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KENT CIVIL WAR SOCIETY * P.O. BOX 3671 KENT, OH 44240

<https://www.kentcivilwar.org/>

Meeting Hotline (330) 474-9362

WHAT: ANNUAL HOLIDAY DINNER AND AUCTION

WHERE: SHELTER HOUSE, FRED FULLER PARK, KENT

WHEN: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2025 AT 6:30 P.M.

COST: FREE TO MEMBERS AND A GUEST

Happy Holidays! Another year of Civil War programming comes to an end with our annual Holiday dinner and popular auction of Civil War publications and artifacts. The dinner is free to you and a guest and features a main course and beverages provided by the Society. Each member is asked to bring a dish to share (see below) AND YOUR OWN TABLE SERVICE, CUP AND UTENSILS. Those with last names beginning with:

A through G, bring a potato or vegetable dish

H through O, bring a salad or hors d'oeuvres

P through Z, bring a dessert

The auction follows dinner. We encourage all members to check their collections of Civil War books, magazines and memorabilia for items you are willing to donate to the auction (as well as items from other wars). Simply bring them with you to the dinner. There will also be some items that have been hanging around. Proceeds benefit our programming fund.

Please note: It is not required that you bring an auction item in order to attend the party. However, we do hope that you will bring your checkbook in order to take advantage of some very real bargains.



"Christmas in Camp," an illustration by Thomas Nast for Harper's Weekly, January 3, 1863

Christmas

(Pulled from various sources)

Soldiers not actively campaigning celebrated Christmas in several ways. Union soldiers would use salt pork and hardtack to decorate Christmas trees. Others were treated to special meals; a captain from Massachusetts treated his soldiers to foods such as turkey, oysters, pies, and apples. However, many soldiers received no special treats or privileges. In one incident on December 25, 1864, 90 Union soldiers from Michigan, led by their captain, dispensed "food and supplies" to poor Georgians, with the mules pulling the carts decorated to resemble reindeer by having tree branches tied to their heads. In some units, celebrating Christmas was not allowed. On December 25, 1862, soldiers of one unit were punished for celebratory gunfire for the holiday, when actually the gunfire was for a funeral salute.

Carols, hymns, and seasonal songs were sung during the period, with some, such as "Deck the Halls", "Oh Come All Ye Faithful", and Mendelssohn's "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" (1840), still sung today. American musical contributions to the season include "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" (1850), "Jingle Bells" (1857), "We Three Kings of Orient Are" (1857) and "Up on the Housetop" (1860). Although popular in Europe at the time, Christmas cards were scarce in the United States, and would not enjoy widespread use until the 1870s.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote his pacifist poem, "Christmas Bells" on Christmas Day 1864 at the news of his son Lieutenant Charles Appleton Longfellow having suffered severe wounds in November during the Mine Run Campaign. The poem was set to the tune "Waltham" by John Baptiste Calkin sometime after 1872 and has since been received into the established library of Christmas carols as "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day". The carol version does not include two stanzas from the original poem that focused on the war.

For children, Christmas was altered during the war. Presents were fewer, especially in the devastated South. In *We Were Marching on Christmas Day*, author Kevin Rawlings notes that some southern children worried about the Union blockade, and one little girl, Sallie Brock Putnam, plotted the course Santa Claus would have to take to avoid it. Sometimes fathers on both sides were allowed furlough, and children were said to react to their fathers as if seeing "near strangers". Excuses for a lack of Santa included Yankees having shot him.

In 1862, the Lincolns visited injured soldiers at the various hospitals. Many Union soldiers in 1863 received gifts "From Tad Lincoln," as Tad had been deeply moved by the plight of Union soldiers when he was taken by his father to see them. The gifts were mostly books and clothing.

Civil War soldiers in camp and their families at home drew comfort from the same sorts of traditions that characterize Christmas today. Alfred Bellard of the 5th New Jersey noted, "In order to make it look much like Christmas as possible, a small tree was stuck up in front of our tent, decked off with hard tack and pork, in lieu of cakes and oranges, etc." John Haley, of the 17th Maine, wrote in his diary on Christmas Eve that, "It is rumored that there are sundry boxes and mysterious parcels over at Stoneman's Station directed to us. We retire to sleep with feelings akin to those of children expecting Santa Claus."

In one amusing anecdote, a Confederate prisoner relates how the realities of war intruded on his Christmas celebrations: "A friend had sent me in a package a bottle of old brandy. On Christmas morning I quietly called several comrades up to my bunk to taste the precious fluid of...DISAPPOINTMENT! The bottle had been opened outside, the brandy taken and replaced with water...and sent in. I hope the Yankee who played that practical joke lived to repent it and was shot before the war ended."