



Old Hay Bay Church
2365 South Shore Road
Napanee

Merry Christmas from the Board of Trustees

How was Christmas celebrated in the Methodist Meeting house?

Would the first congregations have decorated the church or their homes?

Decking the hall with holly and evergreens is not rooted in the celebration of the Birth of Christ. This custom began as a Roman festival honouring Saturn, the God of Agriculture. During this celebration, which was held around December 25th Romans filled their homes with greens and gave friends and family holly wreaths as symbols of friendship. Years later, Christians, who still celebrated their new religion in secret hung holly and greens on their front doors to show their beliefs where different than the Romans. Many years later Christians adopted the custom as a shared Christmas custom. By 1792 the use of wreaths, boughs and garlands would be a part of Christmas festivities.

Would they have had a Christmas tree?

The history of Christmas trees has been traced back to St. Boniface, in Germany during the 8th Century. An old oak tree was cut down as a symbol of the old pagan beliefs that they did not practice any more. It is said that from its stuff grew an evergreen tree. As the tree grew skyward, St. Boniface declared. "This shall be your holy tree. It is the sign of endless life, for its leaves are evergreen. See how it points toward the heaven. Let this be called the tree of the Christ Child; gather about it in your homes and surround it with loving gifts and rites of kindness. "

It isn't until early in the 17th Century that Christmas trees really became a part of the holiday season. Early trees were decorated with homemade ornaments, such as paper roses, candies and cookies, and candles which represented the stars in the sky over Bethlehem. As immigrants came to America from all over Europe, these beautiful traditions came with them and they carried them into their new life in Upper Canada.

What ever the celebration, the early Methodist lived by John Wesley's Rule for Christian Living. Do all the good you can; By all the means you can; In all the ways you can; In all the places you can; At all the times you can; To all the people you can; As long as you can.

Have a Blessed Christmas Season.

