

editorials & commentary

Symbols And Traditions

Hanukkah, the Jewish "Festival of Lights," began last Friday night with the setting sun.

It is the celebration of the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem in 165 B.C., after the Jewish forces, led by Judah Maccabee, took control of their desecrated temple from the Syrians.

It is also the celebration of a miracle. According to tradition, when the Maccabees entered the temple they found one vessel of oil undecorated, overlooked by the Syrians. It was enough for a single day, but the oil burned for eight days, hence the eight days of the Hanukkah celebration.

The symbols of Hanukkah, the menorah, the giving of gifts on each of the eight nights, the eating of traditional foods such as potato pancakes called latkes, are firmly fixed in the Jewish faith.

But just as some Christians feel that Christmas, the celebration of Christ's birth, has moved far away from the simplicity of a snowy night in Bethlehem, some Jews are finding it increasingly difficult to keep the Hanukkah traditions.

Jewish children are exposed to the same frantic pre-Christmas advertising hype as their Christian counterparts. Faced with requests for

video games, ten-speed bicycles and stereo systems, some Jewish parents express frustration over trying to maintain the Hanukkah tradition of small gifts.

And the tinsel side of Christmas is alluring. Some Jewish families celebrate parts of both holidays, with colored lights and a Christmas tree standing beside the menorah.

The story of Hanukkah is a beautiful one, filled with the indomitable Jewish spirit of triumph over tyranny.

The story of Christmas, with its own traditions, is also beautiful. Christians the world over look to this season for a renewal of their faith and hope in the future.

Both Jews and Christians need to look back; to the origins of Hanukkah and Christmas, to the miracles of the oil and the baby's birth, to the symbols of these holidays.

We may be unable to escape the commercial noise around us. Perhaps the best we can hope for is to tune it out for awhile. The miracles of Hanukkah and Christmas require quiet and contemplation, precious commodities today, and all the more precious if we make the effort to achieve them.

TOYS:

Check For Safety Before You Buy

With Christmas right around the corner, children are eagerly lobbying for their favorite gift choices. "However," warned Karen Burstein, executive director of the State Consumer Protection Board, "popularity is not reason enough for a toy purchase."

"There is a voluntary product standard for most playthings developed by the Toy Manufacturers of America with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the National Bureau of Standards," she said. "The purpose of the standard is to establish safety requirements for toys intended for use by children up to 14 years of age."

Consumers and other interested groups contribute to the success of these standards by promoting their use and helping to keep them current with respect to new technology and marketing practices.

In order for shoppers to be able to identify products conforming to the voluntary standards, a statement of compliance may appear on the tag or label, along with the name and address of the toy producer, importer or distributor.

The statement may read: "Conforms to safety requirements of P572-

76."

Ms. Burstein noted that the standard does not cover "every conceivable hazard of a toy nor its performance or quality."

What it does mean is that the toy has undergone thorough testing, perhaps as many as 100 different tests, including:

—an "abuse" test which involves exposing the toy to mechanical damage through dropping, throwing, and other actions likely to be repeated by a child,

—an "impact" test which is intended to determine possible damage to a toy if it falls from a crib, table or counter top,

—a "normal" use test and more such as a "bite" test, "tipover" test, "tension" test, "flammability" test, "wash and dry" test and others specific to the nature of the toy's usage.

After each test is completed, the toy is examined for possible hazards such as sharp edges, points and loosened, ingestible objects.

Articles not covered by the Voluntary Product Standard include bicycles, sling shots, sharp pointed darts, crayons, paints, chalks and

other similar art materials, playground equipment, B-B guns, kites, and hobby and craft items in which the finished item is not primarily of play value, sporting goods, camping goods, athletic equipment, musical instruments, furniture and powered models.

At tag will help you judge appropriate age, skill and interest level.

Further, check for terms such as "non-toxic" on painted toys, "flame retardant" or "flame resistant" on fabric products and "washable-hygiene materials" on stuffed toys and dolls. Look for quality construction and design, and consider whether the particular toy can tolerate your child's normal playing habits.

Ms. Burstein urged consumers to teach their children the importance of stringing toys until their next use in order to prevent breakage and accidents. She further recommends that all toys be checked for wear on a regular basis and that any breakages be repaired or the toy discarded.

For toy safety checklist or further information on the subject, write to the State Consumer Protection Board, 99 Washington Ave., Albany, 12210.

From Our Files

MADRID, July 22, 1875 — Mr. George Walker has nearly completed a very fine brick house on his place, about a mile out of the village. The Scotch boys seem to be getting rich, while other folks are asleep.

Sept. 17, 1875 — Mr. Seth Benson has sold his residence on Market Street, known as the "Widow Parker Place," to A.A. Hessey for \$2,700.

"Did my moustache trouble you?" asked Blubbs to his sweetheart. "No, I only felt a little down in the mouth," was the answer.

Dec. 9, 1875 — The lumbering interests of Potsdam, we are happy to note, are resuming their old vigor. John Snell, with 140 men and 25 or 30 teams is getting logs into the Racket River at Hollywood, about 35 miles above this village. The snow is a foot deep and this makes enough to draw logs to advantage.

Dec. 9, 1875 — Good clear ice about a foot in thickness is now being taken from the Racket. It is rare that the ice season commences so early.

Dec. 9, 1875 — Dr. J.M. Dow, Homeopathic Physician and Surgeon, offices in Westcott Block, office hours: until 9:00 a.m., 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., after 6:00 p.m.

Dec. 9, 1875 — Sweep Powers for churning, sawing, threshing and running all kinds of farm machinery Patented Dec. 22, 1874. Dairy Power, geared overhead, set up and attached to churn ready to use \$35.

NICHOLVILLE, July 20, 1876 — The work on the new M.E. Church in this place, under the direction of L. Blanchard, is progressing finely. The spire is 95 feet high.

July 20, 1876 — "The blessed man that preached for us last Sunday," said Mrs. Partington, "served the Lord for 30 years first as a circus rider, then as a locust preacher, and last as an exhauster."

CRARY MILLS, July 26, 1876 — Morrill's Creamery at Crary Mills receives the milk from 400 cows which now amounts to about 7,000 pounds per day.

LANGDON SPRING, July 26, 1876 — The Langdon Spring butter factory receives milk from 380 cows.

July 26, 1876 — A Down-East editor says: "The ladies spring hats are pretty and worn on the upper edge of the left ear, which makes one look arch and piquant, like a chicken looking through a crack in the fence."

July 26, 1876 — The system of drainage in Potsdam is a complicated and curious affair. We have one or two pretty good drains, but they are the result of nature rather than art, and unfortunately take a most circuitous route, seemingly to avoid the locations most in need of drainage. The most important of these is first seen issuing from under a stable at Leroy Street, at the corner of Clinton, it then crosses Leroy and after flowing for a few rods to the westward turns south, crossing Broad Street, flows into some fields; it is next seen emerging from

another stable on Market Street, crossing Market Street it flows down Willow Street for a short distance when it abruptly turns to the south, crossing Depot Street discharges its effluent in the low land near the steam mill. This is the main drain of the village, and it is used as drain, sewer and receptacle for refuse matter. It drains a few cellars and carries off surface water and sewage. The other drain crosses Market Street between Pleasant and Garden but unfortunately deposits more water in this locality than it carries away, often overflowing both street and gardens, leaving it optional with the inhabitants whether they walk on the fences or wade to terra firma.

Aug. 3, 1876 — Speaking of trout, the old veterans are ahead, James Lenon, M.V.B. Ines, Charles Heaton and R.F. Haywood brought home this week the best string of trout ever caught on the Racket. They caught from one hole 25 trout weighing 50 lbs.

CANTON, March 15, 1879 — Notice to poor masters; The Children's Home is now full and crowded and no more can be received until some here are put out to make room, George Robinson, Supt. of Poor.

March 15, 1879 — There are 43,000 clergymen in the United States, but even this number have not succeeded in working the morals of the community up to that point where all will pay for the newspaper after reading it two to five years.

compiled by Earl Pattison

letters

Opposed To Cuts

Editor's Note: The following letter was submitted to the Courier and Freeman as an open letter to the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators.

To the Editor:

The Concerned Citizens for Children wishes to go on record as being opposed to any cuts in Children's Services. We are convinced that the proposed budget cuts in the Social Services budget for FY 1983 would adversely affect the quality and quantity of services for children in St. Lawrence County and may even endanger these children. The economic climate requires that monies budgeted should be used wisely and effectively. We believe that this can be achieved through reductions in non service related costs and by maximizing reimbursement.

Additionally, we are extremely concerned at the confusion and poor communication surrounding the development of social service plans in St. Lawrence County. This has greatly hampered the public's understanding of the issues and the ability of legislators to make informed and thoughtful decisions on the budget. Accordingly we recommend that the Legislature direct that several improvements be made in 1983 to include at least these changes:

—Appointment of a planning committee which represents public and private providers, direct service workers, consumer representatives and county planning staff;

—that the committee be charged with developing a community planning process;

—that its recommendations be made public early enough in 1983 to afford open discussion of its impact on clients and personnel.

Mary Jean Panella
Chairman
Concerned Citizens
for Children
Canton

Seek Clergy Support For Nuclear Freeze

Editor's Note: The following letter was issued recently as an open letter to the clergy of the North Country.

To the Editor:

The members of the North Country Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign wish you and your congregations a joyful and meaningful Christmas. We are a group of your neighbors interested in peace issues, representing the 1,500 North Country signers of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze petition and the 1,000 signers and contributors to the full page Nuclear Freeze and you may have seen in the local papers. Our greatest present concern is promoting the Nuclear Freeze movement in northern New York and providing educational resources on that and related peace issues.

Religious communities nationwide have provided a strong core of support in this movement. You may be aware that the United Council of Churches voted support for the "Freeze," as well as the hierarchies of the Lutheran, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and American Baptist Churches. The United States Council of Roman Catholic Bishops is deliberating a lengthy and detailed pastoral letter on the morality of nuclear warfare, and it appears their final draft will strongly support the concept of a bilateral "Freeze." As Archbishop McCarthy of Miami said, "We need to demonstrate that waging peace has become a high priority of the Church of the Prince of Peace in this 20th Century crisis."

In that spirit, we are reaching out to the religious congregations of the North Country. The message of peace is uniquely appropriate to this season celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. We ask you, the religious leaders of our area, to bring to your congregations during Christmas services, the deliberations and decisions of your governing bodies concerning the moral dilemma of the Christian in a nuclear world. It may help them to know that the hope and promise of peace is still vigorously pursued by the churches of Jesus.

While Congress commits themselves to the MX missile and

other new behemoths, and the Soviet leadership makes bellicose statements, the best Christmas gift the world could receive would be a respite from nuclear error.

We invite you and members of your congregation to join with us for a silent vigil for peace on Dec. 18, beginning at noon on the steps of the Post Office on Elm Street in Potsdam. Some participants will also circulate the town for caroling. If possible, would you please see that the enclosed notice for the vigil is included in this Sunday's program or in this letter reaches you too late, to announce it after services. Thank you.

Dale R. Hobson

Urges 'No' Vote On MX

Editor's Note: The following letter was sent to Senators Alphonse D'Amato and Patrick Moynihan.

Dear Senator D'Amato: I trust you will oppose funding of the MX Missile in the forth-coming debate and decision in the Senate. Far wiser than their leaders, the people of the world recognize the insanity of the arms race, with its potential for universal destruction and with its almost equally devastating world-wide economic effects. They long for peace and meaningful disarmament talks.

The extent of the Nuclear Freeze Movement in the United States indicates that the American people increasingly recognize the distorted and peculiar logic that claims we are inferior to the Russians in nuclear arms capability and must be superior before they will negotiate seriously. An even elementary knowledge of the Russians' history, economic difficulties losses in WW II, and fear of U.S. policies pursued during their revolution and especially since WW II clearly suggests their need and desire for effective disarmament.

Please vote for life and freedom from fear. Oppose the MX. Most sincerely yours,
Dr. and Mrs. Lewis E. Weeks, Jr.

NATURE: The Miraculous Flea

By ELIZABETH VOGT
Indian Creek Nature Center

The common flea is an uncherished familiarity to most domestic pet owners. For all the contempt these small brown, hard-shelled, high jumping, wingless, elusive, sucking insects are able to inspire for their seemingly insidious adaptations and habits, there is something irresistibly miraculous about them.

Of the several varieties, most apparent to man are the common cat and dog fleas. Human encounters with these mini-beasts may begin shortly after the lazy dog days of summer have chilled and the family pets have become strategically and hopefully parked by the front door. Chances are that at least one of these flea-bearing animals will become successfully established in the house for the winter and along with it, some less welcomed guests.

Anyone who has ever tried to catch and kill a flea can vouch for some of its more successful adaptations. The laterally flattened body slips repeatedly from grasp and just when you're sure you've got it, the flea bounds from between your fingers and vanishes with one of the astounding leaps for which its family is famous. If a flea were human, it could high jump 450 feet. Even if the insect is finally caught, the battle is not won, for squeeze as you may, the persistent little body will reform continually, undaunted.

The adult flea makes its living by feeding on the blood of a warm-blooded host, a practice for which it has developed impressive sucking mouth parts. Man, we are pleased to hear, is only incidentally affected by fleas. They will bite him readily if convenient, but will not normally parasitize him specifically.

As long as you keep a cat or dog you will probably have some fleas with which to contend. Nature has endowed them with clever systems for keeping their kind around. Generations of stages may be hiding in your house. So even if you don't find the adults, your pet or nooks and crannies of your home may be harboring eggs or grubs, soon to be fleas.

The Courier and Freeman welcomes letters from readers. The writer must sign his or her name and give a complete address and telephone number through which the letter can be verified in order for the letter to be published.

Names will be withheld by request at the discretion of the editor. Letters should be typed and double spaced, if possible, or neatly written or printed. Letters should not exceed 250 words (approximately 2 1/2 typewritten pages) in length.

Still Time To Vote

The Potsdam Chamber of Commerce reminds residents that Dec. 15 is the deadline for balloting in the "Deck The Halls" contest.

Local businesses are competing in the contest for the most impressive outside or storefront decoration. Ballot boxes, designed by Andrea Cooper's Lawrence Avenue School art students, are in many locations around town.



WIN POTSDAM? — Yes, you too can become a man about town and own a little piece of Market Street in the localized version of Monopoly currently being sold by the Norwood Jay Teens for the benefit of their organization. There are about 800 games still available at Weston's Store, but shoppers had better hurry. Last year the Jay Teens sold out their entire supply of the games in six days. There is also a likely possibility that this may be the

last year that the game will be available through the organization. Retail price for the game of Potsdam is \$12.99. From left to right: Matt Peacock, secretary, Darin LaGarry, president and Jeff Michaud, director of the Norwood Jay Teens show the game board which is much like the popular Monopoly game with board spaces paid for by local merchants. (Jared Thayer photo)

Courier & Freeman

A Park Newspaper

BETSY BAKER, Editor
SALLY RANDOLPH,
Business & Circulation, Office Manager
PATRICIA A. MONGADA, Advertising
PAUL LASHOMB, Production

Published every Tuesday by Park Newspapers of St. Lawrence Inc. (USPS 1354-6000), 71 Market St., Potsdam, N.Y. Member of the New York Press Association, the National Editorial Association, and Adult Bureau of Circulations. Subscription rates: carrier home delivery in Potsdam, 25 cents per week. By mail outside Potsdam in St. Lawrence County \$13.00 per year and \$14.00 elsewhere in the United States and Canada. Entered in the post office at Potsdam, N.Y., as second class matter. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Courier & Freeman, Inc., 71 Market St, Potsdam, N.Y. 13676.