

## FAMILY HOLIDAYS

St. Nicholas Day —St. Nicholas was the patron saint of children in the Netherlands and Belgium. In the nineteenth century, this was the day of celebration for the children, and Christmas was the religious celebration of Christ's birthday.

As children, I remember hanging stockings on the "clock shelf", or on the doors, and St. Nicholas came that night and filled them with apples, nuts and hard candy. A special treat in the sock was an orange as they were not always available in the local general store, and they were also expensive.

### CHRISTMAS:

In early years a tree was cut from the woods, and decorated with popcorn strings and cranberry strings. Candles were attached to the branches, but could only be lighted on one or two occasions when adults were present to see that the tree didn't catch fire and "burn the house down".

My memories of Christmas are few, and not especially happy ones. By the time I was six or seven years of age and could remember the event, we were already a family of seven, and gifts were not plentiful as spending for necessities was more compelling.