



Jasper-Yellowhead  
Museum & Archives

## Christmas Traditions

Some of the earliest records of explorers in the Rocky Mountains make mention of Christmas and New Years celebrations.

David Thompson spent the Christmas of 1810 in the Athabasca Valley before starting over Athabasca Pass

in January of 1811 but his journal reads only: *Dec 25 [1810] Tuesday Christmas Day 7AM Ther -30, 9 PM Ther -22 Cold hazy day.*

Henry John Moberly, the factor of Jasper House from 1855-, wrote about holiday traditions in his book *When Fur Was King*. *"In fact, Fort Edmonton from Christmas until New Year was the scene of a continued round of revelry. At midnight as the old year expired every hand that could raise a flintlock fired salutes to the new one until the powder-horns were drained. The old three pound carronades were not always fired, owing to an accident three years before. The blacksmith had gone into a bastion, loaded one of these guns and discharged it. No attention was at the time paid to the sound, but when next morning the man was missed and a search was instituted his dead body was found in the bastion. He had been killed by the bursting of the old canon."*

Milton and Cheadle travelled across Canada in 1862-63. In Milton's *The North-West Passage By Land* he talks about the importance of a Christmas pudding. They were given the ingredients for the pudding earlier in their trip but discovered that they hadn't been packed very well.

*"Having discovered, some time before, that the fruit was rapidly diminishing in quality in an inexplicable manner, Cheadle had taken the precaution of securing it, together with a modicum of flour and sugar, in his strong box. This likewise contained stores of powder, shot, caps, tobacco, soap, and various etceteras. When the materials for the pudding were sought, it was found that they had escaped the paper in which they had been enclosed, and were scattered at the bottom of the box, mixed with loose shot, caps, fragments of tobacco and other heterogeneous substances.*

*After eliminating all foreign bodies as carefully as possible, the pudding was duly mixed, tied up in the cloth after the established manner, and placed in the pot. Many a time was it taken out and its state examined by point of fork before it was at last-after boiling nearly all day-pronounced thoroughly cooked. We had a brace of prairie chickens also, but all*

*interest was centred in the pudding. No one who has not been restricted to one species of food for a long time can form any idea of the greedy eyes with which we viewed that plum pudding. It proved to be delicious beyond all anticipation, in spite of certain drawbacks in the shape of caps, buck-shot, and fragments of tobacco, which we discovered in it."*  
*"Never did a schoolboy view with such sincere regret the disappearance of this last morsel of cake, as we did when sighing over the last mouthful of that unequalled pudding."*

At the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum & Archives we are continuing with our own tradition, The Festival Of Trees. Admission is free from December 3-11th, 10 am- 5pm daily. Bidding on the trees and wreaths ends at 4 pm Sunday December 11. Please join us for hot chocolate and cookies from 2-4 pm.

### **We Want Your Socks!**

The Jasper-Yellowhead Museum & Archives would like to borrow your Christmas stockings for our Under the Tree Christmas Display during the Festival of Trees, December 3-18. Please drop them by the museum from now until December 3rd. We are open Thursday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm. We will put them into our Christmas display and return them to you by December 19.