

# Historic Highlandlake

Preserving the history  
of the Highlandlake/Mead area



## Building Bridges Across Time

Volume 3, Issue 1

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## A Highlandlake Christmas—1877

Christmas 130 years ago was quite different from the highly commercialized holiday familiar to all of us today. In 1877, Highlandlake was still a fledgling farming center, and while the tiny community had rapidly grown from the original three homes built by the Mead, Waite, and Pound families, it was still a far cry from the many homes that eventually sprung up along the three main roads: Main street—now WCR 5, Longs Peak Ave.—now WCR 36, and Orchard Rd.—now Minch's lane).

The new school house on Main Street was completed in the fall of 1877 with 40 students enrolled. With the community's strong interest in literary pursuits, most certainly a children's school program was on the slate for at least part of the Christmas holiday celebrations.

Until 1880, Highlandlake did not have a church, so more than likely the Mead's and their surrounding neighbors hitched up their buggy's, or perhaps sleighs if the roads were snow packed, and headed off to Longmont for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.

According to the mid-1870s editions of the Longmont and Boulder newspapers, most churches in the area decorated for Christmas with trees, evergreen festoons, and hung Christmas slogans and mottos on the walls. The service itself was rather long, usually lasting upwards of two hours or more and consisted of singing, recitations and special sermons. Afterwards, small presents, including nuts, fruits and candy were handed out to the children and, if the congregation was well off, to the adult members as well.

Along with the church services in town there were probably private celebrations in the homes of Lorin Mead and his neighbors.

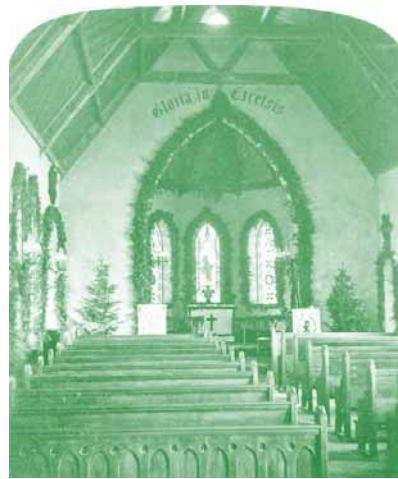
Usually a special meal was prepared with rabbit, wild turkey, or even at times antelope or venison as the main dish. No doubt Lorin Mead's wife, Elizabeth, and daughter Lettie, also created some special "sweet meats" for the family.

For the home, a few simple decorations often included a Christmas tree (either brought down from the mountains or made from dyed goose feathers decorated with garlands of cranberries and popcorn, bits of ribbon and yarn, and lighted with real candles.

Presents were usually hand-made as well, although the Longmont Press was crammed with ads from Longmont and Boulder merchants announcing that their Christmas stock was in. Some of the items mentioned were toys, candy clothes and jewelry.

The Mead's and their neighbors probably received Christmas cards in the mail, which was delivered daily by train to the Highland "switch" about three miles west of Highlandlake, near today's Coor's barley mill. Christmas cards were sent with a special, one-half-cent stamp, as opposed to the usual one-cent stamp for regular first-class mail.

And so, as we sometimes decry the commercialization of Christmas and become stressed out due to our extensive preparations for the day, it is good to remind ourselves of a simpler time, on the shores of our little lake, 130 years ago.



A Colorado church decorated for Christmas ca.1873. Courtesy of the Denver Public Library



And you thought this winter was cold? Frozen water tower on Markham family farm "Locust Grove" in 1918.

Photo courtesy of  
Glen and Pat Markham



*"I think that it is important that we preserve the histories of our farming communities, especially since now so much of our farmland is being sold for development."*

~Nancy Kiteley



Paul Mead and Eldest daughter, Myra Imogene Mead. Ca. 1898

Photo courtesy of Ralph Kirkpatrick



### 12th Annual Joyful Country Christmas Candlelight Service December 21.

If you are weary of attending mega Christmas productions and are longing for a simple, old-fashioned Christmas program to attend, join us in Highlandlake for our 12th annual Joyful Country Christmas.

As in years past, our candlelight carol service will be held at the Historic Highlandlake church at 7 p.m. and will last about a half hour.

Fire codes and limited space allow us to accommodate only 100 people or less and every year our program gets more and more popular, so come early to guarantee yourself a seat.

Also remember that our building is original to 1896, so we do not have a reliable heat source so dress warmly. As always, we will be providing hot cider and coffee to warm body and soul after the service, and there will also be plenty of Christmas cookies to indulge in.

For more information call: 970-535-4936

### Thanks to our Many Sponsors!

When you come to our Christmas program this year, be sure to check out the plaque in the front foyer honoring our many donors who contributed \$1,000 or more to the Highlandlake church restoration fund.

### Search the Web—Earn \$ for HHI!

Find yourself searching for something on the web? Try out a new search engine and earn dollars for Historic Highlandlake!

To use this search engine, go to: [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com). Once there, you will find a place to type in Historic Highlandlake (make sure you spell Highlandlake correctly!), to verify who you want your dollars to go to. Then go searching!

### How Queen Victoria and Prince Albert Changed Christmas

Traditionally, until about 1850, American Christmas observances were rather sober, drab affairs. Anything more was seen, especially by those of Puritan descent (as were most of the early

pioneers in Highlandlake), as pagan rituals and shunned by all but the most liberal of church goers.

However, the change from Christmas drabness to Christmas light was as sudden as the conversion of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens, published in 1843. The cause of this rapid change in public opinion came in 1841, after Prince Albert, the beloved consort of Queen Victoria, initiated his new concept of 'Family Caring at Christmas', promoting a brand new royal image, with the Queen, himself and infant children, pictured together around a decorated Weinachtsbaum; a 'Christmas Tree' of light.

The news quickly spread throughout England and America, and soon society's "A list" on both sides of the pond embraced the Christmas tree with gusto.

By 1850 Charles Dickens was ardently recommending the newly fashionable Christmas Tree custom in the British magazine, *Household Words*. He described the tree as lit by "a multitude of little tapers" and hung with 'books, workboxes, paint-boxes, sweetmeat boxes, peep-show boxes . . . there were tee-to-tums, humming tops, needle-cases, pen-wipers, smelling bottles, conversation cards, bouquet holders; real fruit, made artificially dazzling with gold leaf; imitation apples, pears and walnuts, crammed with surprises."

As early as 1823, Clement Clark Moore's beloved "The Night Before Christmas, mentions the Dutch and German traditions of hanging stockings to be filled by Saint Nickolas. By the mid 1850s these customs were making their way into households across the whole of America, particularly among poorer families who could not afford to pile gifts high beneath the tree. By the 1890s, the story of Father Christmas and his stockings was a firm favorite with American families and retail outlets alike.

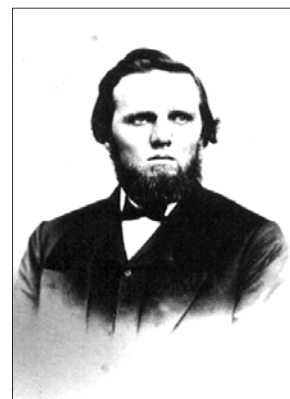
The clatter of today's shopping mall cash registers may drown the gentle tinkle of crystal baubles or silver bells on your traditional Christmas Tree. But 160 years later we can still hear that caring family message of Queen Victoria and her beloved Albert, as they stood in silent wonder around that sparkling tree and marveled with the children at the light from the flickering tapers. And I believe we always shall.

## Join Historic Highlandlake!

Our organization is open to anyone who has an interest in the past history and future vitality of the Highlandlake/Mead Communities. We have two designations of membership —General and “Pioneer,” with the latter designation reserved for those individuals who are descended from anyone who lived in the Highlandlake Community prior to 1906, or in Mead before 1925.

Annual memberships are \$15 for individuals and \$25 for families, whether General or “Pioneer,” and \$100 for a Supporting Member. \$500 will buy you a lifetime membership. Additionally, one-year, individual memberships will be conferred on those individuals or businesses that have donated \$100 or more to the church building fund per year.

The money collected from membership dues will be used for the regular, ongoing expenses of the organization, such as printing, mailings, newsletters, programs and other day to day expenses of running the society.



L. C. Mead  
Founder of Highlandlake

*Historic Highlandlake, Inc.*  
C/O Lawrence Jensen - Treasurer  
717 W. Fifth Ave  
Longmont, CO 80501  
303.402.1031

*Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership contribution for 2006.*

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*Sign me up as a:*

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\_\_\_ I am a direct descendant of a pre-1906 Highlandlake Pioneer\*

\_\_\_ I am a direct descendant of a pre-1925 Mead Pioneer\*

\*Pioneer memberships are restricted to those members who can prove direct descendancy from a pre~1906, Highlandlake settler, or a pre~1925 Mead resident. Please contact us for more information.

*I am contributing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Highlandlake Church Restoration*

*I am contributing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to Historic Highlandlake's Operating fund*

*I am contributing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Highlandlake Pioneer Cemetery*

*I am contributing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to wherever you need it most*

*I would like to help with:*

\_\_\_ Membership Committee \_\_\_ Highlandlake Church/Community Building

\_\_\_ Pioneer Cemetery \_\_\_ Programs & Tours \_\_\_ Annual Reunion & Community Gathering

\_\_\_ Oral History \_\_\_ Highlandlake and Mead Digital Photo Project

\_\_\_ Educational Outreach \_\_\_ Re-enactments

### *New Members/Donors*

Blue Mountain Arts  
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If we have missed anyone please let us know and accept our



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