



# CHEYENNE GENEALOGY JOURNAL

A PUBLICATION OF THE CHEYENNE GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Hi everyone,

I hope this will be a fun newsletter. Several members have responded to my request for stories about their Christmas memories and those stories have been included in this special newsletter.

I hope you all have a Very Special Merry Christmas and the hopes of a Prosperous 2010.

Wanda



The glass display case is outside the Genealogy Room on the third floor of the library and the Society will be displaying mementos again. The first display is a collection of old Christmas cards and Christmas ornaments by Sharon Field and Wanda Wade.

We hope you enjoy these displays and if you have collections you would like to share with the public please contact me at [wade\\_27043@msn.com](mailto:wade_27043@msn.com).



## HOPE YOU ENJOY ALL OF THE CHRISTMAS STORIES!

Being one of the Depression kids we didn't have a lot of extras. Most of our gifts were home made, however when I was about in the fourth grade I wanted a real bike. I had a little hand me down sidewalk model with wheels about 14 inches diameter. My mother was bed-fast and Daddy had extended the legs and put casters on a cot so she could be wheeled into the living room where we had the Christmas tree. After most of the gifts had been opened Mama asked me to bring her a glass of water. I obediently went after it even though I had to squeeze past the prettiest blue bike I'd ever seen. It had balloon tires! I brought her the water and must have had a strange look on my face because Daddy asked what was the matter. I said "There was a bicycle in the way". He asked if there was a tag on it and if so who was it for? I honestly told him I did not know, I had not looked. They then told me it was mine. What a thrill it was.

Ginny Rowland



Christmas story:

Christmas trees were always the special thing in my Christmas's. I remember having no Christmas tree for Christmas when I was five years old. It really looked like it was going to be a bad Christmas. My father had been out of work and so it was going to be very slim. There was really only one thing I wanted for Christmas and that was a tree. Since we lived in a small town the word got out that we wouldn't have a tree. I was in Kindergarten, my teacher was Miss Calan, when she heard about us she went to my mother and talked to her. She told mama that as soon as school was out the tree we had in our class room would be thrown out. She asked mama if we would like to have it. So they had daddy come and pick it up. On Christmas eve, I went to bed and hoped Santa would find us. Being a child, I slept very sound. Daddy and mama brought the tree in and set it up. It was the greatest Christmas I could think of having.

Joey Sailors



I was 4 or 5 years old the year my father built a revolving Christmas Tree stand. My father had acquired a house from an old homestead south of Ovid, Colorado and he had removed the second story of the two story house, moved it to town and converted it to our 4 room house. The house was located at the north end of the main North South street in town and you could see the window in our living room from a few blocks south.

That window was the location for the revolving Christmas tree. In my child's memory the tree turned completely around, it didn't go part way around then turn back. But that is what my child's mind remembers.

While the tree was up people would drive by more than once to make sure they were seeing what they thought they had seen. One man even came to the door one night and ask to come in to make sure it was the tree and not that he had imbibed too much at the local bar!

We moved the following year and the revolving tree stand didn't come with us, but that tree has always fascinated me. So, two years ago I purchased a revolving tree stand for my kids at Hobby Lobby just to keep my memory alive.

Wanda Wade



Christmas for Leslie and her family:

I grew up in Northern New Jersey, in a family deeply engrained in the English traditions. For the entire month before Christmas, my brother and I searched the house for presents, wrapped and hidden, trying to guess not only the contents, but whose gifts we had found! Sometimes they were stacked on top of the china closet; sometimes in our folks closet; sometimes in a cupboard, but never the same place twice. Never were they labeled in a way that could identify them to the future owner. Of course our parents had NO idea that we ever looked for them, and we NEVER touched them as the surprise made the waiting well worth all. The house was decorated with fresh pine boughs and mistletoe, red and white trinkets, brown leather leprechauns and many other things. It smelled of the many, many newly baked cookies and other sweets.

Finally, Christmas Eve arrived. We had a special dinner for all four grandparents, our family, and the cousins' families that were in the area, and then put the tree up, but no decorations except the star on the top were added. As a family (my

parents, brother and myself), made sure it had plenty of water, and was not too close to the fireplace. A snack for Santa was put prominently on the coffee table. My brother and I were upstairs by 7:30 that night, tied long, long woolen socks (my dad's plaid hunting socks) on the foot of our bed, and promptly fell sound asleep after prayers, and before 7:45!

Santa Claus couldn't come to the house till we were in dreamland. Sometime, long after my parents were in bed and the company left, Santa came! He decorated the tree, assembled the electric train that surrounded the stacks and stacks of wrapped gifts under and around our tree, filled the socks to overflowing, then ate his snack, turned on the electric train and the tree lights, and left (by chimney, probably) all without any sound whatsoever!

At the crack of dawn, and not a minute later, we woke, grabbed the socks from the bed, and ran to our parents room to wake them with the news that, yes, Santa DID come this year, too. The giant socks, stretched to their fullest, were then dumped on our parent's, who were barely awake. There was always a paper comic book in the top of the sock, an apple in the heel and an orange in the toe. In between were all kinds of little treasures, and sometimes even a candy or two. Next, we ran downstairs and finally, were allowed to enter the living room – mom went first, and “snap” the traditional Christmas morning picture, with surprise written all over our faces, as we first looked at the tree! Santa really had come to our house, one more time! Dad handed out the presents; one at a time they were opened and examined, with wonderful “ohs and ahs.” Oh, the joy of the morning!

When all the abundance were placed in our own little (huge, actually) stack, into the kitchen for a breakfast of cold cereal, sweet rolls and juice, always gobbled and never more than half chewed before being swallowed. It's a wonder we didn't choke ourselves. Then back we went, to play with Santa's offerings till time to put on our finest clothes, and take one gift for to show others, plus the offerings for my dad's side of the family. To the paternal grandparents house we went, and gift opening started all over again!

Ah, to be young and innocent again!

Leslie Vosler



Each year we went to a certain lot across the Missouri river to pick our Christmas tree because they had the freshest trees. We'd bring it home and Dad would saw off an inch or two and stick it in a bucket of water. Then he'd bring it inside and set it up. Mom and I'd tell him when it was straight. Dad would put strings and strings and strings of lights on it and then the ornaments. Then he'd begin the arduous job of putting on the tinsel. He put each piece of tinsel no more than 1 inch from the previous piece. He'd start at the trunk of each branch and work his way out. It took him hours and hours after work and on weekends to put the tinsel on the tree, but he did it every year. Our tree was always spectacular. Then when Christmas was over, he'd take every strand off just as carefully and save it for next year.

Sue Seniawski



I grew up in Riverton, Wyoming. My older brothers (my next older brother is thirteen years older than I am) said that when they would go to bed Christmas Eve there was no Christmas tree, no Christmas decorations in our house. When they woke up Christmas morning there was a Christmas tree all decorated and with presents under it.

When I was small we would open our presents Christmas morning, then my aunt, uncle, and three cousins would come over to join us for dinner.

Mom would watch for them to come up the walk so that she could have (Merry, Merry Christmas as I recall) playing on the wind up phonograph when they came through the front door. They could not call to let us know when they were coming as they did not have a telephone.

Lowell Ray Anderson



It was always a Christmas tradition that my mother would make Spritz cookies (Swedish) for us every holiday. We looked forward to it all year, and it was the first thing everyone asked for when going home to visit. She got her recipe from a Swedish friend, and only baked them at Christmas (no wonder - she had to make dozens & dozens to feed us all).

They are really delicious but about 500 calories each - since they're made of butter, sugar and a little flour.

Judy Wilson



This is an old recipe.

#### CHOCOLATE GRAVY

3/4 CUP SUGAR      2 CUPS MILK  
3 T COCOA          2 T BUTTER  
3 T FLOUR          1 tsp VANILLA  
PINCH OF SALT

Mix dry ingredients--stir into milk.  
Cook at medium heat until thick.  
Add butter and vanilla.  
Serve over biscuits.

Pauline Sawyer



The most memorable Christmas I remember was one that changed my life significantly. When I was seven years old My father and mother purchased a Lionel train set for me. We lived in Lockport, Illinois. A town that was served by the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio and the Santa Fe railroads. Well, receiving Lionel train equipment and watching my dad build the train table and play with it increased my interest in trains. As I grew up I would sit in the car in Joliet to watch the trains go through Union Station while mom and grandmother shopped.

When I went to college in Salt Lake City, I found myself purchasing a camera and taking photos of trains on the Union Pacific and Rio Grande Railroads. After college I returned home to find work in sales for Texaco Refining. But sales was not in my blood.

After I left Texaco within a year, I found myself looking for work. Well those years of Lionel influenced me even further as I found employment on the Rock Island Railroad out of Chicago. I worked there for 4 years as a brakeman and conductor. Seeing signs of the Rock Island's demise I looked elsewhere. This brought me back to the inter-mountain west that I loved. So I ended up here in Cheyenne working for the Union Pacific for 27 years until my retirement.

Thus a Lionel Christmas present so long ago brought me here and influenced my life.

To this day I work for the Union Pacific Historical Society and belong to two Model railroad organizations.

Bob Krieger, UP retired, Cheyenne



My mom and dad's first Christmas as a married couple they each wrapped the gift they'd purchased for each other and put it under the tree. Each time my mom walked past the tree she shook her present trying to figure out what was inside. When Christmas finally arrived and they opened their gifts, Mom's was a clock, . . . but it was broken from all the shaking. From then on they didn't put any presents under the tree until Christmas eve just before bed. That is a tradition I've continued with my family.

Sue Seniawski



We always opened our Christmas presents on Christmas Eve because Christmas Day was spent at Grandma and Grandpa George's ranch for dinner with my mother's family. Christmas Eve was a special time for my sister and me--My grandfather, a widower, was Sheriff in Converse County, and was always with us for Christmas Eve dinner.

He often had deputies or patrolmen that had no family. So, the Lass Family was their family for Christmas Eve. Of course we kids got really neat gifts--viewfinders, entire paint sets, books, that were made more special because we realized those men who had no children, had taken the time to shop for us!

One year after Santa had come, Grandpa left the room for a few minutes, and when we looked around a brand new children's saddle suddenly appeared under the tree. Bette and I both fought to be the first to sit in it, then we looked at each other--why did we get a saddle? "Grandpa, why did you give us a saddle?--we don't have a horse kids can ride!" Grandpa was a big man and he had a big chuckle--"wellllll, the snow was too deep to get "Honey" a little grey mare out to the ranch, but you can bet she'll be here as soon as the snow melts"

The excitement of that Christmas eve stayed with us for months as we carefully watched for the snow to melt and roads to dry up. When Honey did arrive, she wasn't the most beautiful horse we had ever seen, but boy did we have fun for many years riding her with our Christmas Saddle!

Sharon Field



My grandparents always made sure that Christmas was special for us. We were poor, yes, the real poor where the end of the month meant rice and beans, and so this is when we received coats, gloves and boots from them. One year, though, besides sleds (so cool!) I also received a trunk full of handmade Barbie clothes. I must have spent the whole day dressing her in these clothes. I still have them and honestly don't think that anyone else would appreciate them as I do. I am not even certain that I properly thanked my grandmother, but since I am sure she is listening: Thanks!

Judy Engelhart



What happened to Santa?

When I was a little girl, Santa dressed in red suit and white beard came to our house every Christmas Eve. Daddy always missed getting to see Santa as he had to make sure we had fire wood or something else that was important. Just a few minutes after Daddy would go outside, and soon the back door would open and we'd hear "HO! HO! HO! MERRY CHRISTMAS", as in came Santa. He always remembered our names as he opened his gunny sack and pulled out toys, and assorted goodies. Poor Daddy never got to meet him.

Then in 1948, when I was 8, my older sister married in Sept. That Christmas Eve Daddy didn't go outside. Santa didn't forget though. When he came through the backdoor, he sounded a little different! That wasn't all!!! His eyes had changed from a clear blue to a dark brown. There was something fishy about all this. When I told my Mother that I thought Santa wasn't real, she made me promise to keep a secret. We all could become elves and help Santa out when we were old enough. I could be an elf now!

Marge Dreiling



My step father Don was a big tease and he and his friend Bill who lived across the street always had a friendly challenge with each other about the amount of money they would spend on postage during the Christmas season. The rivalry would start as soon as the first Christmas cards were mailed right after Thanksgiving. Of course this was long before e-mail cards; when the stamp to mail a Christmas card cost less than a dime and there were no zip codes.

After those cards were mailed they would keep track of how many cards they received and how much postage was on the envelopes. Then they would compare that to the amount they had spent on their own postage stamps. Bill and his wife would come across the street each evening and the 'Christmas Postage' was the first topic of conversation between Don and Bill. What a game they played, and each would be so excited when they broke even on their postage expenditure.

One year Don was winning – he had outspent Bill on postage and he teased him about it every time they came over. That Christmas Eve Bill and his wife came to our house very early. Don ask him 'What are you doing here so early, we aren't ready to open packages yet?' Bill just replied that they didn't have anything to do at home so they thought they would come over.

Not too long after that the door bell rang. When Don answered the door the postman handed him a Special Delivery letter – from Bill. The amount of the postage on the Special Delivery made Bill the winner that year.

Wanda Wade



My father was a civil engineer with the U.S. Foreign Service during most of my growing-up years. For one of his foreign assignments, he was stationed in Colombo, Ceylon and the family was traveling there by ship—the Cunard Line—from Southampton, England through the eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal. We had two cramped inside staterooms as our home for almost a month during December 1959.

Christmas loomed as just another day at sea and somewhat depressing for a 6<sup>th</sup> grader and her younger brother and sister, but my mother somehow managed to stash a small tinsel tree and some lights into a suitcase as a surprise...as well as wrapped gifts for everyone. The holidays were very special that year on the rolling sea, when family togetherness meant much more than material things.

Wendy Douglass





Wes Shafer allowed me to copy this photograph. It is so charming. How many people do you see in the picture?



## COMPUTER INTEREST GROUP

BY: LESLIE VOSLER

Hi All,

. See you in January.

**WHEN** - 1st Thursday of the month

**WHERE** - The in the Laramie County Library at about 6:30 p.m.

**WHAT** - Bring your LAPTOP (if you have one and want to do so). Plus bring your questions and problems, solutions and suggestions, 'new stuff and old stuff'.

If you have any desires for programs for the coming year please let us know.

If you have questions, contact Leslie Vosler  
hm: (307) 635-5892 - fax: (307) 637-2893  
cell: (307) 630-8864

Looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

## UP COMING CHEYENNE GENEALOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| January 12, 2010 | Organizing Your Research<br>Melanie Bosselman   |
| February 9, 2010 | Individual Research in<br>Genealogy Room<br>Laramie County Library<br>Details to be determined  |
| March 9, 2010    | National Archives and Records<br>Administration-Rocky<br>Mountain Region<br>Eric Bittner, Archivist, NARA<br>Rocky Mountain Region<br>Denver, Colorado<br>Exact program to be<br>determined |



## CURRENT OFFICERS OF CHEYENNE GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President - Wendy Douglass	307-632-2533
Vice President - Judy Engelhart	307-632-2623
Secretary - Freda A. Wright	307-637-5218
Treasurer - Bert Budd	307-632-8256
Past President -Van Mellblom	307-635-0128

If you have suggestions for newsletter or areas of interest you would like to share please contact me at [WADE\\_27043@msn.com](mailto:WADE_27043@msn.com) or 307-638-3877.



MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!