

Carolers Were Once Dancers

The first Christmas carols were danced to, according to Encyclopedia International. Carolers took hands and formed a ring, singing as they went round.

Oldest of all carols, it has been said, was that sung by the heavenly host when the birth of the Saviour was announced to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. Probably, the practice of singing carols at Christmas arose in imitation of this, as the majority of carols declared the good tidings of great joy, and the title of Noel, nowell or novelle, applied to carols, would seem to bear out this idea.

Birthday News . . .

"Nowell" or "Noel" means birthday news or a "shout of joy" for the birth of Christ.

The earliest carols were songs of the Nativity the Incarnation and the Annunciation. Later, ones on shepherd themes and the Epiphany were composed, and there were also many of folk origin on the festivities of the Christmas season.

These latter included such songs as "The Holly and The Ivy." Many of the surviving old carols were originally part of the medieval mysteries and miracle plays.

First in Latin . . .

Christmas carols first were written in scholar's Latin. The Blessed Jacopone of Todi of

the Franciscan order, led the way to a wider enjoyment and appreciation of joyous Christmas songs by writing musical poems in the language of the common people.

The saint, who lived from about 1230 to 1306 A.D., had a good precedent for his interest in carols in St. Francis himself. To St. Francis is traced the creation of the first creche or manger scene, in 1223 A.D. Villagers gathered around the scene and sang hymns to the Christ Child.

"The Boar's Head" . . .

"The boar's head in hand bear I,
Bedecked with bays and rosemary."

"The Boar's Head Carol,"

source of this quotation, appeared in the first collection of English carols, printed in 1521, and is still sung on Christmas Day at Queens College, Oxford.

Other colleges of Oxford had their own versions of the same song. "The boar is dead; lo, here is his head," remarked the carol sung at St. John's, while "The boar's head in hand I bring, With garlands gay and birds singing" was the version heard at Balliol.

Even in early times, the "boar" romantically referred to as traditional at the feast was probably a pig. The wild boar is believed to have been

extinct in Britain early in the 12th century.

Feast of Stephen . . .

"Good King Wenceslas looked out on the feast of Stephen."

This familiar carol commemorates two famous men. One is King Wenceslas, who ruled in Bohemia in the 10th century A.D. He was noted for his generosity to the poor, and practiced this generosity on Christmas and on St. Stephen's Day, December 26.

St. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, noted in legend as a follower of Christ who, at the time of the Nativity, had been in the service permitted to see the Star, he left Herod to serve the Child.

Today the "feast of Stephen" is remembered primarily because of the carol, "Good King Wenceslas." His day is now more commonly observed, especially in England and Canada, as Boxing Day, when presents are given to servants and others who have rendered services throughout the year.

Shepherd Maiden . . .

Shepherds are familiar figures in Christmas stories and carols, such as "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night."

More novel, but equally established in tradition, is the story of the shepherdess who visited the stable on the first Christmas night.

"D'ou viens-tu, bergere?" (or, "Whence Come You, Shepherd Maiden?") was brought to Canada in the 17th century, by early French settlers. In the carol, a questioner asks the shepherdess where she has been and what she has seen, and she in turn describes the manger scene.

Elect First State Officers To American War Mothers

Los Angeles — Two colored women were elected to state offices for the first time in the history of the American War Mothers here at the recent convention of the group's Los Angeles chapter.

They were Mrs. Christ-teale L. Owens, elected state recording secretary and Mrs. Rose Ho-King, who was chosen state chaplain.

Mrs. Owens's victory places her in line for the presidency of the group, a charter member of Friendship Chapter No. 57, she will travel around the state to various regional meetings in her new post.

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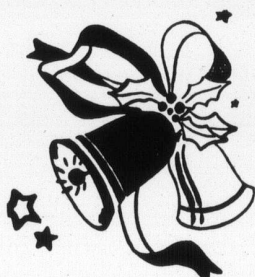
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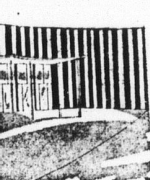
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