM the Rutland Masonic Center.

We have been rehearsing the degrees that the Valley will be presenting thru the month of February. We have a number of non-speaking parts you can certainly help us with.

Come join us for a night of Fellowship. If you need a ride or can offer a ride to a brother, let us know.

The Valley Administration Council meets once a month on the first Monday evening at 6 PM at the Rutland Masonic Center.

We welcome your articles, comments, photos, etc. Please forward to:

bilbasso@vermontel.net

"Spes Mea in Deo Est"

Bill Basso, MSA

Celebration of the Holiday

The origins of Hanukah or the Festival of Lights are an event that happened 200 years before the birth of Christ. A king named Antiochus attempted to have all Jewish persons under his reign to follow the Greek religion. Under the leadership of Judah Maccabee, there was a rebellion.

After three years of fighting, the Maccabees drove the Greek soldiers away. The Maccabees wanted to rededicate the temple, but were only able to find enough oil for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted eight days; long enough to make new oil.

An important part of the Hanukah celebration is the menorah. This is a candleholder with eight candles and a shammash or servant candle. One candle is lit by the shammash for each of the night of Hanukah.

After the lighting of the candles, people give gifts to one another. People sing and make merry. A popular food for Hanukah is potato pancakes, or latkes, cooked in oil in honor of the miracle.

Children enjoy playing the dreidel game. This is a top game played with nuts or gold-covered chocolate coins. There are four letters of the top which stand for nun, gimmel, hay, and shin and give the directions for what to give or take during the game. The letters also stand for "nes gadol hayah sham" or "a great miracle happened there."

continued on next page

Valley of Rutland Degree Schedule

JANUARY: Valley of Rutland presentation of the Secret Master, 4th Degree and the Perfect Master, 5th Degree, at 7pm. No meal is planned as of this writing.

FEBRUARY: Valley of Rutland will be presenting the Prince of Jerusalem, 16th Degree, preceded with a light meal at 6pm.

Thrice Potent Master –Robert Senn -bsenn@fluhs.org

Sovereign Prince - Graham Trudo - Trudo@sover.net.net

Treasurer - William Anderson - Anderson@stifel.com

Most Wise Master -Thomas Johnston IV - t4jovt@vermontel.net

Secretary - Richard Boise - rick.boise@rutlandmasons.org

Publicist - William Basso II - bilbasso@vermontel.net



Long before Christmas, people celebrated the Winter Solstice. People felt the celebrations made the Sun God happy and hurried the coming of Spring. Celebrations were held on the eve of the shortest day of the year.

A big log, called the Yule Log was burned in a great bonfire. Everyone danced and sang around the fire. Families hung mistletoe from the doorways of their homes for good luck. Some people decorated their homes with evergreens.

Many of the Winter Solstice traditions were made a part of the Christmas traditions as more people became Christians. The Winter Solstice is still celebrated, by many cultures around the world.

Many English Christmas customs traveled to the United States with the English immigrants. Both countries share the hanging of stockings and mistletoe. People in both countries decorate with holly and ivy. While not as popular today, both the English and the Early Americans burned a Yule log, saving the remains for starting the next year's fire.

There is no Santa Claus in England. Instead, children receive gifts from Father Christmas.

At Christmas dinner, plum pudding is the dessert of choice. Coins are hidden in the pudding bringing good luck to those that find them.

Actors known as Christmas mummers present plays during the Christmas season to the delight of persons both young and old.

In some villages, churches "toll the Devil's knell" on Christmas Eve. The church bell is rung once for every year since Christ's birth; ending at midnight. The ringing is said to keep the Devil away from the village.

The English celebrate Boxing Day on December 26. On this day they give gifts to persons in service jobs, such as shop clerks or maids.

In France, religion is a very big part of the Christmas holiday. A crèche or manger scene plays an important role. In addition to the customary figures of Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, and the Wise-men, the French crèche also includes common village figures such as a man selling kindling or a woman selling herbs. The making of these figures, or santons, is a very important art form.

Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is an important French tradition. After church, people feast at a large late supper or réveillon. A traditional dessert at this supper is a bûche de Noël, a chocolate cake filled with whipped cream and shaped in the form of a Yule log.

Children receive gifts on December 6 and/or December 25 depending on which section of France they live. Instead of stockings, children leave out their shoes to be filled with goodies by Père Noel.

continued on next page



In Mexico, the Christmas celebration begins nine days before December 25 with Las Posadas. During this time the people in the town go to a different home each night. At each home the story of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter at the inn is acted out.

Piñatas are a fun part of the Christmas celebration. Piñatas are figures made out of clay or paper-mache decorated with paper. Children use a stick to try to break the pinata. When one child breaks the piñata, all the children are rewarded with a "rainfall" of candy and small toys.

During Christmas time the poinsettia flower is very popular. There is a legend that the poinsettia plant formed miraculously one Christmas Eve from a little girl's only gift to the baby Jesus at her church's midnight service; a bunch of weeds. Also popular, are luminarios. These are small, decoratively cut paper bags lit with small candles.

Santos or creche figures are an important part of a Mexican Christmas. The figures are used to recreate the nativity scene at the town's church. At midnight, on Christmas Eve, all the people in the town make a grand procession to the church to lay gifts before the manger and to celebrate Midnight Mass.

In Germany, the Christmas tree is a popular tradition. This tradition began in the Middle Ages when folks would decorate evergreen boughs with apples. As time passed, candles, cookies, blown glass ornaments, and paper cornucopias were added to the decorations.

Gingerbread people and houses, pfefferneuse cookies, and cinnamon star cookies are special Christmas treats in Germany.

On December 6, Weihnachtsmann walks the streets on the night of the 6th and leaves presents in the children's shoes which they have left "outside" their door. If they were bad he leaves switches or coal. If they were good he leaves candy and goodies.

On Christmas Eve Mothers and Fathers decorate the tree. The children then come into the room to open their presents. December 25 is a family day.

December 13 is St Lucia's Day. On this day, the eldest daughter in a family wears a white robe and a head wreath with candles. All dressed up, she serves the family St. Lucia buns (Lussekatter) and coffee in bed. A big event is the Lucia choir show. Young girls portray Lucia and "terns" (tärnor). Boys take part as starboys, tomtenissar (Jultomten's helpers) or ginger cookie characters.

Christmas ornaments might be made of straw. Animals, especially goats, are popular ornaments for the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree is also decorated with lights, glass ornaments, and tinsel.

On Christmas Eve, a large dinner or smorgasbord is served. Desserts include a rice pudding. An almond is hidden in the pudding. The person to find the almond is said to be the next to marry in the next year.

continued on next page



Another important Christmas Eve tradition is somewhat American! At three o'clock in the afternoon all the children stop to watch the Disney special "From All Of Us To All Of You." Dinner and presents must sometimes wait until after Kalle Anka (Donald Duck).

Children in Sweden look forward on Christmas Eve to gifts brought by Jultomten (today a cross between a little gnome and the German/British Santa Klaus). They make sure to leave him a bowl of porridge. They also put candles in the windows so he can find his way to the children's homes. Christmas Day in Sweden is spent in church. December 26 is St. Stephen's Day (Staffen) in honor of the patron saint of animals. An old tradition on this day was to give the farm animals extra food to eat.

The holiday season concludes on January 13 or the 20th day Knut. On this day the Christmas tree is taken down and Christmas is over for another year in Sweden.

In the Seventeenth century the Puritans did not celebrate Christmas. December 25 is a workday. In the late 1700's, Christmas was once again a happy holiday. The Colonists decorated their fireplaces with greenery, sung carols, and feasted. No one, had a Christmas tree.

In 1823 Clement Moore wrote the poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas." Saint Nicholas or Santa Claus began to play a big part in the celebration of Christmas.

In the 1840's, German immigrants introduced the Christmas tree. This decoration became a major part of the Christmas tradition.

In the 1890's, Victorians decorated their trees and homes with lots of lace, flowers, and glass ornaments. Sending Christmas cards became popular during this time.

Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday created in 1966. It begins on December 26 and lasts through January 1. The name Kwanzaa came from the language of Swahili and means first fruits of the harvest.

To prepare for the holiday, families decorate their homes with Kwanzaa symbols.

They place a mkeka, a straw mat, on the table. Corn (one ear for each child in the family) and other foods are placed on the mkeka to remember the earth's abundance.

Candles are placed in a kinara, a wooden candle holder. A black candle is placed in the center as a reminder of the richness of African-American skin. Three red candles represent struggles and three green candles represent a prosperous future. A candle is lit for each day of Kwanzaa. The black candle is lit first, and then red and green candles are lit alternately.

continued on next page



There are seven principles of Kwanzaa, one for each day. They are Umoja or Unity, Kujichagulia or Self-Determination, Ujima or Collective Work and Responsibility, Ujamaa or Cooperative Economics, Nia or Purpose, Kuumba or Creativity, and Imani or Faith.

Today, we combine old and new traditions to celebrate the Holiday in a way that is meaningful to our family and friends.

