

# Americans inherit holiday tradition from others

By ROSELLA STERN  
Copley News Service

America is certainly the land of opportunity and variety when it comes to Christmas celebrations. Families can cling to the holiday traditions brought to America by their forefathers, or they can share in a great wealth of cultural choices. This year, it might be fun to begin a new tradition - something from another country.

Mexico has two appealing traditions. The posadas, or processions, which begin nine days before Christmas, can easily be adapted to American culture. Originally, these were jour-

ney that mirrored the travels of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. They have now become preholiday visits, with some staying home to prepare little treats and act as hosts while the others go visiting door to door. Neighborhoods organize these evenings before Christmas as progressive open houses.

Another Mexican tradition especially for children is the pinata. Used for Christmas and also for birthdays, the pinata usually is made of papier mache and takes the form of animals, plants or favorite folk heroes.

Filled with sweets and hung from the ceiling, the pinata is ready for an assault. Children are blindfolded, then twirled around and given a

stick to break the swinging pinata. Once broken, the children scramble for the treats that tumble to the ground.

Many American traditions are actually British in origin. In fact, the British have been "very merry" at Christmastime since the Middle Ages. Charles Dickens's 19th century version of Christmas as pictured in "A Christmas Carol" is dear to the hearts of many Americans. From England comes the Yule log, the flamed plum pudding, Christmas caroling and the custom of sending Christmas Cards.

The Welsh were so fond of caroling they created caroling contests, and now many American communities participate in organized carol-

ing. Grous practice and perhaps dress for the occasion in top hats or Victorian coats, then sing for their neighbors in hopes of being invited in for cookies, punch and other goodies.

The many northern cultures of Europe have traditions involving light, fire and food at Christmas. The Danes place a lighted candle in the window as an invitation for stranger to join them. At Christmas Eve dinner the Julesbaal, or Yule log, is brought into the house and lit in the hearth. Many traditions surround the dragging of the log out of the forest; the youngest son often "rides" the log as it's transported.

Another tradition from Scandinavia is the feeding of the birds in the winter snow.

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