



Dreisbach-Dresbach Family Association Newsletter

December 2022 ©

Christmas Memories: We all have memories of Christmas time from our childhood. Some of these traditions remain, others have changed or disappeared entirely but the memories are still there, ready to surface when we see a particular Christmas decoration or smell the fragrance from a live pine tree standing in our living room. Let's take a look at some of these memories.

Christmas time in elementary school: In those mid-20th century school days most of sat in desks arranged in rows, and in older schools our desks might be bolted to the floor. After we returned from Thanksgiving holidays, we noticed that the turkey cut-outs and pictures of orange pumpkins had been put away. The classroom looked a little bare but this would soon be remedied as we made Christmas decorations. Some were for our classroom but others were to take home as presents to our parents.

After we'd finished doing our arithmetic, spelling and reading lessons, we got to make decorations out of construction paper. We spent hours making paper Christmas lanterns and Christmas trees and Christmas cards, some more sophisticated than others. We made paper chains from red, green and white construction paper and they were hung above the blackboard. Our teachers put up cheerful pictures of Santa and reindeer. Green holly leaves and red berries were drawn in chalk at the corners of the black board. We cut out paper snowflakes to paste onto the windows. When there was singing in class, we sang Christmas Carols and by the 1960's, after the Carols were done, we might be allowed to sing *Jingle Bells* and *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*".

The Christmas tree: At home, if you had a real tree, a week or two before Christmas was the time to go and select the perfect tree. There rarely was one of these so you picked out a tree that had a good side, which would face the room, and the thin and somewhat ugly side would be put against the wall or in the corner. If you had an artificial tree, it had to be brought from storage and assembled, sometimes with much frustration as to which branches went where. But in the end you had a big tree in your living room and Christmas had truly begun!

The first things put on the tree were the strings of lights. In the 1950's the lights might include "bubblers" which looked like glass candles with a clear colored liquid inside. When the lights got hot, bubbles formed at the bottom and rose to the top



1950's tree with bubble lights. Photo by anthonylibrarian in flickr 2007.

of each 'candle' making a magical effect. All lights got hot, not just the bubblers, and you had to make certain that the bulbs were not resting on the needles which could create a fire hazard as the tree dried out.

The lights were arranged in series so that if one bulb was loose, or burned out, none of the lights worked. When this happened, the string had to be plugged in and each bulb tested until the culprit was found, replaced, and the whole string lit up again!

After the lights were on the tree, it was time to hang the glass balls and homemade decorations. In many families some of the balls were treasured antiques handed down over many years. In other families the balls were new and reflected the fashion of the time - sometimes all blue balls, sometimes all silver or gold. Decorations made by children in previous years were either hung in prominent places, or nearly hidden deep within the branches. Finally tinsel was put on the tree.

The tinsel of the 1950's was made of lead and each strand was hung individually over the tree branch. There was a school of thought that said the tinsel should be thrown at the tree and stay wherever it landed but this was dismissed by most people as being 'not right'. After Christmas, the tinsel was carefully removed, strand by strand, and returned to its box to be put away for the next year.



1950's, a little boy hangs up tinsel, strand by strand.



1950's DIY Christmas tree flocking kit, using your own vacuum cleaner. The flocking was made of **asbestos!**

<https://keup.wordpress.com/2019/12/26/99-%E2%80%A2-sno-flok/>

Christmas tree decorations could be beautiful glass ornaments as well as homemade things. Especially in the earlier years of the 20th Century, cranberries and popcorn were strung on long threads of fishing line and hung on the Christmas tree. The silver papers used to wrap sticks of gum were folded into a zig-zag paper chain for the tree. Snowflakes were cut out of white paper and put on the tree as well.

Many people bought heavy paper that was printed to look like bricks. If you didn't have a fireplace for Santa, you could make a pretend fireplace. Other people used it to screen the area below a putz or around the back of the Christmas tree.

Until the 1950's, most trees were live evergreens. The main attraction of a real evergreen tree was the faint scent of pine forest. However when the tree was taken down, sometime after New Year's Day, the ensuing rain of dry needles convinced many to buy an artificial tree. The artificial



Left to right: Stocking from the 1930's, from the 1950's, from the 1970's. Mesh stocking from the 1960's.

until mom and dad were there. But the stockings! The Christmas stockings! They could be touched, could be taken back to your bed where you slowly, or quickly, opened every little thing. The stockings contained smaller presents, smaller in size and value, but delightful nonetheless. Whistles, small cars or dolls, harmonicas, balls, yoyo's, games, candies, and always, always, an orange at the toe of the stocking. That is unless you had been naughty and then there just might be a lump of coal at the toe. This piece of coal was only possible in the 1940's and early 1950's when people still had coal furnaces in their basements and a heap of coal in a special place called the 'coal bin'. After people changed to gas furnaces, the idea that a naughty child could get coal in their Christmas stocking disappeared.

There were many varieties and sizes of Christmas stockings. In early years, children might use their own stockings (which were not socks, but long wool stockings). By the 1930's stores were selling colorful Christmas stockings with images printed on them. Stocking designs kept pace with the current clothing and decorating fashions as can be seen in a stocking from the 1970s. There also were stockings made of red mesh where you could see the unwrapped toys inside. This was an easy way of filling a stocking but was not as common, or as much loved, as the red felt ones. The stockings were, of course, brought by Santa Claus.

Santa: The current image of Santa Claus as a "jolly old elf" developed in the early 1800's with the publication of Clement Moore's *T'was the Night Before Christmas* in 1823. His red suit, though, did not become obligatory until the 1930's. Just about every child believed in Santa Claus in their pre-school years, unless older children in the family revealed 'the truth'. There are probably readers among us who still have a small trauma created when they learned that Santa was not real.

Santa's flying reindeer can have their origin in pre-Christian Scandinavia or in Germany, but, once again it was Clement Moore's *T'was the Night Before Christmas*, which brought this idea firmly into Christmas consciousness. [Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer](#) appeared in 1939 as a book by Robert L. May, and the song became a huge hit in 1949 when Gene Autry recorded it. By 1940 Santa's eight reindeer had increased to nine with Rudolph in the lead. One more thing - if you're a certain age, you may remember heavy paper made to look like red brick. It was useful for creating a fake fireplace or just for covering up space underneath a tree.



1933 Firemen in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, collect and repair toys to donate to children in an orphanage.
<https://cuyahogafallshistory.com/2021/01/6825/>

The Xmas Gifts: Gifts were not always lavish. In the 1930s and 1940s groups of men, often firemen or policemen, collected old and broken toys which they repaired. At Christmas, they gave away these toys to children who lived in poor neighborhoods, with one of their men dressed as Santa Claus to hand out the gifts. In later years, and continuing today, benevolent organizations collect new toys for the same purpose!

In most homes, the presents were opened on Christmas morning, often very early in the morning when young children came in to wake up their parents and report that "Santa was here!". In some homes presents were opened on Christmas Eve. Often this was the

custom in families where the parents or grandparents had immigrated fairly recently, and from a traditionally Catholic area such as southern Germany, Austria, or Hungary. Most Pennsylvania German families, though, opened their Christmas presents on Christmas morning.

The types of presents children received changed dramatically in the 50 years between the 1930's and 1980's. In the 1930's the depression caused hardship. Many families had no money for presents or managed only small token presents. Even families with enough means to celebrate Christmas generally gave practical gifts to their children - socks, sweaters, and underwear, and only a few toys.

The number of presents and the type of presents changed with time. During the war years of the 1940's, meat sugar was rationed and oranges were expensive if they were even available. Toy soldiers and doctor kits were common gifts and presents of clothing apparel were still the norm. After the war, people began to give more toys at Christmas. Doll beds and carriages, sleds and wagons were large presents that appeared under some Christmas trees in the late 1940's. Cowboy and cowgirl outfits complete with cap guns were favorites of these years.



The 1950's saw a surge in the number of gifts. Prior to then, a child received relatively few presents on Christmas morning. However in middle-class suburban homes of the 1950's it became standard for each child to receive many presents, although a piece of clothing might still be among them. The obligatory present of underwear or socks disappeared by the 1960's. The 1970's saw the beginning of electronic toys and games, a genre which continues to this day. By the 1980's Atari's had become the longed for toy and by 1994 Play Stations were in demand. The number and type of presents and the culture itself had radically changed in this 50 year span of time.

Toys of the 1940's - Meccano sets and Erector sets, red wagons, sleds, Lincoln Logs, View Master, toy pianos, toy kitchens, doll houses and doll house furniture, Slinky, Monopoly, die cast model cars and trucks, Western outfits and cap guns, clip on roller skates.

Toys of the 1950's - Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head, Gumby, Matchbox Cars, Play Doh, Fisher Price Little People, Howdy Doody stuffed monkey, Gilbert Chemistry set, Paper dolls, Silly Putty, Yahtzee, Candyland, Scrabble, and Park and Shop board games.

Toys of the 1960's - Barbie (introduced in 1959), Hula Hoop, Chatty Cathy, Ken Doll, Hot Wheels, Easy Bake Oven, Lite-Brite, Etch-A-Sketch, Color Forms.

Toys of the 1970's - Hot Wheels, Star Wars Figures, Nerf Balls, Weebles, Trolls, Fisher Price Airport, Garage, etc. Baby Alive Doll, Boggle, Rubik's Cube, Simon Says, Skateboards, electronic games like Speak and Spell.

Christmas Eve Church Service: Amid the many preparations for Christmas, we remember going to church for candlelight services on Christmas Eve. There was a special magic in watching the dark church light up as the flame was passed from candle to candle. Pew by pew more candles were lit until the church was bright with warm candlelight.



Candlelight Christmas Eve service

https://www.wvnews.com/theet/news/live-music-candlelight-services-popular-in-churches-this-christmas-eve/article_1a095e3c-a6a4-50be-90e8-e2b741651c18.html

At home on Christmas eve, musical families sang and played together, making memories that still endure. And there were visiting relatives and friends who sometimes arrived with food, sometimes with gifts but always with good cheer. There were cousins to play games with, and best of all there was wonderful food to eat - food that appeared on the table only at Christmas time.

Turkey, Ham or Roast Beef? These were the three possible main courses for Christmas dinner. Among the Pennsylvania Germans, turkey with a potato based stuffing was most often served. Some families preferred a big farmer smoked ham, and in families where 'the English' had made inroads, roast beef might be found on the Christmas dinner table. Whatever the main course and whatever the side dishes, there were sure to be many and they were delicious.

Christmas cookies: Is there anyone who hasn't enjoyed Christmas cookies? The best were those we helped to make. Some of us had little rolling pins and miniature cookie cutters, but mostly we used mom's or grandma's big rolling pin and those old familiar cookie cutters that appeared every year. The roll-out cookies were usually vanilla 'sand tarts' but could also be gingerbread. Cookies were decorated with red and green sprinkles and sometimes with icing and nuts and they were oh so delicious when still warm (and a little flexible) right from the oven. There were other cookies that meant "It's Christmas time" to us: peanut butter cookies with the cross on top made by two pressed down forks. Chocolate chip cookies, sometimes with walnuts, sometimes without. Spritz cookies, thumbprints, icebox cookies and more. Some families made fudge or other candies. Brownies, lemon squares and more were all part of the plate of Christmas treats.



Christmas memories: No doubt we all have memories of our childhood Christmases. Memories of the 'best ever' Christmas and maybe memories of the 'worst' one as well. Some members of the DDFA have contributed snippets of their Christmas memories.

Bob Kendrick - DDFA President: Our Christmas in the 1960s always began with my father bringing out the light strings full of screw-in colored bulbs that had to be tested before either using some of the strings to fill the bushes out front in the yard, or those strings which we would set aside for decorating our tree, which was always in the middle of our Christmas Putz.

Testing each string was a complex process. Plugged in, my little sisters would watch as my Father and I would unscrew the burned out bulbs, always more than a few. That step would inadvertently mess up the color-order my Father had in mind. And with that, the lit ones which had to be moved, would inevitably be almost red hot to the touch but we handled them anyway! All my sisters could do was laugh at our reactions to these glowing embers of light that we would toss from hand-to-hand in an effort to cool them off before screwing them back in! A distant holiday tradition of creating the best colored light strings on the planet!

The tree was a marvel. Hand made ornaments mixed with handed-down glass ornaments stored with care in rickety segmented boxes. It was my Mother's job to hang those. My great grandfather's care giver was a skilled crafter and a hand made Christmas ornament was a gift she enjoyed giving. My 1st Christmas ornament, and each of my sister's 1st Christmas ornaments, always went up with a kind-of ceremony. My parents really knew how to decorate a tree and bring in the family joy of the season. We lived in the country North of Allentown for a while. Trucksville up off of Rt. 309. Hilly. Our tree and Putz in the front window. It snowed a lot. My father stood at the window cursing at the cinder trucks as they rolled by spreading the crushed coal clinkers which would damage the lawn he manicured all summer long.

Then on or about Christmas Eve, we would pack up and drive, in our Rambler American Wagon, to my Grandparents home on College Heights Blvd in Allentown for a nice bunch of days with family. Carols at my Uncle Eddy's and Aunt Jean's home. Our dinner on Christmas Eve at their house was memorable with all of the pies family would prepare and bring. Mincemeat, Apple, and Cherry, my favorites, served to us at the kids table!

In the morning on Christmas Day, my grandmother was up really early to get the Turkey in the oven. The house was already filling the house with wonderful aromas when we would charge down the stairs to see what Santa gifted us.

At right: Bob (standing) with sister and little brother, Christmas 1964.



Melanie Dresbach Warman: By age 6, I had decided that the whole Santa story was improbable and I shared this right before Christmas with my 18 year old brother. He thought that this was tragic and so, came up with a prank to change my mind.

Shortly after I went to bed on Christmas Eve, he climbed a ladder to the roof outside of my bedroom window. With a pair of sleigh bells borrowed from a neighbor, he ran across the roof from my window, back to the ladder, shaking the bells all the way. Then he climbed down the ladder and returned to the kitchen via the back door where my parents were drinking coffee. I was literally FROZEN in bed. Then I jumped up and ran to the window, pushed the curtains away and saw exactly nothing. I considered the risk of going downstairs BEFORE morning and decided to take my chances.

There, in the TV room, the Christmas tree was lit and surrounded by presents. I was stunned. My mom, dad and brother were all in the kitchen. I ran to the kitchen, barely able to get the words out, to tell them what I had found. "No, how could that be? We didn't hear anything and we were sitting right here the whole time." They made me coax them to come and see. They feigned shock and surprise but they let me open one gift and then I went back to bed. I will admit that this made me rethink the question of Santa's reality. But not for long. And I somehow knew that my big brother was involved.

Rachel Meyer: When I recall my childhood Christmases, I have visions of the wonderful variety of foods, including the smell of cinnamon rolls baking in the kitchen. There is one smell I remember because it was not enticing to me...the smell of the fresh oyster dressing baking in the oven. It was an annual tradition that my parents looked forward to. The week before Christmas was our annual Christmas program at church. We children would perform for all of the adults with carols and scripture memorization (that we had practiced for weeks). Members of the congregation would play the shepherds, wise men, Mary and Joseph portraying the first Christmas, and there was usually a young baby who played the part of baby Jesus. At the end of the program there would be an appearance by Santa Claus, who would give us each a gift. Sometimes it was a white paper bag of a delicious chocolate candy mixture, which was always appreciated! Several times we received a little plastic creche. I have attached a picture that is the style of creche we received. I am also attaching the photo of me on my first Christmas with the putz under the tree in the background. I did not know what a putz was. I don't remember the putz in later years and after reading your interesting newsletter about the tradition of a putz, I was surprised to find it in the background of these photos.

We always went to our Grandpa's and Grandma's woods to cut our own Christmas tree a few days before Christmas. It usually required a trek through the creek, so we bundled up with our rubber boots, scarves and mittens. The type of tree that grew wild in the woods was a Leland Cypress. The fronds of the Cypress were soft and the stems weren't very sturdy. I remember the ornaments were often too heavy to stay on the branches. But the smell of the fresh-cut cypress was heavenly! At our Christmas gatherings with grandparents, I remember the cut-out cookies made by my Aunt Joy, the gumdrop tree my Grandmother used as a centerpiece, and the popcorn balls my Grandma made for the holiday, in addition to the very large meals served at their beautifully adorned dining room tables.

Below: Rachel Meyer with a doll for her first Christmas, 1955. Plastic nativity set similar to those given to children at church Christmas program.



Pauline Brookfield: One of my favorite Christmas memories is helping Mom bake lots of Christmas cookies. Although she did most of the work as well as the clean-up, my sisters and I each had small jobs and also regularly tasted the batter. In fact, we loved our cookies so much that every year when our teachers asked who would be willing to bring Christmas cookies to the class party, my sisters and I always raised our hands because we thought our Mom's cookies were the best. Mom was always gracious, and we three girls delighted our teachers and friends with tasty goodies. It wasn't until I was older and heard Mom retelling stories of Christmas that I learned there were years when she was so busy preparing for Christmas, she sometimes wished we girls had kept our hands down! Little did we know that sometimes she would be baking late at night, never saying a word to us, simply smiling in the morning and handing us our tin of cookies to share. She was truly a gem.

Bettijane Burger: On Christmas Eve, we would have a family get-together. My father would read the Scripture, my mom would play the singing saw. My older sister would play the violin. My middle sister would play the piano or accompany my singing "O Holy Night" or playing it on the flute. Then we would go to Christmas Eve service at our Methodist Church.

I think my mom learned the singing saw at Wooster College. Her mom was Flora Etta Dreisbach Behner, born in Benton Ridge, OH.



At Left: Bettijane in front, coming downstairs with her sisters for Christmas morning. Below: Picture of a woman playing the singing saw.

This is NOT Bettijane's mother. It's Marlene Dietrich who played the singing saw - as did Bettijane's mother.



Jeff Dreisbach: My mother would start baking Christmas cookies early in December. She would freeze them in a freezer in our basement. Of course we were strictly forbidden to go into that freezer. Well, Saturday mornings my brother Scott and I would sneak in and load up so we had cookies watching Saturday morning cartoons. Needless to say Marjorie (my mom) was upset when her chocolate chip and pecan fingers were severely depleted.

Debbie Brooke: One of my memories about my very early Christmas years was always thinking that there were millions of gifts under the tree by Christmas Eve. Piles of gifts! And I was not wrong. My paternal grandfather was a wonderful and generous local doctor who often took goods in trade for his services, or only accepted small payments from those patients he knew were struggling financially. He did a lot of pro bono work too. And his patients were so grateful that many of them repaid him by buying Christmas presents for his 3 adored granddaughters. On Christmas morning after all the gifts were opened I clearly remember my mother lining up all the dolls (for instance) that we had received and allowing us to pick one and to understand that the rest would go to less fortunate children. We never questioned sharing the bounty. And we were not extraordinary children, we just recognized "too much" when it was right in front of us. Those were our earliest lessons in sharing and understanding that everyone was not as fortunate as we were. My mother lived by that code and we were blessed to have had her set that example for us at such a young age.

Christy Hendricks sent a Christmas Candy recipe (see page 15) and photos of herself all dressed up on Christmas Eve (at left) and playing with new gifts on Christmas morning (at right) in 1976. She's playing with a hairdresser doll (it came with only the head) and is wearing a new watch and new slippers!



Sharon Driscoll: I grew up when the Christmas tree lights had cloth covering the wires (some houses caught on fire), bubble lights and a star on the tree. My dad loved listening to big band music most of the year. During Christmas he switched gears to the old Christmas classics such as: *Sleigh Bells* with Gene Autry, *Frosty the Snowman* with Patsy Cline, *White Christmas* with Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole (Chestnuts roasting over an open fire). This is just a few! The movies we would watch were *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), *White Christmas* (1954), *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (1965), and *A Christmas Carol* (1938). These were my favorites.

After Thanksgiving we would bundle up in our snow suits and drive to the nearest Christmas tree farm. Sometimes it was snowing while we were wandering row after row looking for the perfect tree. Then, we would go home for hot chocolate and begin decorating. We would always have either a Blue Spruce, Scotch Pine, Norway Spruce or Eastern White Pine. My favorites were the Blue Spruce and the Eastern White Pine. There would be live clippings from the tree on the fireplace mantle and the dining room table with tapered candles. We always would bundle up for a car ride through Old Arlington to see the mansions decorated for Christmas. Most of the mansions were professionally decorated. They were amazing! Also, we would drive to German Village in Columbus to eat at Schmidt's Sausage Haus. German cream puffs yum! That is where we usually ate my birthday dinner on December 23rd.

For our Christmas dinner we would always have a white lace tablecloth, China, sterling silver, and cloth napkins. It was always the same food! We would have Turkey, dressing (like Amish), mashed potatoes, turkey gravy, mashed sweet potatoes, oyster dressing, cranberry salad (recipe from my Aunt Marie), always pumpkin pie and date nut pudding. We rolled dinner rolls in butter & cinnamon sugar (not healthy!)

December was my brother's and my month. Our birthdays were a week apart. We would ice skate, snow ski, build snowmen, make snow angels, igloos and have snowball fights. I would ride my horse with sleigh bells. My families' traditions always bring a smile to my face.

My parents ALWAYS said MERRY CHRISTMAS! They understood it to mean we Wish You Well and Peace.

Jennifer Dresbach: My favorite memories include waking up before dawn, tiptoeing out to the living room, and gasping with delight upon seeing half the room covered in wrapped packages, radiating out from the tree. I would have been around 8 or 9, the middle of 3 girls, and knew I had to return to bed and wait for the sun to come up and the adults to wake up. Later, we would have oranges or grapefruit for breakfast, and maybe a sweet roll, then tear into the packages in a frenzy of ripped wrapping paper and ribbon.

Later still, my grandma and aunt would arrive with more wrapped presents (usually dolls) and the frenzy would begin anew. Then my Grandma Dresbach would come with her packages and her famous oyster dressing. We would help set the table for Christmas dinner, usually around noon or one o'clock, and mom would bring out the ham (or turkey), scalloped potatoes and green bean casserole, followed of course by pies (chocolate cream, mince, or pecan, if memory serves me correctly) and whipped cream.

One other memory stands out. I was 10 or 11 and woke up early on Christmas morning but for all the wrong reasons. I was sick with the stomach flu, and in pure disbelief. Sick on Christmas? Who does that!?!? But I remember my parents got me a ukulele from Sears, and I was too sick to open it. Later that day I lay on my bed and strummed it a bit, then went back to sleep. I thought it was such a cool present! I still have that and am thinking about getting it out on Christmas day and playing some carols.By the way, this was in Chillicothe OH in the 1960's. I would love to hear my sisters' perspectives and see if they remembered things differently.

Marcia Dreisbach-Falconer: Decorating the Xmas tree was one of the things I enjoyed doing as a kid although it was years before I knew that after I had put all the ornaments on the tree and gone to bed, my mother *redecorated* the entire tree! Later, if I noticed an ornament had been moved, I was - sometimes - allowed to reposition it. Tree decorating had rules: large spaces between branches *had* to have a long, dangly, ornament and it was not permissible to have more than 2 similar balls or balls of the same color, close together! I also have very fond memories of spending hours running the Lionel O-gauge train on the putz and rearranging houses and people to tell different stories.

Hanging up my empty stocking just before going upstairs to bed was when Christmas really began. I was allowed to come down before anyone else was awake and take my stocking back upstairs and open it while I was in bed. That was special. It also gave me a sneak peek at the presents under the tree and very early in life I recognized my name in writing so that I could find MY Christmas presents! As for favorite Christmas presents, I think receiving my sister's old dollhouse which my father had redecorated and electrified was among the best.

There were other presents that I vividly remember. One was a huge disappointment. It came when my aunt and uncle visited and gave me a large box all wrapped in cheerful paper. I was very excited, ripped open the paper and found ... a slip (underwear for girls and women which almost no longer exists). I was dreadfully disappointed, and it got worse. There was a second present in this box, one clearly supposed to make me feel better about getting underwear. It was an early "bobble head", a 12" high, paper mache doll whose upper body was one solid piece that could be rocked back and forth on her legs. It was called a "Swing and Sway with Sammy Kaye" doll, and I loathed it. It has since become a rare collector's item and sells on eBay for a lot of money. I regret to say that I gave it away 'to the poor children' as soon as my mother allowed me to!

At right a Creche from the 1930's. This is very much like the one I had as a child. My sister, Ardis Dreisbach Grosjean, currently has this Creche in her home in Stockholm, Sweden.

The figures are made of paper mache. Palm tree visible at left was not part of original creche.



Christmas GOODIES

Charlene Dresbach Woolever's Christmas Fruit Cake
sent in by her daughter, Rachel Meyer

Christmas Fruit Cake

1 c. butter	2 c. currants
2 c. light brown sugar	1 lb. mixed candied fruit + citron
1 c. grape juice	1/4 lb. candied cherries
4 eggs (beaten)	4 c. flour
3 T. lemon juice	1/2 t. soda
2 t. cinnamon	2 lb. English walnuts, nut
1 t. cloves	1 lb. pecans, shelled
1 t. nutmeg	1/2 lb. almonds.
1/2 t. salt	1 t. vanilla.
1 cup seedless raisins	

Cream butter + sugar until creamy. Add
beaten eggs. Add grape juice and sifted dry
ingredients alternately. Mix all fruit, raisins,
and nuts. Add. Bake at 275° until done.
(about 2 hours).

This was my mother's recipe (Charlene Dresbach Woolever) and I don't know if it was handed down from her mother or not. I don't remember Grandmother making them...just Mom. Mom would make a special trip to one grocery store that stocked up on the candied fruits. These fruits were a little expensive. We weren't allowed to help...she wouldn't have wanted us to make a mistake in the mixing. She baked one or two large cakes in an angel food cake pan. She made several more batches to give as gifts. She used mini loaf pans and some pans of her own creation using empty vegetable cans. After they were baked, she would cut the bottom out of the cans and use a metal scraper to loosen the cake from the sides of the cans. She wrapped them in Saran wrap or cellophane and tied ribbons around them. They made adorable little gifts. Of course, any that broke apart during the extraction were kept in a cookie tin for us to eat!

Erma's Chocolate Icebox Cookies

1930's recipe of Erma Musser Dreisbach, mother of Marcia Dreisbach-Falconer

First make sour milk: add 1 ½ tsp plain vinegar to ½ cup whole milk, let stand, don't stir.

Next cream together:

1 cup butter and

2 cups light brown sugar until smooth

Add 2 eggs and mix well

To this add: 5 squares melted unsweetened chocolate, 1 tsp vanilla, the ½ cup of sour milk, mix

In large bowl put:

4 1/3 cup flour

½ tsp baking soda

1 tsp baking powder

½ tsp salt

Mix thoroughly then add 1 cup broken walnuts

Stir liquid ingredients into dry ingredients and mix thoroughly. Shape into two "logs" each 2" to 3" in diameter, press top of rolls to flatten, then wrap in wax paper or plastic, refrigerator overnight. Can be kept several days in fridge, or frozen for later use.

Slice each "log" just before baking into thin slices (1/4 inch thick) Bake on ungreased cookie tray at 375F for 10 to 12 minutes (depends how thickly cookies are sliced)

Pfeffernusse - an old Mennonite Christmas Cookie Recipe

(Recipe based on Pfeffernusse in *Mennonite Community Cookbook* by Mary Emma Showalter)

In a large bowl cream together until soft and fluffy:

1/2 cup butter and 1 cup sugar

Add 1 tsp peppermint extract

Add 1 cup cream to butter mixture and blend thoroughly

Measure 1 cup milk and set aside

Sift together 6 cups flour plus 3 tsps baking powder and a little salt

Can add 2tsp cinnamon and/or ½ tsp cloves and ½ tsp cardamum to the flour if you want. Sift everything together..

Add flour mixture alternately with milk, beat until soft dough forms.

Chill dough in refrigerator several hours.

Divide cold dough into 4 equal parts, work with one part, keep the other 3 in the fridge.

Cut dough into slices and roll into 1" thick "snakes". Cut off marble size bits and roll into balls.

Place balls fairly close together on greased baking sheet.

Bake at 375F for 8 to 10 min or until starting to turn brown.

Remove from baking sheet and roll in powdered sugar. May want to roll again before serving.

Pfeffernusse will be small somewhat flat cookies about the size of a quarter.

Divinity Candy

Sent in by Christy Hendricks

Prep: 25 minutes Cook: 10 minutes

2½ cups sugar
½ cup light-colored corn syrup
½ cup water
2 egg whites
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 or 2 drops food coloring (optional)
½ cup chopped candied fruit and/or nuts



In a heavy 2-quart saucepan combine sugar, corn syrup, and water. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until mixture boils. Clip a candy thermometer to the side of the pan. Reduce heat to medium; continue cooking, without stirring, until the thermometer registers 260°, hard-ball stage (10 to 15 minutes).

Remove saucepan from heat; remove thermometer. In a large mixing bowl beat egg whites with a freestanding electric mixer on medium speed until stiff peaks form (tips stand straight). Gradually pour hot mixture in a thin stream over egg whites, beating on high speed about 3 minutes, scrape side of bowl occasionally. Add vanilla and, if desired, food coloring. Continue beating on high speed just until candy starts to lose its gloss (5 to 6 minutes).

When beaters are lifted, mixture should fall in a ribbon that mounds on itself.

Drop a spoonful of candy mixture onto waxed paper. If it stays mounded, the mixture has been beaten sufficiently. If mixture flattens, beat ½ to 1 minute more; check again. If mixture is too stiff to spoon, beat in a few drops hot water until candy is a softer consistency. Immediately stir in fruit and/or nuts. Quickly drop mixture onto waxed paper. Store tightly covered. Makes about 40 pieces.

This is my favorite Christmas candy recipe that my Mom used to make.

From: *1937 recipe from Better Homes and Gardens All Time Favorites*

