

A WHITE HOUSE



CHRISTMAS

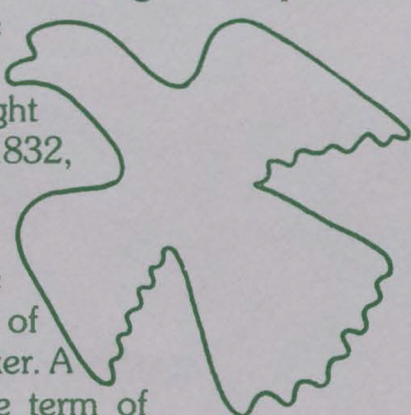
1975

A NUTSHELL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN CHRISTMAS TREE

Many of the Christmas traditions familiar to modern Americans have developed since 1840. In fact, the tree-trimming ritual wasn't widespread in the United States until after our Civil War. In 1850, the English novelist Charles Dickens referred to the Christmas tree as that "new German toy".

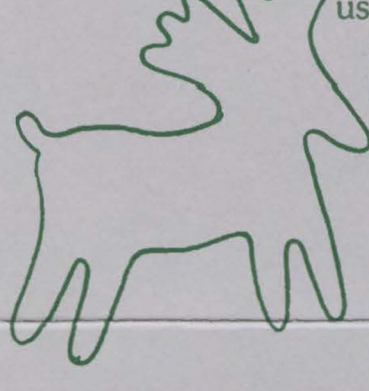
Some say that Hessian soldiers, hired by England's George III to quiet his rebellious colonists, introduced the custom here; but the claim remains undocumented. Researchers have definitely established that Charles Follen, a refugee who taught German at Harvard "dressed" a tree for his young son in 1832, while living in Boston. Ten years later in Williamsburg, Virginia, Charles Minnigerode, a German immigrant teaching at the College of William and Mary, shared the traditions of his youth by decorating a tree for the children of a friend and colleague, Professor Nathaniel Beverley Tucker. A tree first graced the White House in 1889, during the term of Benjamin Harrison.

By 1850 city people could purchase toys and shiny glass ornaments for Christmas use. But many Americans lived simply in rural areas. Using spare bits of cloth, various nuts and vegetables, wood scraps, and plenty of imagination, these folk managed to create a Christmas every bit as warm and gay as their wealthy, worldly neighbors living in towns.



THE WHITE HOUSE TREE

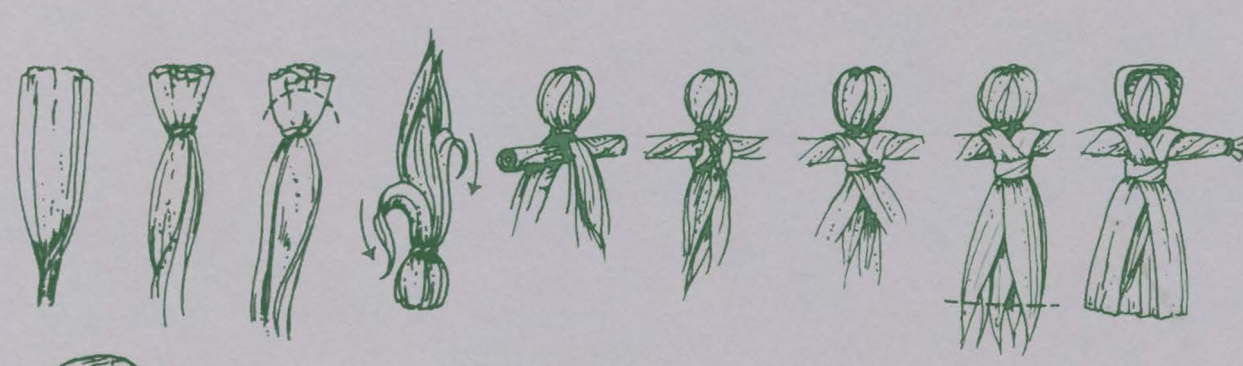
For a second year, the White House's Christmas tree decorations reflect Mrs. Ford's interest in traditional, homemade ornaments. All the trimmings are hand-crafted and constructed of such readily available, inexpensive materials as acorns, peanuts, dried fruits and vegetables, straw, pine cones, gaily-colored scraps of fabric, yarn, ribbon, and so forth. No plastic, foil, or metal has been used. Most of the simple handmade ornaments have been created by volunteers in Williamsburg, Virginia, supervised by staff from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection.



In our increasingly synthetic world, it is reassuring to know that one can still make special things from ordinary ones through the combination of imagination, skillful hand-crafting, and time.



CORN HUSK DOLL



MATERIALS:

10 to 12 dried corn husks
comsilk
heavy brown thread
grocery twine

white glue
1" straight pins
cotton
acrylic paint or ink

TO MAKE:

The best time for gathering corn husks is in the fall during harvest. Husks from sweet corn bought in the grocery store may be used; but they must be dried thoroughly. Dried corn husks must be dampened before beginning, to make them pliable. Soak the husks in water for at least five minutes. Select four of the longest husks and place them flat against each other. Tie the ends of the corn husks tightly together 1" from the top with brown thread. Round off corners of the short end with a pair of scissors.



Then turn upside down and peel back in two sections with two husks on either side. Take a small piece of cotton and wrap it around the short ends to form a head about 1½" in diameter. Tie the long ends securely below the cotton forming the head. (Use pins if necessary to hold husks around the doll's head.) Take two other long husks and roll up to form a long cylindrical piece, or braid three husks together. Tie each end of this roll off with brown thread. Insert this roll between the two sections of husks at right angles to the doll's head and tie again below this roll forming the doll's arms. While arms are still wet, bend into desired position.

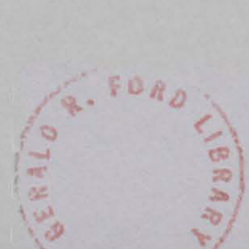
Take two fairly narrow (1" wide) husks and wrap them in a diagonal pattern—one across each shoulder to form the doll's bodice and hold her arms in place. Tie loose ends at waist. Extra skirt may be added by bending husks in half and tying them at the doll's waist. When doll is dry, the face may be painted and hair added by gluing comsils or unraveled twine on top of doll's head.

Other accessories may be added to suit your imagination with extra pieces of corn husks, tassels, or kernels.

THE WHITE HOUSE

1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20500



NUT PEOPLE



MATERIALS:

1" dressmaker's straight pins
3" T pins
white glue
florist wire
nuts, acorns, buckeyes,
walnuts, hemlock and
pine cones

drill
clear plastic fish line
acrylic paint

TO MAKE:

Choose a pine cone or buckeye to form an appropriate sized body. Attach arms and legs by either pushing a T pin through soft hemlock cones or nuts and pinning this row of nuts to the body, or stringing florist wire through holes already drilled in acorns. The T in the T pins will keep the hemlock cones on, or you may bend the end of the florist wire so the nuts do not drop

off. The figure's head—consisting of a walnut, acorn, buckeye, etc.—is attached by sticking a T pin through it and pinning it to the body. Glue may be used to help hold the head in place. Ears or nose may be added by pinning hemlock cones or small acorns to the head. (The drill is only necessary when the nut is too hard to push a pin through.) The face may be painted with acrylic paint, and halves of walnuts or pieces of pine cones can be glued on for hats. Nut people can be hung from clear plastic fish line or florist wire.

SOAP SNOWFLAKE

TO MAKE:

Soak bath-size bar of soap in water for approximately one hour to keep bar from cracking. Remove from water and let dry overnight. Trace snowflake design onto top of bar and carve away unwanted soap. Carefully push wire into carved piece. If desired, various patterns may be painted onto the snowflake to enhance the design.

MATERIALS:

bar of soap
knife
hook
wire
acrylic paint



COOKIE CUTTER TREE TOYS

MATERIALS:

1" dressmaker's straight pins
colored thread
sewing needle
scissors or pinking shears
cookie cutters
construction paper
pencil
fabric: cotton, calico, felt, wool fiberfill, shredded
stockings or light-weight filler
colored yarn
buttons

TO MAKE:

Trace cookie cutter or draw figure of your own onto construction paper. Cut out figure and pin to two pieces of fabric with wrong sides of fabric facing inward. Cut out fabric along lines of paper model with scissors or pinking shears.

Method I: Sew right sides together stitching around edges $\frac{1}{4}$ " from border leaving a space of 1" to insert stuffing. After trimming edges, turn the fabric so that right sides are out and stuff with fiberfill, stockings or light-weight filler. Stitch up stuffing hole. Add eyes (buttons may be used), tail, wings or mane using scraps of fabric or yarn. Sew on thread loop for hanging ornament.

Method II: Place right sides of the fabric facing outward, and stitch around edges leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ " border. Leave 1" space for stuffing. Stuff with fiberfill, shredded stockings, or light-weight filler. Sew up hole; add eyes and other decorations. Add thread hanging loop. This is a faster method; however, pinking shears must be used in the original cutting of the fabric as these edges are exposed.

PAPER SILHOUETTES

MATERIALS:

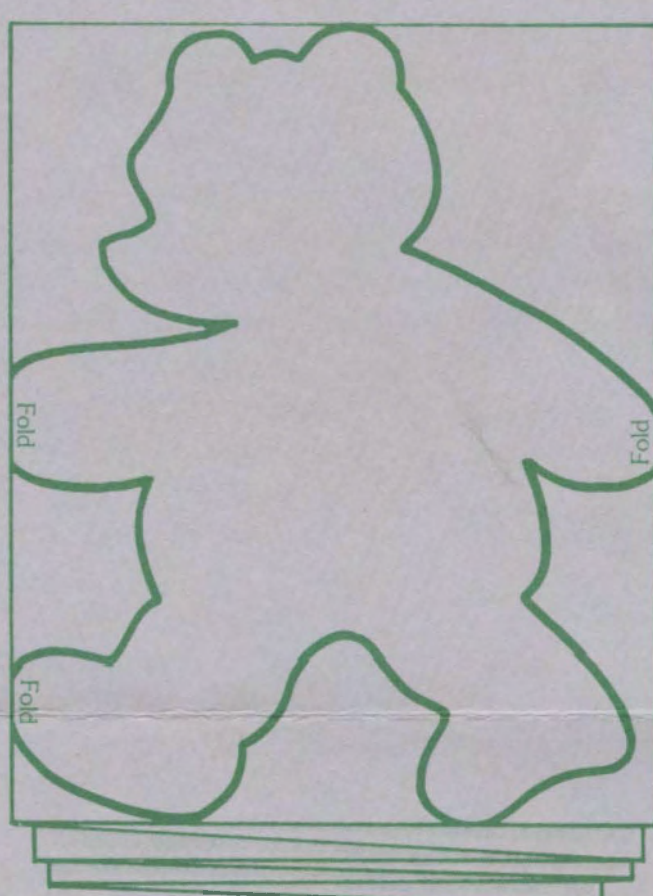
colored construction paper
pencil
scissors

TO MAKE:

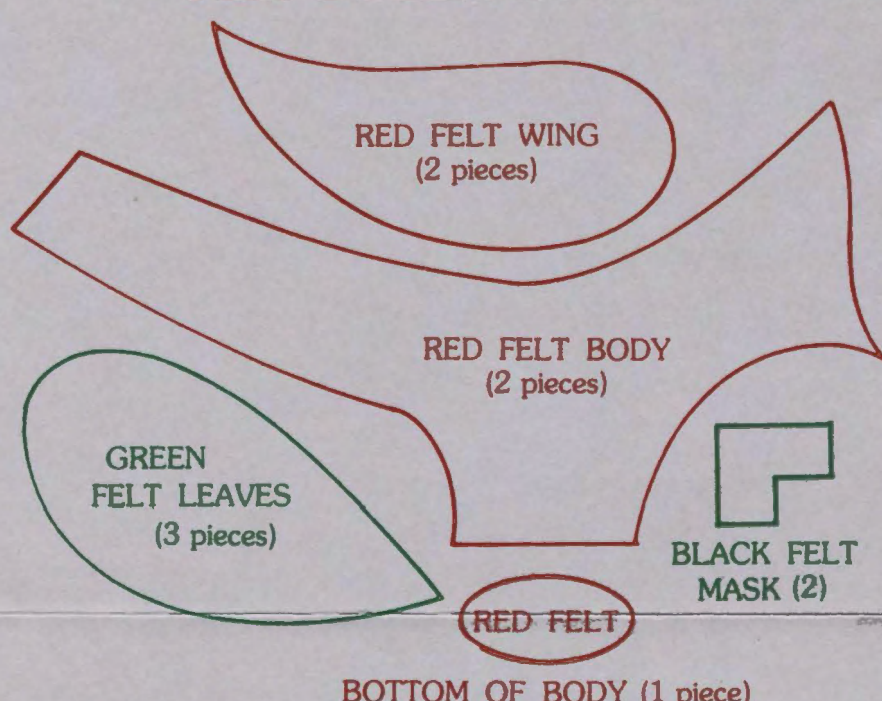
Decide upon a figure to be made. It may be a string of animals, such as bears or elephants, or a set of figures, such as angels or snowmen. Fold the construction paper into several layers wide enough to accommodate the figure and thick enough to make the chain a desired length.

Trace the chosen shape onto the folded paper; then cut it out being careful to leave a segment of the folded area on each side of the shape intact. If the folds are cut through entirely, the figures will not form a chain but will instead be separate and unattached to one another.

After cutting is complete, open the paper figures to find a chain to surround the tree limbs!



CLOTHESPIN CARDINAL



MATERIALS:

felt—red, green and black
cotton or fiberfill
3" pinch clothespin
white glue
black glass beads
sewing needle
thread
scissors
1" dressmaker's straight pins
pencil

TO MAKE:

Trace pattern onto colored felt with pencil. Cut out felt pieces. Assemble pieces into body shape; sew around edges of cardinal's body leaving 1" space at bottom open. Stuff bird with cotton or fiberfill; close 1" opening. Sew red felt base onto bottom of bird. Glue three green felt leaves to top of 3" pinch clothespin. Glue stuffed bird to top of leaves. Glue or sew black glass beads on for eyes, or use tiny squares of black felt for eyes. Attach clothespin to tree.



THE PRESIDENT AND I WISH YOU
MERRY CHRISTMAS

Betty Ford