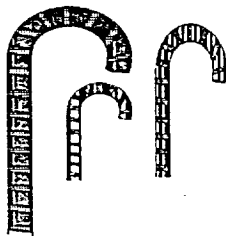


CHRISTMAS



In Mexico:

Beginning on December 16, there is a celebration every evening until Christmas at the home of one of the nine families that join together for "posadas". The group of people make a procession to the night's pre-selected house. They are led by two children bearing figurines of Mary and Joseph. On the way, they knock on different doors. Asking the people whether there is room at their inn, they receive the reply, "No, we have no room". When they reach the designated house, the people are invited to come in, and the statues of Joseph and Mary are placed in the crib that has been prepared. The night of December 24 is known as the "buena noche". On that night, the figurine of the Christ Child is also brought and placed in the crib in the last house, and Christmas is celebrated.

the celebration of his birthday on December 6. During the days before Christmas, the children are on their best behavior, knowing that surprises are being prepared by the adults. The little gifts are wrapped in funny packages with jokes written on the labels. On Christmas Eve, the children place their shoes or clogs near the fireplace before going to bed. In them they put a sugar cube, a carrot or a handful of hay for Saint Nicholas' horse. The next morning these provisions are gone, and gifts are in their place. On December 25, the Dutch children receive other larger gifts, as children do in Canada.

In Holland:

Nicholas is the patron saint of



children. In Holland, he is called Sinterklaas. Dutch children eagerly await

In Russia:

Until quite recently, Christmas was celebrated on January 7 in Russia. It began on the sixth, when the first star appeared in the sky. Essentially a religious holiday, it was preceded by a day of prayer and fasting. Imagine how good Russian families felt after returning from church, when they sat down to a delicious meal! Under the tablecloth, a table garnished with straw served as a reminder of the stable in Bethlehem. The Christmas tree, crowned with a six-pointed star, and laden with candy, candles and toys, sat imposingly in all Russian homes.

In Germany:

The Germans claim to have invented the Christmas tree. The primitive German theatre was actually the first place in which the Christmas tree, as we know it, was used. Laden with golden apples and ginger candles, it shone like the tree in the Garden of Eden. In later years, the tree was decorated with gingerbread men, and angels made of

