

CHRISTMAS IN NEW ALBANY 50 YEARS AGO

December 22, 1907 . . . 50 years ago was a Sunday just as today, for the days of the week and the dates on the calendar in 1907 were the same as this year. It was the Sunday before Christmas and all through New Albany everybody was stirring, getting ready for December 25.

New Albany was in a festive mood 50 years ago. The Christmas season was in full swing, and although it was at a slower pace than Christmas seasons today, it probably was the biggest yuletide New Albany had yet witnessed. Christmas cards and gifts flooded the post office and nine extra mail carriers were needed to cope with the flow.

And although the volume of Christmas advertising in the New Albany Ledger and the New Albany Tribune didn't begin to match the amount of advertising today, many enterprising merchants were beginning to realize the potential of Christmas sales. Sapinsky's Men's store even took a full page to advertise suits and overcoats . . . \$7.50 to \$25. Those were the prices for men's sizes. Boy's suits and coats ranged from \$1.50 to \$10. Pearl Street merchants advertising for Christmas in 1907 included Cerf, the Jeweler; G. E. Kremer, toys and cut glass; Herbst Dry Goods; J. O. Endris, Jewelers, and Baer's Dry Goods.

Candies, oranges and other holiday treats were available at Canter's News Stand under the skating rink in the Opera House. Floral decorations for Christmas were offered by Rasmussen, the florist, who had just received a handsome new delivery wagon. Daniels, on Vincennes Street, advertised toys

for the children. After a tour of shopping, the family could settle down in the evening to read the Christmas Chef, a story appearing in the Tribune.

The New Albany Fire Department received a special Christmas gift 50 years ago . . . a large cast-iron cook stove from the Anchor Stove & Range Company in appreciation of the fine work of the department in quenching a blaze at the plant several weeks before. The stove was installed in the fire house at Spring and East Fourth Streets.

Then, as now, families were gathering together from distant points to spend the holidays together. Miss Margaret Jewett was home from the Dwight School in New Jersey to visit her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jewett of Silver Hills. Mr. and Mrs. Oliver McAfee of Bedford, Indiana, were in New Albany to spend the holidays with Mrs. McAfee's parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Dieckman. And from St. Mary's-of-the-Woods School at Terre Haute came Miss Alice Terstegge to visit her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Terstegge of Silver Hills. Mr. and Mrs. William Towne had as guests their daughter and son-in-law Mr. and Mrs. Perry Towne of Columbus, Indiana. Miss Aileene Weathers returned home from school at Tudor Hall at Indianapolis to spend Christmas with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Weathers.

The visitors returned to a city full of Christmas activity. The Elks Lodge planned a dance Christmas night. During the days before Christmas the Elks had been busy helping the city's poor with gifts and baskets so that they, also, would enjoy a merry Christmas.

But it was in the churches that the real meaning of Christmas was to be found and it was in the special services held in all the churches that New Albany residents heard the timeless message of Christ and they also heard Christmas music. Elaborate programs of Christmas music were presented at the Second Presbyterian and Trinity Methodist Churches, and at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

the new pipe organ was used for the Christmas Day service. Many things have changed during the past 50 years, but the Christmas music of 1907 was the same still heard today . . . such hymns as Hark, the Herald Angels Sing . . . It Came Upon the Midnight Clear . . . O, Little Town of Bethlehem.

And so as Christmas dawned bright on December 25, 1907, the city forgot the other news of the days . . . forgot about the dispute between the city government and the street railway over the track on Market Street, forgot about the new Daisy Depot under construction, forgot about the old Market House which had just been torn down on Market Street between State and Pearl . . . and remembered Christmas, just as New Albany will do this Wednesday.

[Vol. III, Historical Series No. 10]