



*Preserving, promoting, and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.*

## CULTURAL MOMENT FOR DECEMBER 11TH CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS IN PIONEER CANADA

At Christmastime in pioneer Canada, the tree wasn't loaded with gifts, but those small log cabins were filled with love. Most pioneer families did not put up a Christmas tree, as log cabins were too small and most United Empire Loyalists were of English, Scottish, and Irish descent and the Christmas tree did not originate in those countries.



The Christmas tree came to Canada with settlers from Pennsylvania who were of German descent. When Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, introduced the Christmas tree to England, then Canada took on the tradition.

British families had a custom of hanging greens. This was more appropriate in the cabins of Upper Canada. English greens consisted of ivy, mistletoe, and holly. These were not available during the winter months, so evergreen boughs were hung and made into garlands. They also had the Christmas tradition of the kissing ball. In Upper Canada, a garland was woven into a hanging ball that hung from the rafters. This ball took the place of the Christmas tree. Children made figures out of straw and yarn to decorate the Christmas ball and garland. Cookie dough figurines and gingerbread men were not used to decorate the tree until after 1860.



Stockings were hung on the mantle or bedposts. A gingerbread man may have been included, but it would have been molded by hand. Wooden rocking horses were often made for small children. The carver added a horsehair mane and tail; then, painted eyes and a saddle. The horse was a magnificent specimen of early Canadian handcrafts. It may look rustic, but it was made with love. Children made gifts for parents and siblings: potpourri, sachet, and pomander balls. Girls as young as five-years-old could hem by hand and knit. Candy and cookies were made. The candy (fruit juice and peppermint flavours) were shaped into sticks or balls. Wild turkey or goose was served along with mincemeat pie and plum pudding made with hand-gathered fruit.

Knox Presbyterian Church in Conn has had an annual display of Nativities and International Christmases for the past 5 years. There are 500 plus nativities, as well as over 100 angels and the Christmas traditions of international countries along with a cookie recipe. The display is held on the first weekend of December each year.



Submitted by Councillor Penny Renken, Wellington North Cultural Roundtable