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Just A Note...

This is a wonderful time of year to enjoy many traditions, shop for special gifts and decorating needs, and so much more that the holiday season brings – using our publication as your guide. We have included recipes that you may want to add to your festivities. Have fun exploring the special events that are summarized in our Shows & Events Listing!


David, Amy, Rachel & Grace

Please be sure to visit our Facebook page and like it. We post lots of updates about shops and events, plus we welcome reader comments and interaction. On our website, you can find links to our advertisers' web sites, view the current shows and events listing, read the paper online and more.

We do ask that you please let the shop owners know that you saw their ad in our publication - it is extremely important! Advertisers want to know that their ad in our paper is effective and they like it when you mention you saw their ad. Without the advertisers, our publication can't exist so they need to know the paper is working for them. Also, feel free to pick up extra copies for your friends … we'd love for you to share it with them.

If you know a shop that should be advertising in the paper, please let us know via email. We are always looking for new shops to add to our list of great advertisers.

Would your group or guild like to receive FREE COPIES of each issue? Just send an email to amy@theregisterweb.com. Let us know how many copies (25 minimum) and a street mailing address.

Nine of our family just gathered for a Fall beach escape and we had a blast. We definitely passed along our love of travel to Rachel and Grace. Every time I turn around, they are planning a trip to somewhere or to go see someone. November and December will be busy months for our family, and I know for our readers probably too. I like to make sure to remember to enjoy these upcoming family gatherings, special events and so much more that November and December bring.

Our Jan./Feb. issue will be out shortly after the first of the year. That issue has an annual theme of Quilting, Needlearts, Fiber Arts and Sewing! So be sure to plan a visit to your favorite shop to pick up your copy!

Have fun shopping this Holiday season. Don't forget to use our guide as your road map. We wish you and your family Happy Holidays!

Amy & David

SHOWS AND EVENTS

November

5-8 ..... Open House at Primitive Goods in Uxbridge, MA (pg. 6)
6-8 ..... Holiday Open House at Tessier's Changes of Thyme in Bolton, CT (pg. 11)
12-15 ..... Holiday Open House at Personal Touch Country Shoppe in Seekonk, MA (pg. 8)
14-15 ..... Holiday Open House at Bittersweet Hollow in Uxbridge, MA (pg. 6)
14-15 ..... Quilt Show by Cape Cod Quilters in South Yarmouth, MA (pg. 8)
22-Apr 25 ..... Coventry Winter Community Marketplace in Coventry, CT on Sundays (pg. 11)
27-28 ..... Black Friday & Small Business Saturday at Primitive Goods in Uxbridge, MA (pg. 6)
27-29 ..... Yuletide Gathering at Primitive Thymes in Spencer, MA (pg. 4)
27-29 ..... 25th Annual Holiday Open House at The Tole Booth in Blackstone, MA (pg. 6)
27-29 .. Thanksgiving Weekend Events at New England Country Barn in North Branford, CT (pg. 12)
27-30 ..... Black Friday Weekend Sales at Jeffrey's Antique Co-Op Mall in Lunenburg, MA (pg. 7)

December

2-6 . Christmas Open House & Final Sale of the Year at Meeting House Fabric in Wales, MA (pg. 5)
4..... Midnight Madness at Bernat Antiques in Uxbridge, MA (pg. 6)
5-6 ..... Holiday Open House at Hattie D's in Harwich Port, MA (pg. 8)

Our Writer's Favorite Holiday Recipes

Can be found throughout this edition!
We thank them and hope you enjoy trying the recipes.

Pennsylvania Dutch Dried Corn

submitted by Janet M. Bair

1 package of Copes Dried Sweet Corn (available on Amazon)
1 cup milk
1 tiny can evaporated milk (If you don't have evaporated milk, use a half cup more of regular milk.)
1 tsp salt
2 tsp sugar
2 Tablespoons butter

Directions:
The night before, grease a 2 quart casserole dish. Add one package of Copes Dried Sweet Corn. Add 1 cup milk and 1 tiny can evaporated milk. Soak overnight.
The next day, remove dish from fridge early to let it warm up before putting it into the oven. Add: 1 tsp salt, 2 tsp sugar and 2 Tablespoons butter. Cover with foil.

Bake at 350 about 45 minutes

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The Holiday Hustle

by Barbara Kalkis



There is no season more intense than the final 92 days of the year. Surely, no one escapes the speed with which the days fly by, like geese honking farewell as they race toward warm weather.

Businesses understand the fourth-quarter, Q4, months are the final push to lure customers, raise annual sales, and post earnings revenue "in the black". Artisans know these days culminate a year of sewing, painting, quilting, knitting, crocheting, making, baking, creating the unique items they will sell before December 31st.

The last quarter begins with sunflower bouquets and brightly colored leaves, corn stalks and pumpkins, craft fairs and harvest festivals. We then pivot to Jack O'Lanterns, ghosts, witches, black cats, scare crows and Halloween candies for one fun-filled night. The next day, everything orange and black is tossed back into storge to make way for Thanksgiving. Pumpkins lose their scary smiling faces and become fancy décor items in shades of white, sedate sage, and – aptly named – pumpkin orange. To live the moment to the max, decorations set the scene for traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings of stuffing, sweet potatoes, corn, green beans, cranberry sauce – whole or jellied, and – what else? Pies! With leftovers stored, we take advantage of Black Friday sales. And that begins the final seasonal crunch.

Our homes become the setting for poinsettias, wreaths, bayberry candles, greeting cards and photos (if one is fortunate), train sets, gaily wrapped secret packages, outdoor light displays, and the tree in a place of honor, glittering with decorations.

I think we cram the most energy and effort into making this fourth season memorable. Every one of our five senses seems to be heightened: **feeling** the morning chill, **smelling** pine-scented trees and wreaths, **gobbling** down fresh-baked cookies and milk, **seeing** homes sparkle with decorations, **listening** to holiday music.

I believe in a sixth sense that is our **emotions.** When I recall Christmases growing up. I think of our family adventure of driving to a farm to find our special tree.

We would jauntily set off in the snow to find the perfect tree. The "winner" had to be approved by all, so this process was time-consuming. Too small. Too tall, Too skinny. Too "fat" for my father's flimsy saw. Too "bushy" for my mother's dangling ornaments. Too full to push through the back door.

After a thorough search of the woods, we would find the winner. Primarily, because we were all exhausted from trudging through the snow and were as cold as popsicles. Finding our way back to the barn – which some years seemed to an iffy thing (my parents were city people) – we slogged into the barn and rushed to warm ourselves with cocoa and hot apple cider. Satisfied that the main seasonal purchase was accomplished, we'd arrive home to waiting lights and a warming fire.

It's easy to romanticize these last days of the year, but they are truly memorable. In all other seasons, there are special holidays, but those last 91 days cram the most work, memories, emotions, scents, and feelings of putting an imaginary "bow" on the gift that is life.

When I was young, I used to stand at my bedroom window and look out into the night, trying to spot Santa Claus entering the neighborhood. Now I stand at my window and look out at the blnight and feel the contentment of a year that delivered all kinds of events, but which ended once again in the gift that Life gives us every day. However you have raced from Autumn to Halloween to Thanksgiving to Christmas to the new year, Celebrate!

©Barbara Kalkis, 2026. Barbara is a marketing consultant, teacher, and author of "Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm." Contact her at BarbaraKalkis@gmail.com.

Moms Cranberry Salad – A real favorite

submitted by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress

Fresh cranberries (1/2 pound)
Apples (1 cup, chopped)
Celery (1 cup, diced)
Sugar (1 cup)Water (2 cups)
Nuts (1/2 cup, chopped)
Salt (1 teaspoon)
Baking soda (1/8 teaspoon)
Raspberry Jell-O (1 small box)
Miniature marshmallows (1/2 bag)

Boil
1/2 pound of fresh cranberries, 1 t. Salt in 2 cups of water for 10 minutes. Add 1/8t. Baking soda. Stir well.

Add
1 cup sugar and 1 small box of raspberry jello. Stir until dissolved. Add half a bag of miniature marshmallows, stir until they are nearly dissolved.

Add
1 cup chopped apples, 1 cup diced celery, 1/2 cup chopped nuts. Stir well
Pour into a 9x9 square dish, refrigerate 4 hours until set.
Awesome!

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Experience is not required. Remote, professional design help is available should you prefer to concentrate on sales.

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The drawing will be made prior to the next issue. The winner will be emailed information on redeeming their certificate and also announced in the next issue.
Note: We do not place your information on any mailing list.

And the Winner is...

Our winner from last issue is Jenny Boutin. Jenny will receive a gift certificate to spend at *Willow Tree Country Shoppe* in Swansea, MA. She shops there because "it's pure Americana." Congratulations Jenny.

The Country Register Gift Certificate Entry Form

ALL ITEMS MUST BE COMPLETED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE PRIZE DRAWING

Name _____
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About The Cover Artist

Diane Kater



Diane Kater began her artistic journey at a very early age, drawing and coloring her way through childhood. Continuing into a more learned environment, she participated in a commercial art program in high school and then onto art school where she graduated with an associate's degree in advertising and design. She worked in the commercial field as an art director of an advertising agency until she branched out onto her own and specialized in graphic design.

In 1991, she met Judy VonStein of Imaginating, Inc. and ventured into a needlework designer, designing cross-stitch and quilt patterns. Her painting talents led her to her current agent, Penny Lane Publishing.

Today, she produces a range of interchangeably styled still-life paintings in acrylic medium. A "country-esque" theme shadows over much of her work as she captures the essence of home. Diane's paintings are soft and comfortable. She believes country is homemade and handmade, but most of all provides a feeling of comfort that she wishes to draw her viewer into.

To view Diane's art prints, go to www.PennyLanePublishing.com or call Penny Lane Publishing at 800-273-5263 for more information.

Wit & Wisdom

It's That Time Again!

by Juleann Lattimer



The days are getting shorter, the trees are getting barer, and the weather is getting colder.

When my children were young it was a red-letter day when the Christmas catalog arrived in the mailbox (remember those?) They spent hours poring over each page, with their greedy little fingers pointing, "I want this and this and this." By the middle of December that catalog looked like it had been run through a paper shredder. It wouldn't have even been good for use in the privy!

Oh how their eyes twinkled with excitement and anticipation and trust. They were excited knowing that Christmas would soon arrive. They anticipated lots of good things, and they trusted their loving parents to give them all the toys they had chosen.

That never happened. Many toys they chose were not age-appropriate, too expensive, and some I just didn't like. We chose the ones we could afford and those we liked – not always the ones they had pointed to in the catalog, because we loved them and knew better than they what was best for them.

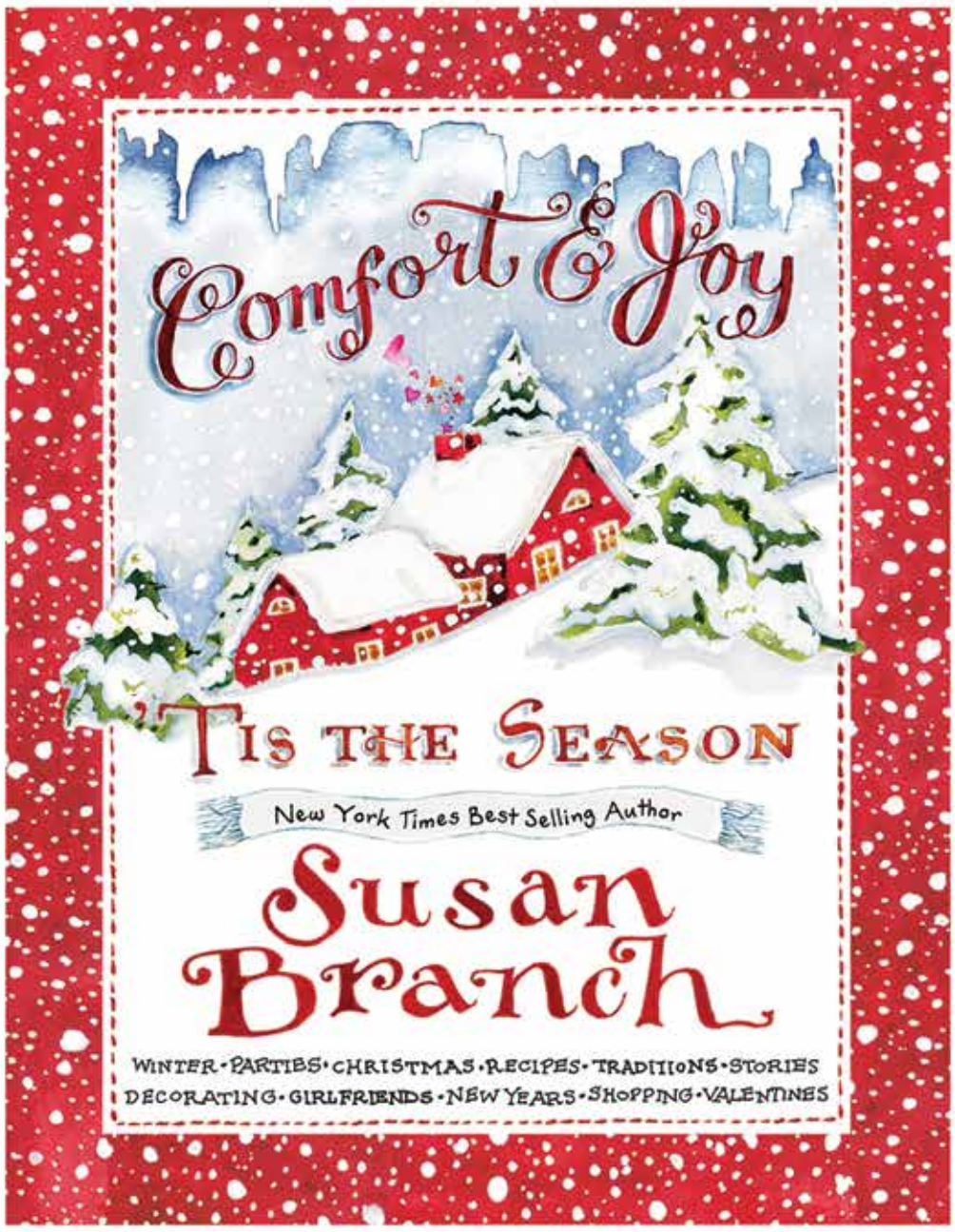
And that's exactly how my loving heavenly Father answers my requests. When I say, "I want this and this and this to happen this way," He often doesn't give me my desires. But He always gives me what He knows is best for me.

So, like my little children on Christmas morning, I will delight in all the wonderful gifts given, which far eclipse those that a wise and loving Father has withheld.

If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him. (Matt.7:11).



Recent vacation: Amy's parents, Rachel, David, Grace, Amy and David's mom and step-dad



Comfort & Joy

We're excited to announce COMFORT and JOY, a NEW BOOK by NY Times Bestselling Author, Susan Branch! Let Susan fill you with inspiration from Christmas through Winter, right into spring with classic comfort-food recipes, holiday decorating, celebrations, & parties ~ 192 hand-written & watercolored pages, with tons of ideas, quotes, & photographs. Cozy as a favorite sweater, everything to make the season bright!

Available Nov.15 at a bookstore near you. Along with Comfort and Joy, many of Susan's older books, including Autumn and Summer, are back in print & available at bookstores ~ just ask! Order books & read about Susan's cross-country book tour (Nov-Dec) at Susan's website, www.susanbranch.com.

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Become Inspired

Decorating, Entertaining and Living in the Early American Style

by Annice Rockwell

Anticipating the Wonder

Often one of the most anticipated times of the year, the holiday season is filled with plentiful opportunities to create spaces that welcome and inspire. With themed gatherings planned for family and friends, we often feel a great sense of anticipation to share our creativity and to beautifully transform our homes to suit the season of celebration.



Charming Authenticity

In order to design a seasonal space we can often use some of our favorite classic antiques accented by elements of nature to surround us with charming authenticity. An antique lift-top mule chest in early red paint can be heightened and enhanced by stacking a smaller antique box in blue on top. Nestling boughs of evergreen between a primitive trencher and a blue decorated stoneware jug adds a balancing touch of nature to our vignette.

Antique sleds that radiantly reveal their use from age can be adorned with a spray of fresh hemlock, red berries and twinkling white lights to brighten the corner of the hearth. Centerpieces created by using a large divided carrier filled with greens and cones can feature a glass chimney to hold an antique hogscraper or one of our favorite scented country candles like "Orange Clove Pomander" or "Balsam Christmastide."

Early punched tin lighting that has come to represent tradition and comfort can be used to cast the beautiful play of light it was intended to create. Petite cedar trees in various sizes can be placed in crocks, firkins, early kegs or baskets to enliven a seating area or even brighten a country bathroom. Handmade country stockings fashioned from woven coverlets in bright red can be filled with greens and hung on our mantel or an interior door to add texture and color to our rooms.

Embracing the Magic

One of the blessings of the holidays is planning a festive night out with friends to take in the sights and sounds of Christmas. Main streets of small towns become magical and unusually alive on an Open House Night when storefront windows gleam with the glow of Christmas. Through the front windows we can see freshly decorated inviting displays of antiques, textiles, scented candles and decorations that deeply appeal to our country style. As we enter these local shops the music of the dulcimer plays traditional tunes while we take in a cup of hot mulled cider while we browse. We know that the hand-selected purchases we make are even more special because they are local and support the shops that provide us with a sense of genuine connection.

After finding the perfect treasures to give as gifts or the ideal antique to enhance our displays, we can visit a local restaurant that promises to be a memorable part of our night. Taking time to plan a festive, local night out is time well-spent as we share in the abundant blessings of giving.

This season, enjoy the anticipation of creating magic. Transform your home to include the splendor of a country Christmas. Spend a treasured evening with friends embracing the sense of wonder that this spectacular season always brings.

--Annice Bradley Rockwell is an educator and owner of Pomfret Antiques. She is currently working on her book, New England Girl. NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com

Thanksgiving and Christmas: A Time to Savor

by Nancy J. Nash



My favorite food at Thanksgiving dinner is the dressing, made with down-to-earth bread and onions playing host to a variety of interesting and exotic herbs. Much as I love pumpkin pie, it is the warm, savory taste of dressing that lingers on my tongue and satisfies my palate.

The word savory is related to savor, which bears the connotation of lingering over food we are enjoying. (dictionary.cambridge.org). As I recall from my scattered research, it harks back many centuries to a root word that means to taste or perceive. (I wish I could find that internet entry again!). Savoring extends beyond our favorite meals and can apply to something as simple as quiet moments spent watching a sunset.

The end-of-year holidays get a bad rap for being overly busy. That reputation is not undeserved, but I wonder whether intentionally savoring the season would make a difference. What if we lingered over our holiday "comfort food," grateful for the opportunity to once again gather with family and friends? What if we listened more closely to the stories being told around the table?

I remember my father and his brother sitting around a wide oak table and reminiscing about their travels in Vermont. They told about their experiences scouting for trees for their father's Christmas business. Many were the people they met on farms and in small towns. One elderly man, a highly respected state official, had been visited one night by a lone man who had just been released from jail. Family members warned against their meeting - it could lead to vengeance and violence. But the ex-convict had only come to thank the older man for an act of kindness years earlier, possible the only significant act of kindness he had known.

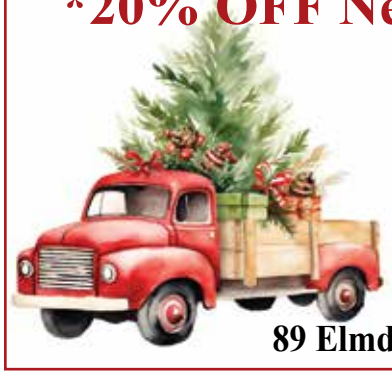
Another reminiscence we heard involved an elderly farmer who declined to sell a grove of trees to my father. Since the farmer was quite poor, Dad was puzzled - until he spoke with a local who explained that the elderly man had a purpose for them. During the year, some of the townspeople provided meals for him and his crippled, bedridden wife. He could not afford to pay them. To thank them, he let each family cut a tree from his woodlot to decorate their parlor at Christmastime. My father added that the elderly farmer had the kindest eyes he ever saw.

To me as a child, such stories revealed the secrets of people's hearts. I was struck by the generosity and sacrifices of the rather impoverished Vermont farmers. These qualities were precious - and called out to be contemplated and savored.

Savoring stories of Christmas makes the holiday season more restful and deepens its meaning. I think of the 2000-year-old narrative about stars and shepherds and angels watching in the night. At the heart of it is a baby born into poverty and laid to rest, incongruously, in a bed of hay, his eyes already sparkling with a pure and profound love that has lasted down through the centuries and does not end.

Copyright 2026 Nancy J. Nash. Nancy is the author of Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story *and* Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*, both available at amazon.com. She holds a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. She may be reached at tradit2@verizon.net.*

Blackstone, Uxbridge - MA

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Life In Skunk Hollow

The Day That Frosty Melted

by Julie A. Druck



This week I undid the house of all its holiday finery and put the Christmas decorations away for another year. That is, all except Frosty. I have a vintage plastic blow mold Frosty decoration from the '50s. Every year for decades he stood sentinel next to the front door of my grandparents' home. As a little girl I often had a Christmas picture taken next to him. When my grandfather died 13 years ago, I inherited Frosty, and he has proudly stood sentinel on MY front porch for those years. But alas, Frosty has begun to melt.

I noticed how bad he was last night. We had an extremely windy day, and Frosty had blown over. When I went to set him back up, I saw what I have been unwilling to acknowledge for the last several years. Frosty's base was becoming more and more brittle and cracked. My husband has been telling me for a while that Frosty's time has come, but I didn't want to hear it. Last night, I couldn't deny the truth.

It sounds crazy that I'm mourning the loss of a Christmas decoration. But, in my mind, Frosty represents something much more intangible than a hunk of plastic. I lived with my grandparents for three years as a little girl and then for another ten years right next door to them. Their home was a haven of comfort and peace and joy to me. Every day was a holiday with my grandmother. Our supper table always looked like a lay-out from a vintage women's magazine – deliciousness and simple beauty were always on the menu. And when any holiday rolled around, my grandmother went full-tilt into making it special in every way. As for my grandfather, he was a bright beacon of warm light who loved me – not for what I did or didn't do – but simply because I was his Julie.

So, you see, in my mind, Frosty is a symbol of all the love and joy I received in my grandparents' home. But as I set Frosty upright again, I knew it was time to say goodbye. I went in and tearfully told my husband that Frosty could go with three stipulations: that he would take one last photo of me with my snowman, that he would dispose of the remains without telling me how or when or where he did it, and that he would remove Frosty's little metal shovel and save it for me as a keepsake.

As I contemplated my decision further, I realized that just because Frosty goes, doesn't mean that the memories he represents have to go. I still hold all the dearness and love of my grandparents in my heart that I can access at any time. And so, though Frosty won't be back again someday, he, and all that he stands for, will forever hold a warm place in my heart.

- © 2025 - Julie Druck is from York, Pennsylvania, and writes from her farm in Skunk Hollow. She'd welcome your comments at thedrucks@netzero.com.

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More Than a Tree Topper

by Becky Van Vleet

Every year the same angel takes her place at the top of our Christmas tree. She's made of plastic, more than seventy years old, and a little worse for wear. She still lights up, though her outdated cord is crinkly and twisted. I'm amazed she still works.

But to me, she's far more than an old tree topper. She's a piece of my childhood.



When I was growing up, we always had a real Christmas tree, and decorating it was a family affair. My sisters and I helped hang the ornaments, Mother supervised with a camera in hand, and Daddy tackled the silver icicles. Those slippery strands seemed to cling to his fingers more readily than to the branches. He'd fling them toward the tree, sending plenty to the floor along the way. Getting them to let go of his fingers was half the battle—and part of the fun.

Our tree also held those wonderful bubbling candle lights. Once they warmed up, we watched the bubbles rise inside them. Then, when the decorating was nearly finished, Daddy would place our angel on the highest branch and plug her in. Only then did our tree feel complete.

As a little girl, I loved gazing up at her. I imagined she was singing Christmas carols just to me. She was beautiful. Angelic.

Years later, after I had a family of my own, my father passed the angel topper along to me. I was thrilled. Since then, we've placed her gingerly atop our own Christmas trees, carrying a little of my childhood into each Christmas.

These days, as our grandchildren enjoy Angelina, the name we've given her, one of her wings is broken and held together with Scotch tape. But when I look at her, I still see the angel of my childhood—and I remember Daddy placing her on top of the tree.

If I had to guess, I'd say she cost less than a dollar back in the 1950s. Her value today? Priceless!

Becky Van Vleet, a retired school administrator, lives near Colorado Springs with her husband, Troy. They are the parents of four grown children and enjoy spending time with their nine grandchildren. Becky is a children's picture book author, and her website is devoted to family stories and creating memories: www.beckyvanvleet.com.

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The correct entry drawn from last issue was from Marianne D'Amico of Mass.

The Case of the Missing Christmas Craft

by Janet M. Bair

Last fall I found a very intriguing quilt pattern called "Shadowbox" that I wanted to try. I decided that I would make it into a Christmas wall hanging rather than a whole quilt. Struggling to understand the directions, I set the bag of material and pattern aside in the spare bedroom where I sew. When I started to clean for Thanksgiving company, I put the partially started project in a "safe place."

After Thanksgiving when all our family had returned to their homes in North Carolina and Florida, I looked for my Christmas craft. There were still a few weeks before Christmas, so I figured I could finish it. It was nowhere to be found! I hunted through all of my fabric twice, organizing fabric as I went. Since I only began quilting four years ago, I don't have that much fabric accumulated.

I continued to look for the gallon size clear plastic bag of fabric over the course of the year. Never found it. I am usually very organized so I knew it was in our small house but I was puzzled as to where. Long after Christmas passed, in June I decided to do a massive house clean of our attic and basement.

In my sewing room, I looked inside a box of my husband's old computer items and we decided it was time to get rid of outdated computer discs. As I emptied the heavy box to move it out of the room, I finally spotted my Christmas craft bag! It had slipped behind the heavy box and was squashed next to the bookcase, out of sight. I had searched that area several times before to no avail.

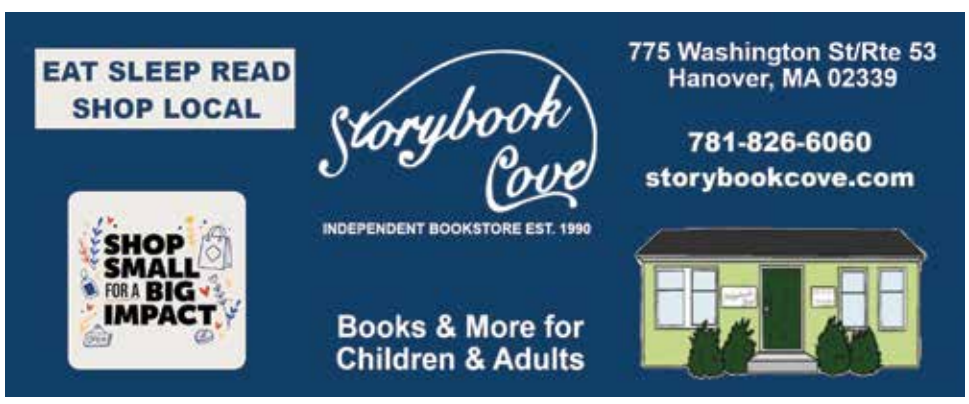
I am very happy to have my bag of Christmas fabric back again because there are some lovely pieces just waiting to be made into something beautiful. I guess my advice is—never stop searching--and it always pays to clean.

The experience of finally finding my special project made me wonder if this was how the wise men felt when they came to the end of their search for the newborn king. The star had guided them for months and they joyfully worshiped the Messiah with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Though they left poorer, their hearts were richer for having made the long journey to see the newborn king, Jesus. May we all experience that special joy this holiday season. Now that my mystery is solved, I hope that I can finish my Christmas wall hanging soon!

© Janet M. Bair of Ansonia, CT. You may contact her at librarybair@hotmail.com

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Easy Fancy Pink Fruit Salad

submitted by Judy Sharer, historical romance writer

- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 12-ounce container whipped topping
- 1 15-20-ounce can cherry pie filling
- 1 15-ounce can crushed pineapple, well drained
- 1 15-ounce can mandarin oranges, well drained
- **Optional:** 1/2 Cup chopped walnuts, 1/2 Cup Shredded Coconut

Directions:

Stir together the condensed milk and whipped topping. Fold in the cherry pie filling and then the pineapple and oranges. Add optional items if wanted. Refrigerate at least 4 hours prior to serving.

Makes 12 – 14 servings

The Sewing Machines Are Out!!

by Wayne M. Bosman

The sewing machines are out! This is something that happens fitfully here. Kerri is the one who sews at our house, so when they appear, something important is afoot.

We have a lot of sewing machines. Most of them are mine, but those rarely get used. After 49 years as a mechanic I retired- mostly. It would have been really hard after a lifetime of fixing things to just stop cold turkey.

Sewing machines are relatively light compared to cars, and I can keep a whole bunch of them around without the neighbors complaining. Or more importantly perhaps without Kerri complaining. (I should put in a disclaimer here-Kerri is absolutely accommodating to my many and varied projects. She is not the complaining type. Our neighbors are nice too.)

At any rate, I found that I have an affinity for sewing machines, especially ones about my age. I seem to be a magnet for broken sewing machines that need a little TLC. I buy them, fix them and then give them away to someone who will use them. Not a very good business model, but it keeps me off the streets.

Kerri has only two sewing machines that she works with. One was her mother's Singer 401a. It is the machine she learned on. Every time she sits down to use it she remembers her mother, and it is her belief and intent that some of her mother's love goes into whatever she sews on it. The other machine was my mother's Kenmore 158. The belief is the same. Both machines give her a lot of joy when she uses them. She likes to imagine the previous owners looking over her shoulder while she makes things for the next generation.

Kerri uses sewing machines, I just fix them occasionally. She doesn't sew professionally, she makes things. It is her internal belief that taking the time to hand make something for each of the grandchildren every year lets them know that they are loved. They still get the flavor-of-the-month toy or a gift card that will let them get what they want. That is all well and good, but to make something one of a kind consciously aimed at them individually has a special meaning for her. It is love made manifest.

Of course, sometimes the handmade item will miss the mark. Children are inscrutable and constantly changing, but in the attempt a message is sent. The message goes beyond the usability of the item. The message says "I love you. I see you and am doing my best to support you from afar." If the item goes quickly to the back of the bottom drawer, as sometimes happens, so be it. The message is sent anyway.

But more often, the little handmade item gets used. The pillowcase made of fabric that has scenes of the child's favorite things ends up on the bed. The useful canvas bag that might be just the right size for taking things to the beach is exactly that. The crocheted hats and sweaters get worn and become favorites.

So there is an excitement in the house, and some anticipation as this year's Christmas gifts take shape. Kerri starts this process shortly after Christmas every year, but there is inevitably an acceleration as zero hour approaches.

There are new additions to the list of recipients and last minute inspirations as the children evolve. It is our sadness that Mom is no longer on the list. She passed last year at 104. She didn't need anything before and she definitely doesn't need anything now, at least nothing that can be made on a sewing machine.

We won't be eating at the kitchen table for a few days. Three sewing machines and tools have taken over.

Wayne M. Bosman is a retired auto mechanic living in Cape Carteret, NC.

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DREAMS DO COME TRUE

by Janet Young



Dashing through the snow, in a one-horse open sleigh, those are the words to a well-known Christmas song - Jingle Bells, written in 1857 by James Lord Piedmont. This song was not intended to be a Christmas song. In fact, it was first sung in a Thanksgiving church service. Piedmont wanted it to be a lively tune that celebrated sleigh racing. Before long, it soon appeared as a Christmas song even though it never mentioned Santa, reindeer, snowmen, or any other secular symbols of the holiday. So, why did I start this article referencing Jingle Bells? Let's begin.

When my mother was growing up, it had been her life-long dream to go on a one-horse open-sleigh ride. This was a secret I never knew about until one day, she happened to mention how she wished she would have had the chance go on that ride. By now she was in her eighties, and her chances of ever having that wish come true was slowly diminishing.

That is, until one November day I happened upon a local newspaper that talked about a local fire station hosting a Christmas Open House replete with Santa, crafts, entertainment, and last but not least one-horse open sleigh rides.

My immediate thought was how would they be able to do this. The event was to be in early December. However, in Central Pennsylvania the chances of having snow, was so unpredictable, especially since there was no weather forecast predicting snow.

As the date approached, excitement was cautiously building because I still did not know how they were going to do this. We entered the fire station, and were amazed by all the festivities. We listened to the various chorale groups. And before long the big moment arrived.

It was a cold winter night, so my husband stayed inside with my mother while I went outside to wait in line. Before long, it was our turn to get in the sleigh. We bundled up in a cozy warm blanket and off we went around the grounds of the fire station.

How did we do this when there was no snow on the ground? Well, due to the ingenuity of a kind soul, we were transported in the sleigh that had wheels placed on a platform that the sleigh could safely and comfortably rest upon. And yes, it was driven by two horses.

While this may not seem like such an idyllic sleigh ride, let me tell you, in the darkness of the night, you would have never known you were not flying over the hills of snow. There was magic in the air that night. And, all because my 85-year-old mother had finally realized her childhood dream. With a smile on her face, and my heart filled with love, I knew that this would be a night she would forever cherish.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

© Janet Young is a Certified Tea and Etiquette Consultant, Co-Founder of Mid-Atlantic Tea

Life on My Wee Farm

Pockets Filled with Thankfulness

by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress

A year like no other, 2026. As I sit at my old kitchen table in my crumbling farmhouse, sipping tea, munching on homemade bread and peach jam, I try to remember to be thankful. Good lord yes, I'm scared! Barely getting by.

I take a deep breath, fold my hands, call up my ancestors. Centering on their strength, their resolve, their love, their faith in tomorrow.

A vision of my grandmother's apron pocket comes to mind. I never knew exactly what she kept in there...clean hankie, horehound candy, keys. Often during the day, I would see her, hand in that pocket, far off look in her eyes. I think now she must have been giving thanks, maybe praying, maybe remembering.

So, I shall sum up the year in pockets.

In one pocket I will put those most dear to me, my animals. They sustain me. Give me reason to rise in the morning, bringing me smiles, ready for feed and hugs. The companionship of my cats and dog. The wonderful wools from my bunny's goats and sheep. Fresh eggs from my hens. A very full pocket.

In another pocket I will carry my family, my kin. Their strength and love. Promise of generations and adventure. An odd assortment of personalities but they are mine.

My health and love of fiber and hard work go into another pocket. So thankful I am able to care for my animals, pursue my fiber work, somehow keep body and soul together. Glad I rise with a smile on my face no matter how hard the day ahead.

Another pocket is for my realm, my wee farm. The wonders of trees, plants, stream, rocks and fertile soil. The hum of bees. Birds. Wild things. Dragonflies in my garden, fireflies in the summer nights. Hoar frost on fence lines. Diamonds in the dew. A place untouched by chemicals and little technology.

In another pocket I must put my love of reading, my quest to learn history, to find out why and how. Books to keep me company on sleepless nights. Stories to wander in on summer afternoons. Knowledge of the ages, printed on paper, bound up with the stuff of life.

Friends should have a pocket for they are dear to me. Some wander in and out of my life. Others always there. I rely on their listening, help, love and loyalty. I don't judge them, ask only understanding for I am a feral crone.

A pocket must be for our country. What it was and will be again. Change is inevitable but we have lost sight of compassion and respect. I am thankful there are still people who hold to morals and honor. May we gain ground in the coming year, thankful for our aged history.

And being a farm child, farmers must have a special pocket of thankfulness. I can feel their fear, disappointment. Please let them gather strength, resolve, our support. I am so thankful for them, large and small, family farms. The farmers made and still keep this country. The greedy who abuse them can go to compost.

In another pocket I have to put those who protect us...soldiers, policemen, firemen. The everyday heroes. I'm thankful they feel led to serve, help us, one another. May they stand tall with honor.

My heavens my pockets are full. I have much to be thankful for as the year ends. And as Christmas approaches, I have Christmas wishes. Those I won't list here. You make your own list, fill your own pockets of thankfulness.

Let's be a little kinder, less judgmental, gentler, more caring, more loving. Sharing. Peace and blessings.

© 2026 - Donna Jo Copeland writes from her farm, Breezy Manor, Mooresville, Indiana where she tends her flock and creates art from the wool. Being the 14th generation of farm owner/operator, Donna Jo brings alive the struggles of farm life.

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Building Harmony

by Jeff Cappis

Christmas: The Big Show

There is nothing like children at Christmas is there? Most of us were kids once so we recognize the wonder in their eyes.

My neighbor Ned has four of the cutest children you've ever met. Three girls and a boy. The oldest, Mandy is five and a half. She's followed by Sandy and Candy. The boy, Randy, is the youngest at two and a half years. Ned and his wife Wendy seem to crank them out like clockwork. They maybe a little lazy when it comes to naming their children, but they really are good parents.

Last Christmas they decided to make a video for the children's grandparents and it was a success. They sang "Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer" as they danced around each other and did a little skit. At the very end Randy sang the high note for the big finish. Cute as heck.

Ned wondered why stop there. So, he taught. them "Jingle Bells." Again, they danced around each other and Randy hit the last high note. They were naturals, and when it comes to his children, Ned is a proud father.

One day he met his neighbor Renee on the road and they both stopped to have a friendly chat. Renee asked Ned about his children. Ned beamed and talked about how talented they are. He even showed Renee the video of them singing on his cell phone.

Renee thought they were cute as the dickens. "You know," he said to Ned, "There are a few of us on our road who have nothing to do this Christmas Eve. I was going to have them over for some Christmas cheer. Do you think the kids could do their songs?"

"Sure," Ned smiled. That would be fun." And so, it began. Ned's children were sort of "booked" for Christmas Eve. Ned even taught them to sing "Silent night" in case everyone liked hearing the first two. They were great. Ned even recorded them and put the videos up on his internet page.

For his part, Renee went about inviting a few of the neighbors and even told them about Ned's kids. He got a great reaction and word started to spread up and down the road about the kids and this party. Renee was pleased. He's a neighborly guy so more's the merrier. Meanwhile, Ned's videos went viral in the neighborhood.

A few neighbors asked to bring their own children so Renee got the idea they could hand out presents to the kids as well. Better yet- he could be Santa Clause! (It's important to note that Renee is a six-foot-three, sturdily built man and an ex-French air force pilot with blue eyes and an accent).

Renee's small get together of about 6 people grew to a Christmas party of 40 people and he was beginning to wonder if they would fit in his house. When another 5 people asked to come, he booked the old fire hall down the road. Now this was becoming a community party and everyone wanted to see these cute kids perform their Christmas songs.

Ned was thrilled. The kids made a game of it and practiced singing their three songs over and over. They got it down perfectly. Ned even made some paper cut out Christmas trees to hang as a backdrop. Wendy made them some simple costumes. Mandy wanted to be a duck; Sandy was a kitty; Candy was an elf; and Randy wanted to be a dinosaur. (Wendy actually made him a puppy costume, but she told him it was a dinosaur. He couldn't tell the difference).

Renee decided to build a small stage so everyone could see the kids. Then he hung a couple of sheets for curtains. One of the neighbors, Stanley, offered to do a little juggling as a warm up act. Everything was set.

On Christmas Eve at precisely 6:00, the doors opened and people began coming in. The fire hall was warm and comfortable. Earlier Renee had laid out a table with coffee, cookies and juices. At this moment though, he was dressed as Santa sitting on a chair in the corner with a small pile of presents. Waiting for the first child.

The rest of us were milling around getting caught up with our friends. It was a very good time. Most of us hadn't talked in months or even years.

Renee got his first child. They put little Jimmy on his right knee. "What's your name?." Jimmy smiled then peed on his leg. Renee gave him a present and handed him back to his mother.

Behind the sheets Ned was putting up the paper cut out Christmas trees while Wendy put the costumes on the kids. They were excited. Randy stomped around like a dinosaur. Stanley had gathered up his rubber juggling balls and was waiting off stage.

After Renee tried drying his pant leg, he sat back down and motioned for the next child. Little Emily. She was two. "Ho, ho, ho. What would you like for Christmas little Emily?" Emily looked up at him with her big blue eyes and threw up in his beard.

Seeing this from across the room, I commented to my wife Cathy that Renee didn't look like he was having a good time. Behind the curtain Ned and company were almost set. Stanley had a drink while he waited. By now we were all into the Christmas cheer.

Again, Renee sat down (without his beard) and motioned for the next child. His name was Timmy. Timmy was four. Timmy had a cold. They put him down on Renee's left knee. "I see you've been a good boy this year Timmy," he said as he handed Timmy a present. Timmy sneezed in Renee's unbearded face. Renee looked at his assistant. "Jeez! How many more kids

continued on page 11

Reader Shares!

Finished Project!

My patriotic potato chip quilt, made in July 2026.

Shared by reader P. Olson of Dighton, Massachusetts.



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Christmas, cont. from page 10

have we got?"

It was finally show time. The lights went low throughout the community hall except for the small stage with the sheet curtains. Renee stood in front of the stage (without his pants and beard) and introduced Stan the juggling man.

Stan took to the little bit of stage he had in front of the sheets. The space was tight and his juggling was off. Every third rubber ball bounced into the audience. Every time someone would toss it back. This really messed up his routine. Eventually someone tossed the ball back and beaned him right on the forehead. He fell off the stage. The sheets behind him came down revealing the kids.

A duck, a kitty, an elf and a dog who thinks he's a dinosaur.

The girls were okay and began their song and dance. They were in their glory. Randy though, (who'd never seen so many people) got stiff. He stuck his finger up his nose and put his thumb in his mouth. Then he just stared at the audience.

They got through "Rudolf" okay. The girls were having a great time. They kind of forgot the words sometimes and invented a new key but everybody clapped. Then came "Jingle Bells." Much the same but even more adorable. Finally, "Silent Night."

The girls held hands and sang it in the nicest voices they had. At one point Candy got tangled in the sheets and fell down. The other two danced around her. Smart phones were recording everywhere. We were touched.

When it came to the big finish, Randy pulled his finger out of his nose and gave off what can only be described as- a banshee scream. It even startled Randy. His finger went back up his nose, just as the paper Christmas trees peeled off the wall behind him.

The stage lights went down and the house lights came up. The kids got a standing ovation on a somewhat unforgettable Christmas Eve. Ned and Wendy were the proudest of all.

Renee changed his clothes.

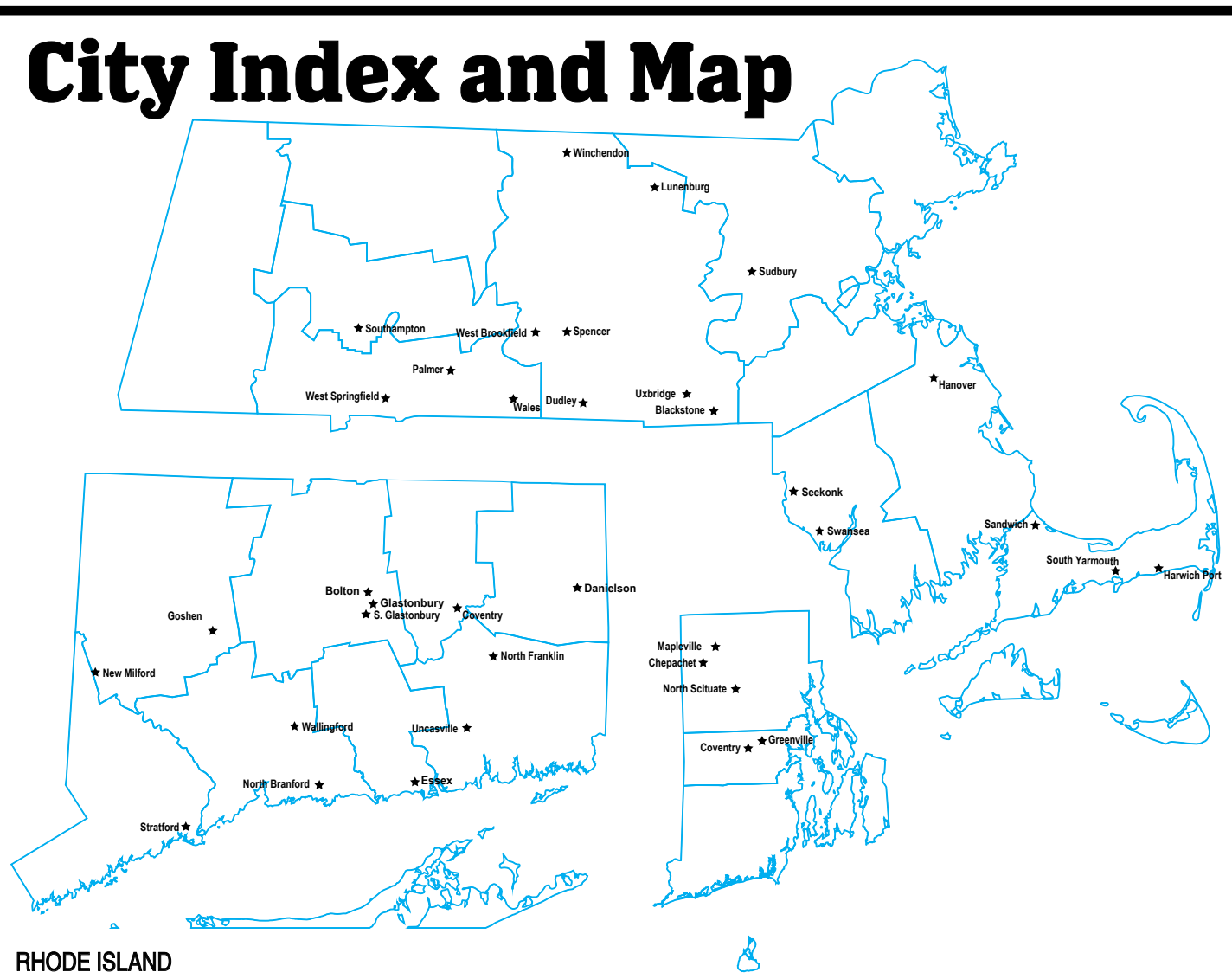
There is nothing like children at Christmas is there? May the child in you will always treasure the season. Merry Christmas from Harmony Acres.

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