

CHRISTMAS REMEMBERED - GALA OCCASION 50 YEARS AGO

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When Russell Farough was a little boy, way back in 1920 when everyone thought that the War to End All Wars had been won, Christmas meant going to Grandma's and Grandpa's big brick house next door to his father's four room home of white clap-boards and having dinner with all his cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandma and grandpa, too, ofcourse.

Now, Russell's father was Walter Farough, the youngest of three boys in his father John's and his mother Jemima Grace Collins' large family of eleven children. The first three, Elizabeth, Kate and Jessie were girls.

John Farough walked six miles through the trackless bush to Essex and brought home a high chair on his shoulders for first born son. The girls had had to sit on their mother's lap.

Russell's mother was Annie, a humorous woman who was a demon for work and raised her children to be the same. Russell was the eldest of three children, with a sister Helen and a brother Milton. All the children had chores to do.

Trestle tables were set upstairs and the children served first-- all the traditional good things-- usually goose and chicken, not turkey, though. Grandma and the aunts made so many trips up and downstairs that they all felt free to do full justice to their repast at the dining room and kitchen tables extended to full length and covered with the traditional white linen damask cloths.

Besides the goose there would be apple sauce and all manner of jellies and pickles -- all homemade. There would be great tureens of mashed potatoes and turnip, squah and home canned waxbeans. There would be cabbage and apple salad -- gravy and dressing, and for dessert, a great Christmas pudding with luscious brown sugar sauce, mince and pumpkin pies, and for nibbling later there would be oranges, apples, nuts and candies.

When the dishes were done everyone would gather around the tree, and someone would distribute the presents, mostly handmade -- perhaps a few store-bought toys for the little ones. Russell, when he was five, was given a small red wagon made for him by his father. This he used to haul in the wood and chips for the stove every night.

Annie remembered making aprons for the aunts as presents. Russell recalls receiving a book -- one of the few books his grandfather permitted his children to read. Only the Bible really won his approval. John Farough was a stern man and read his Bible every day. Most other books were works of the devil, he told his youngsters when they wanted more variety.

Then, everyone would bundle up and ride away to do barn chores and return for supper, left-overs, but what left-overs!

Almost all the ingredients of those joyous Christmases were home-made, but they were all the more appreciated.

The fun with the cousins made young hearts beat in eager anticipation, and all the adults enjoyed the talk and laughter as news and good jolks were exchanged. The humor was gentle, never cruel or meant to hurt. It was a good time. No wonder many compare it with today's commercialization of the holiday and think we are the poorer.

Walter and Annie continue the same tradition, except that now the holiday meals rotate between the children's homes.

They have ten grandchildren and two great grandchildren. The atmosphere of gentle fun, quiet dignity and grace before meals are still with them. It is still a good family Christmas with the Farough's.