



December is Eventful

By Judy Haynes

December news through the years showed seasonal activities, whether one celebrated Christmas or Hannukah or simply a celebration of the winter solstice; however, news articles that focused on Boylston, Massachusetts, a primarily Christian community, it was the Christmas celebrations that remained the focal point.

DECEMBER 1884: A short newsclip announces “There will be a Christmas tree at the Town Hall Wednesday evening next.” For many this was a ‘new’ tradition of decorating trees at Christmastime and that activity is said to have come to the States from Germany about early or mid-1800s.¹

DECEMBER 4 & 5, 1901 a notice was posted that the Boylston Dramatic Club will present a comedy titled “Uncle Si,” to be held at the Town Hall. Admission was 20 cents and apparently it was acceptable for children as they could attend for a mere 10 cents. Since there was no hint in the act titles of holiday time, I conclude it was simply an enjoyable winter entertainment in those days’ pre-radio and pre-television.^{2,3}

DECEMBER 1983: (right) The Boylston Lioness [Carol Podolski, Dot Settle, Ruth Gates and Jean Corcoran] took turkey dinners to those seniors unable to attend the Lion’s Club’s 15th annual Senior Citizen Christmas Party.⁴

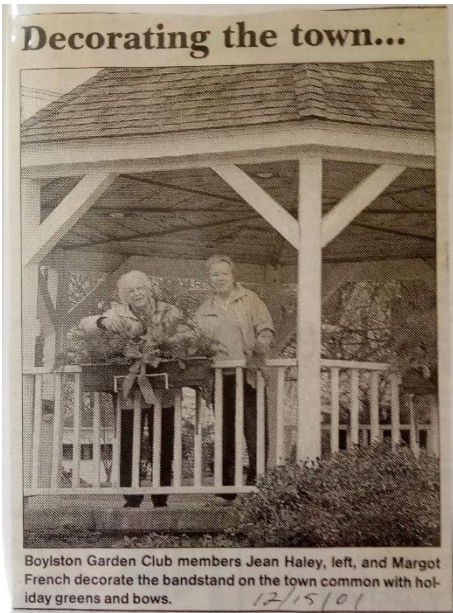


Christmas takeout 12/1/83
BOYLSTON LIONESSES, from left, Carol Podolski, Dot Settle, Ruth Gates and Jean Corcoran leave the Boylston Elementary School kitchen on a recent Saturday evening with turkey dinners for Boylston area senior citizens who were unable to attend the Boylston Lion Club's 15th annual Senior Citizens Christmas party. The dinners included turkey with all the trimmings and a party favor.
(ITEM Photo by J.M. Cramer)



Good deeds, helping those who could not get out easily, became a common occurrence of the season by many of the clubs and groups in Boylston. Wreaths were made and sold by the Garden Club as a fundraiser. The group then spent the money on flowers and plants to beautify the common and outside public buildings. Volunteers spent hours to tend any of the community flower gardens around the town and in front of our community public buildings throughout the year. They have proudly offered their beautiful floral magic for many years.

DECEMBER 8, 1994: (left) “Holiday House. Rita Fuller works on a wreath at the Boylston Garden Club’s annual Holiday House fundraiser.”⁵



DECEMBER 15, 2001: (right) “Decorating the town...Boylston Garden Club members Jean Haley and Margot French decorate the bandstand on the town common with holiday greens and bows.”⁶

Decorating the town...
Boylston Garden Club members Jean Haley, left, and Margot French decorate the bandstand on the town common with holiday greens and bows.
12/15/01



DECEMBER 24, 2004: (left) Not only adults were working to do for others as a seasonal gift, Sue Filsinger led the Girl Scouts as they made gifts to give to the senior citizens at the Lion’s Club Christmas dinner. On the 24th the Scouts helped serve the food and to provide some intergenerational social mix.⁷

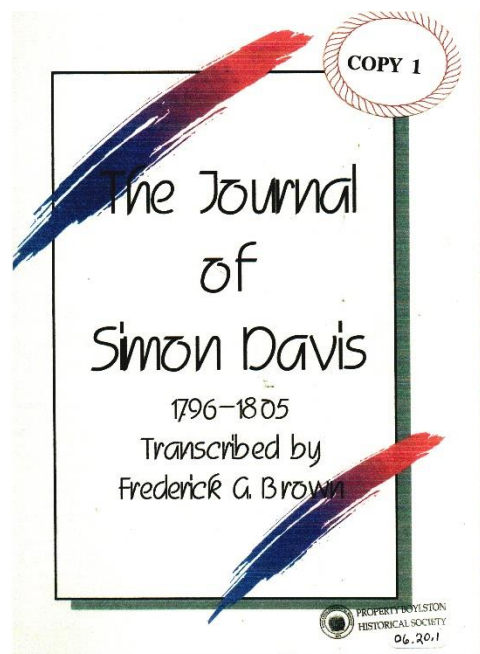
¹ News clip from Mary French Scrapbook. No paper name was listed.
² Ibid.
³ Town Hall location was 7 Central Street, the home of the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc.
⁴ From “The Item,” December 1983.
⁵ “The Banner” photo by Letty Ridinger, December 8, 1994.
⁶ “The Banner,” December 15, 2001.
⁷ “Boylston Girl Scouts Prepare Gifts for Senior Citizens,” The Banner, December 23, 2004.

DECEMBER 24, 2009: (right) “Getting in a Good Word.” Boylston Fire Department’s annual breakfast with Santa gives two local lads a chance for some quality time with St. Nick.⁸ The Fire Department has sponsored a Pancake Breakfast annually with Santa being on his throne to hear the Boylston children’s wishes for gifts. If you grew up in Boylston, you may have visited Santa at this annual special event.⁹



The tradition of remembering others and passing on good cheer and help was not always a seasonal event. Helping others was done daily and necessary as a new country was being created. In early Colonial days Puritans considered the 25th a day to either work or be in the meeting house [church], and Puritans frowned on the old English ways of playing games, feasting and being joyous for a day.¹⁰

Alice Earle quotes from William Bradford (circa 1600s) “Ye 25 day begane [sic] to erect ye first home for comone [sic] use to receive them and their goods.” He, the governor, was not happy when some felt they should not work as he was anxious to prepare for the coming of future expected immigrants to New England.¹¹



DECEMBER 25, 1796: (left) Simon Davis journal mentions December 25, 1796 as a “pleasant day – at meeting house.”¹²

DECEMBER 1797: (left) And again in 1797 the word “Christmas” is stated “A severe CHRISTMAS – P.M. 1 o’clock at the burning of Mr. Harthon work shop – Wind & water favor’d, or it is hardly probable that the other buildings would have escaped the flames.”¹³

This was not a time for celebration, but of concern. Apparently late 1700s in Boylston at the Davis home and possibly other households was a day like others, go to Meeting House and help a neighbor, if need be, fighting a fire.

But here we are at the end of 2024 and we enjoy both good times and special time with our families, as well as serving and helping others during the holiday season and throughout the year.

We wish one and all the very best as you celebrate your holiday traditions carrying on the tradition of doing good deeds for families, and community. And we at the Boylston Historical Society wish each of you a very Happy New Year in 2025!

Happy
New Year

⁸ Boylston’s Santa, Bill Richardson

⁹ “The Banner,” photo of Santa at the Firemen’s annual Pancake Breakfast, December 24, 2009.

¹⁰ Alice Morse Earle, “Customs and Fashions in Old New England, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont, 1973 [originally published 1893].

¹¹ Ibid, p. 214-215.

¹² From the Journal of Simon Davis as transcribed by Fred Brown.

¹³ Ibid.

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