



# MANSION HOUSE NEWS

WESTPORT  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

During this Christmas season visit the Mansion House and enjoy the beautiful and festive 19<sup>th</sup> century decorations. The Mansion House will close on December 22, 2019, for the winter season, and will reopen March 6, 2020, at 1 pm. Book group tours during January and February 2020, by calling 913-648-0952 for reservations.

Decorating the home for the holiday was not just for the wealthy as poor families also decorated their homes. 19<sup>th</sup> century Christmas decorations included holly, evergreens, candles, pinecones, holly berries, and fabric and paper bows. It was considered unlucky to bring greenery into the house before Christmas Eve, so homes were a buzz of activity on that special night. Parlor Christmas trees were decorated with spices, apples, oranges, candles, ribbons, paper snowflakes, small presents, pinecones, popcorn balls, and bells. Fireplace mantles, and banisters were often wrapped in evergreen garland and tied up with bows. Kissing boughs and balls were popular and were usually constructed from holly, ivy, mistletoe and rosemary. Of course, lit candles always added a special glow.

## CHRISTMASTIDE

'Tis the season to be jolly and deck the halls with greens, red bows, and mistletoe, bake the Christmas cookies and breads, and wrap the presents in glittering papers and bows. It is a time for family to share cherished memories, and continue beloved traditions. Sit before the crackling fire and watch the gently falling snowflakes, smell the hot cider and the roasting turkey, listen to Christmas music, taste the peanut brittle, watch the smiling children, and feel the love given with each heartfelt holiday greeting. Celebrate with your family and embrace the beauty of the season.

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS!

The Executive Officers and Board of Directors of the Westport Historical Society, along with the staff of the 1855 Harris-Kearney House wish you and your family a year-end season of love, sharing, celebration and joy.

## THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Boxing Day is December 26, the day after Christmas, and is celebrated in Great Britain and in most areas settled by the English (the U.S. is the major exception), including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Despite its name, Boxing Day, has nothing to do with pugilistic competition. Nor is it a day for people to return unwanted Christmas presents. While the exact origins of the holiday are obscure, it is likely that Boxing Day began in England during the Middle Ages. Since servants were required to work on Christmas Day, most took the following day as their holiday. As they prepared to leave to visit their families, their employers would present them with gift boxes filled with clothes and food.

Or, maybe boxing day got its start in the church. Boxes were placed in churches where parishioners deposited coins for the poor. These boxes were opened and the contents distributed on December 26.

As time went by, Boxing Day gift giving expanded to included giving coins to those who had rendered a service during the year. Today, this tradition survives as people give monetary gifts to tradesmen, mail carriers, doormen, porters, and others who have helped them or who have gone above and beyond what was required.

~David Johnson, 2017



## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

It is that time of year when we ask for membership renewals. Membership dues are a primary source of funding for the operation of the museum and our events, exhibits, and educational programs. Each year we are pleased to welcome new members, and support our current members as they continue to share their wealth of knowledge and expertise with the society. In addition to membership dues, we are continually inspired by the tax-deductible gifts to our Endowment Fund which strengthen the society and the future of the museum. We look forward to the continued generosity of our members, business partners, donors, and many friends.

Whether you are renewing or a first-time member, we urge you to join us for 2020. You may mail a check and your membership form to 4000 Baltimore, or you can visit our website [www.wesporthistorical.com](http://www.wesporthistorical.com) and fill out the membership form and pay your dues online.

THE KANSAS CITY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

*Pryde's*  
KITCHEN & NECESSITIES



The Corner Restaurant



# Aunt Minerva's Kitchen

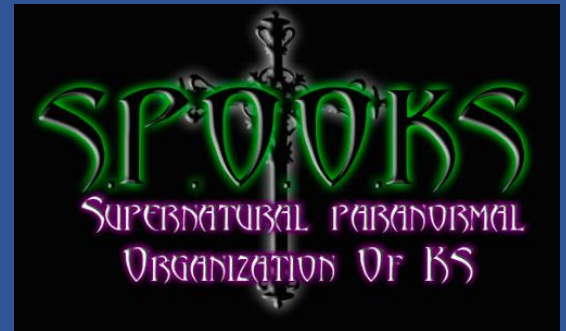
## Christmas Fruitcake Muffins

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 ½ cup flour          | ½ cup milk                   |
| ¼ cup brown sugar      | 4 T. unsalted butter, melted |
| 1 T. baking soda       | 1 cup mixed candied fruit    |
| ¼ teaspoon salt        | ½ cup seedless raisins       |
| 1 egg, slightly beaten | —soaked and drained          |
| 2 teaspoons each:      |                              |
| grated lemon zest;     |                              |
| grated orange zest     |                              |

Heat oven to 400 degrees.

In mixing bowl, stir together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. In a separate bowl, stir together the egg, milk and butter. Stir liquid mixture into dry ingredients to make a lumpy batter. Fold in the remaining ingredients, and stir to mix.

Spoon the batter into greased muffin cups, filling them about two-thirds full. Bake until well risen, golden brown and a wooden toothpick comes out clean when inserted into the center of a muffin; about 25 to 30 minutes. Makes a dozen muffins.



## SLEIGH RIDES AND JINGLE BELLS

### *Jingle Bells*

Dashing through the snow  
In a one-horse open sleigh  
O'er the fields we go  
Laughing all the way  
Bells on bob tail ring  
Making spirits bright  
Oh, what sport to ride and sing  
A sleighing song tonight

This joyful wintertime tune was composed by James Pierpont and originally published in 1857 as “One Horse Open Sleigh.” The song and tune, meant to accompany sleigh rides, successfully captures a bygone America in which horses served a major role in everyday life. The song evokes, in our imaginations, what was once a common sight when snow turned the countryside white. It was a world where horsemen changed out their wheeled sulky for sleds, and horse-drawn sleighs ruled the roads.

Sled runners glided smoothly over the ground and snow muffled the sounds of horses’ hooves, making horse-drawn sleighs a nearly silent form of transportation. As such, clinking bells helped drivers avoid collisions at intersections and alerted passersby to a sled’s approach.

The sleigh described in “Jingle Bells” is known as a “cutter”—a two-person vehicle designed for a single horse in harness. As the song alludes, it was not uncommon for the tails of the horses to be bobbed or docked to avoid entanglement in the tack.

For many years, “Jingle Bells” was regarded as just a “sleigh song.” The song’s merry cadence parallels the balanced hoof-fall of a trotting horse. Sleigh-riders could sing in time with the beat of the horse’s hooves, and share a laugh over the youthful antics described in the verses of the song.

To this day, the delight of riding in a horse-drawn sleigh lifts the spirits of any lucky enough to sit behind the reins. For years to come, sleigh rides will remain an idyllic way to enjoy the wintry countryside, savor the brisk open air, and experience horsepower in its truest form.

“Jingle Bells” is now a holiday classic sung around the world.

~2019 Equestrian Culture, LLC

