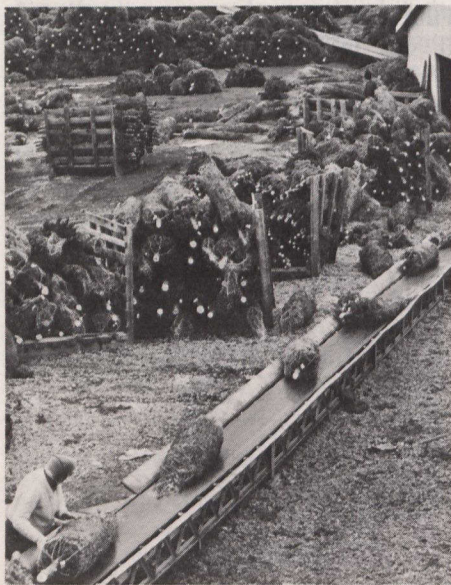


Government House was only a rough structure in the fledgling military post, the courage of those worshippers was such that the foundations were laid for the building of Canada. Lonely for their families (who had not yet joined them), and with none of their familiar Christmas activities, these sturdy pioneers nevertheless had a deep faith in God, themselves, and the new country which held their future.

On the Atlantic coast on Christmas Day, 1791, Trinity Church, Saint John, New Brunswick, first opened its doors. At that service, The Royal Coat of Arms, which had been brought by the Loyalists from the Council of Massachusetts, was dedicated. It was a memorable day for those settlers, who only eight years before had been disembarked on a wild shore, where they had to clear away the brushwood before they could pitch their tents or build their shanties.

Into Quebec, and Christmas now brings devout reverence for this is a sacred day and not a merry time, which French Canada saves for New Year's Eve. In Quebec's northeastern wilderness, Christmas reaches scores of picturesque villages lying in the shelter of snow-covered hills. It begins with Midnight Mass, and then home to a feast in the first hours of Christmas Day.

First mentioned in Canadian history in 1644, the custom of the *crèche* is one of



The first Christmas tree in Canada was erected in the city of Halifax 128 years ago. The province of Nova Scotia has become the leading producer of this festive fir tree throughout Canada.

the quaintest and most beautiful. In church and home alike, the scene of the Nativity creates a picture of devout adoration.

#### Illuminated tree

It was in Quebec that the first Christmas tree in Canada was lit, in the German tradition, by General von Riedesel on December 25, 1781. Von Riedesel had been placed in command of all British troops from Sorel to Montreal, and a few days before Christmas, he and his family moved into their home in Sorel where central military headquarters had been established. Neighbours and British officers who were invited to their Christmas party were astonished to see, for the first time, an illuminated Christmas tree.

Now it is Christmas in Ontario. Originally settled by United Empire Loyalists and the ranks of early British garrisons, Ontario's Christmas clings to the age old traditions of turkey, holly and mistletoe, but, as everywhere in the nation, customs old before Canada was born are brightening Christmas Day as new Canadians preserve the customs of their homelands.

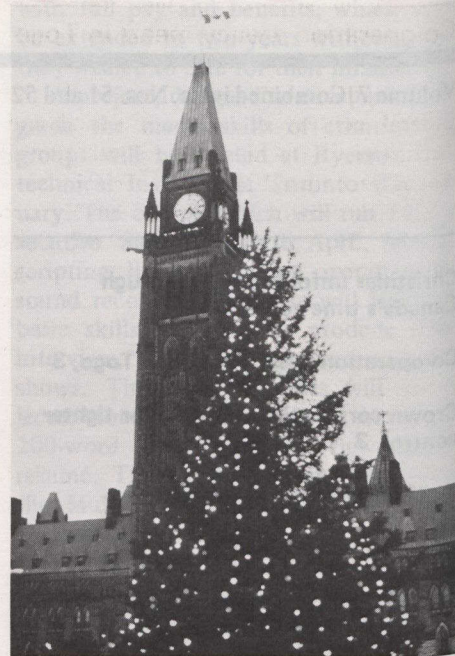
In Ontario's cities, as well as in other cities in Canada, the tree markets will resemble fir plantations. Apartment dwellers will adopt the twentieth century custom of a tree table, but those near to the country will keep up the happy tradition of making it a family day to find and cut their own tree in the forest.

Toronto's traditional Santa Claus parade began in 1905, when Santa arrived at Union Station and roamed the streets on a red and white packing case on a horse-drawn wagon. Today it is a mile-long spectacle.

Christmas speeds on. Its fourth hour envelops Ontario's easternmost lakehead and a wide band on the Prairies. It is now well into Saskatchewan as the clocks in the Central Time Zone join hands. At Winnipeg, the Gateway to the West, the customs of all Canadians find fruition, and in Ukrainian homes Christmas will not be celebrated until January 7.

#### Indian belief

Into the Mountain Time Zone, Christmas leaps to the foothills of the Rockies, and in the fifth hour, western cities celebrate as all cities do. But what of the first Canadians whose tenure goes back before the white man? Adopting the Canadian Christmas, the Indians still cling to a belief that the deer in the woods are lying



Christmas lights twinkle on a 40-foot high tree on the lawn in front of the Peace Tower. Every noon a concert of carols will be heard and at night the 53 carillon bells will play an evensong of Christmas classics.

with their heads in the direction of Bethlehem.

Christmas rushes on and only in the Yukon does it enter its last hour in Canada and embrace the whole country in its glory.

On the Pacific Coast, the building of the new Fort Victoria was just completed in time for Christmas, 1843. Inside the fort, ringed with high cedar pickets, were buildings for storage, an Indian trading shop, a general trading shop, and accommodation for two families. A belfry stood in the middle of the complex, its bell to toll for meals, weddings, deaths, church services, fires and warnings. It pealed for the first time on Christmas Day accompanied by the firing of rockets from the ship *Cadnor*.

Today, Vancouver's most colourful Christmas tradition is the Carol Ship. Every year since 1961, Christmas lights outline the lead Carol Ship which is followed by a flotilla of private yachts. Residents gather on the beaches, and led by a school choir, sing carols as the flotilla sails by.

In every corner of Canada, the Christmas customs of the world weave a glorious tapestry.

(From Canadian Scene, dated November 23, 1979.)