

Santa reached all the children through newspaper

"My dearest children: Mother Santa Claus and I receive your nice little letters every day, and we are very glad to hear from you in this the Season of the Christ child."

— *Bloomington Evening World*, Dec. 14, 1920.

For the readers of the *Evening World* the little item that appeared on Dec. 14, 1920, brought back some vivid memories. Perhaps the readers could remember their own childhood when they were seated at the kitchen table laboring over a letter to Santa.

The jolly old man's reply in the newspaper gave the impression that he and his wife helper were swamped with letters. "But my dear little ones, we can not reply to all of your letters individually, because we are so busy getting ready to pay you a visit, so we write this letter to ALL."

That elusive Santa was taking each letter into consideration, because his letter contained a plea with the children to be sure to include their name, age and address when they write to him. Also, a couple of the children must have been agog when they read the rest of the letter. "Dear Pinky, we shall try very



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

hard to find you 'a little brother or sister,' that you are asking for, and Andy shall have his 'Tin Soldier.'"

Santa had some helpers in Bloomington who started thinking earlier in the year about the holidays. The Oct. 30 issue of the *Evening World* contained a little item which informed the readers that, "The woodworking classes of the Junior High School want broken and cast off toys to repair. When repaired these will be redecorated by the art department, then turned over to the Salvation Army for Christmas distribution ... Think twice before you decide you cannot part with the old playthings. Will make them new to some other youngsters." The item was signed by Milo L. Curtis, perhaps a teacher at the junior high.

For those with plenty of money to spend for Christmas gifts there were the enticing ad-

vertisements of local merchants. Ed Williams' jewelry and music store suggested that it was time to buy a Victrola. There is a picture of one, clearly showing the crank necessary to make the turntable go around.

The City Book and Music Company owners thought that books were an ideal gift. Shoppers could pick up "popular copyrights at 90c." The list included such authors as Zane Grey, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Jean Stratton Porter and Joseph Conrad.

H.P. Tourner informed shoppers that they needn't have the total price of an item in his store, which sold jewelry, watches, silverware, clocks, toilet sets and umbrellas. His ad explained, "By your paying a deposit on the article, we put it in the safe, and from time to time you may pay us to suit yourself ... Hundreds of satisfied customers take advantage of this plan every year."

As for the toys that the children were looking forward to, there was a wide selection at Turner's store on the south side of the square. The store's ad reflects the kind of things that were popular in 1920 — "dolls, dollbuggies, cradles, beds, games of Flinch, Spoof, Rook,

Uncle Wiggley, Lotto, Dominoes, and tea sets of tin, china." For the boys there were velocipedes of all sizes, air rifles and pop guns, shufly flies, trains on track and mechanical toys."

Some of the less-affluent citizens of Bloomington and the county were likely to be looking through the items on sale at Quarles store. It sold leftovers from the U.S. Army during World War I. Army overcoats, which had been drycleaned, sold for \$7.85, and there were hobnail shoes (with new soles) selling at \$2.50. Army oil stoves were available at \$7.50.

The *Evening World* of Dec. 18 carried a wire story warning unwary Christmas tree shoppers about "profiteers." "One dollar should buy a tree large enough for most families, while 50 cents is enough to pay for one of 'apartment house' size."

One of the most heartwarming items in the 1920 holiday season was a little classified ad nearly buried among other news in the Dec. 7 issue of the newspaper. It said, simply, "FOUND—Pocketbook with cash. Owner may have same by describing property at Kirby & Norman's store and paying for this advertisement."

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