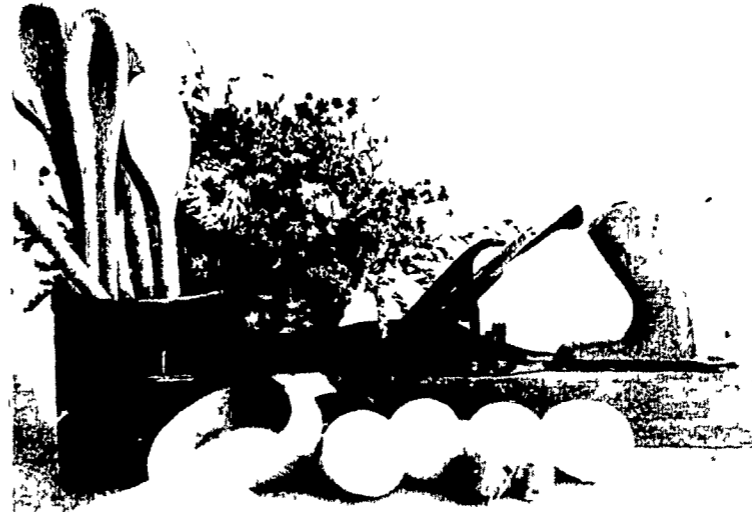


# Homestead Notes

Pat Erway, Editor



## Christmas at Landis Valley . . .

# Reflections of An Old-Fashioned Christmas Season

By Sally Bair  
Feature Writer

An "old-fashioned" Christmas brings to mind visions of popcorn and cranberries, caroling and candles, and a simple celebration of the birth of Christ.

While it isn't possible to return to simpler times, it is possible to regain the spirit of a traditional Christmas with a visit to the Landis Valley Farm Museum.

This week the museum ushered in the Christmas season with its annual community carol sing, complete with tableaux of the season. Singing was led by members of the Lancaster Opera Workshop, but the enthusiasm and spirit came from the nearly 1,000 people attending.

Jolly Old St. Nicholas was climbing down the chimney of the Toll House, carolers in 19th century dress were singing by a lamp post and a manger scene could be seen in the hayloft. The



Lancaster Farming Photos

Mrs. Winnie Brendel, in authentic dress, holds a mold of suet and seeds to be hung on a tree for the birds. Also on the table is a bowl of greens, popcorn, nuts, fresh and dried apples.

glow of real lighted candles from the windows of the museum buildings added to the inspirational atmosphere as the wondrous Christmas story was told again by the Rev. Galen P. Work, pastor of Memorial Presbyterian Church, Lancaster. Toys play an important role in

But the true spirit of an old-fashioned Christmas is captured best in the Settler's Cabin, which depicts life in rural southeastern Pennsylvania in the mid-1700's. Here the decorations are simple, but beautiful.

According to Carroll Hopf, acting director of the museum, a lot of research went into the preparation of these decorations. He said, "We have been especially careful to use only materials which the early settlers would have had on hand." Simple as the decorations are, he said, "They may still be in excess of what was done."

"One of the difficulties in gathering information on these early Christmas celebrations is that the amount of decoration varied greatly among the many German sects who settled here," Hopf said.

Mrs. Winnie Brendel, Reinholds, presides over the Settler's Cabin, and is filled with enthusiasm as she describes the Christmas which might have taken place there. She said, "The cabin is decorated according to the Lutheran, Reformed and Moravian church people who did much more decorating in their homes than the Anabaptists."

The Advent wreath, a tradition observed today, was a simple ring of greens on a table. It was the custom, Mrs. Brendel says, to place one candle on the wreath on each Sunday of the Advent season. The center candle was added on Christmas Eve, and the wreath was burned as long as was possible without the danger of fire.

The wreath at the Settler's cabin has candles of natural

(Continued On Page 21)



Mary and Joseph rock the cradle in the barn at the Landis Valley Farm Museum as the chorus sings "Away in the Manger."



A cast iron "Eclipse" wood-burning stove for the little cook in the family. It came complete with iron skillet, teakettle and deep cooking kettle.

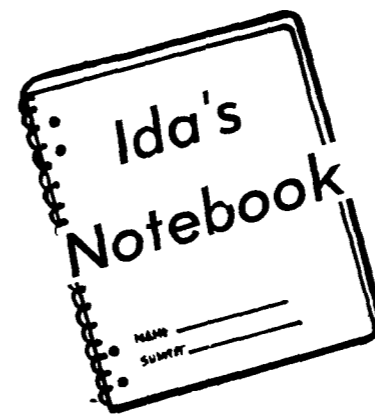


A gabled house at the turn of the century is part of the antique toy exhibit at Landis Valley Farm Museum. There are circus toys in the background and a toy school and pupils in the foreground.



The traditional Christmas tree, surrounded by antique toys of the period. The tree has real candles and some very early Christmas balls.

our Christmas celebration, and a tradition at the Farm Museum is the antique toy exhibit, dating from 1875. This display is a delight for young and old alike. There are dolls, sleds and hobby horses, as well as mechanical piggy banks, iron fire trucks and a circus merry-go-round.



Ida Risser

As Christmas approaches I'm sure we all look forward to seeing friends and relatives who have been away. It gives us a warm feeling to know that people care and that they remember us.

They say there is nothing so constant as change and the size of family groups certainly fits in that category. As the children come into a home it grows and grows, only to have it decrease in size as they grow up and leave. But then as they return on holidays and bring friends and start new families the swing is upward again.

We are looking forward to a family get-together at Christmas and expect my sister from Michigan to come East with her family and also my sister from Clarion County.

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Recently a lady told me that her children don't come to her home for Christmas because they like "leavings" so much. Only

after she explained this to me did I understand that she meant they enjoy the dishes made from leftover turkey.

Whatever the reason, many young couples enjoy spending Christmas in their own homes with their children in order to start traditions of their own. We all need routines and rituals in our lives.

We always lined up on the stairsteps, as early as the kiddies could get us out of bed, with the youngest at the bottom step so they could get to the stockings first. And then the gifts were given out in certain order.

As my children no longer have a Childrens Program to look forward to, we usually attend a Candlelight Service on Christmas Eve. Now all we need is a bit of snow but not enough to close our long lane.

Several years ago on Christmas Day, we hauled our milk out through the fields to the truck.