

Canada Weekly

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Ottawa, Canada.

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Season's Greetings

and a

Happy New Year

Christmas in Canada

Christmas customs are as varied as the seven million children of Canada. But Christmas trees are something common to them all. In fact, for most children, Christmas really begins the day the magical tree comes home. Sometimes it arrives from a "super-market", sometimes from the empty lot on the street corner which overnight became an evergreen forest of fir and pine trees, all sizes and shapes, cut and ready to go. But best of all is that special tree families find for themselves in the forest, decorate with hand-made or very special objects that sometimes have come from grandmother's day or are created from the old world traditions Canadians hold dear.

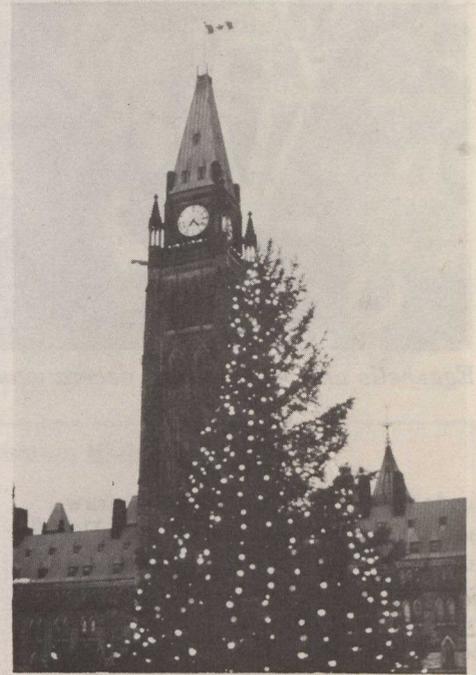
It's not just Christmas Day itself, for in many homes the festivities begin after the first snowfall or early in December. On misty Vancouver Island on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, and in other homes across Canada, on the 13th of December little girls with flaxen braids wearing the traditional Swedish "Lucia Crown" wake up sleepy fathers with an offering of gingersnaps, *pepparkakor*, *lussekatter* bread and coffee.

Three thousand miles eastward on wind-swept Newfoundland Island children disguised as "mummers" in odd costumes visit neighbours to sing and dance and to receive as thanks some special Christmas treats.

In other cities, mothers, remembering their childhood in Austria teach children to make the circular *Advendkranz* wreath from spruce boughs and to light one of the four candles every Sunday until that special day.

At just about the same season, there is a *Hanukah* festival celebrated by Jewish families, with nine glowing candles, *latkes*, tales of the miraculous lamp of the temple and gifts for the children.

In French-speaking Quebec nothing seems as wonderful as the Christmas Eve *Reveillon* after Midnight Mass. All the family gathers around a table piled high with *tourtière*, *cretons*, turkey, maple-syrup hams and the



Although no Christmas lights will twinkle through the frosty night on Canada's Parliament Hill in Ottawa this year owing to the need to save energy, the bells of the Peace Tower will still peel. Every noon a concert of carols will be heard and at night the 53 bells will play an evensong of Christmas classics.

crusty goodness of *La Bûche de Noël*.

On the flat central Prairies, when snow covers the golden wheat fields, "Little Christmas" is celebrated by the people of Ukrainian and Russian ancestry on or about January 6, with all the golden richness of music and pageantry that doesn't tarnish with the years.

For most children the season really begins the day the Christmas tree is trimmed. They say that the first decorated Christmas tree in Canada, trimmed with forest pine cones, feathers from a turkey tail, some little birds and objects made in beadwork by Indians living near Sorel, Quebec and decorated with star shapes made of gaily painted unbaked bread dough, was in the home of a German family who had come to live in Canada in 1792.

The earliest Christmas trees were decorated mostly with hand-made objects, paper ornaments and chains