

Hello- Nikki, Michael,
Kena & Nalin -

When pausing to think about all the ways
we've been blessed this year,
it's people like you
who keep coming to mind.

Have a Wonderful Christmas & a

Merry Christmas
Happy New Year
Best
Paul & Candace

Column for December 16, 2008

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTMAS WREATH & CHRISTMAS STOCKING

In America the word wreath most often refers to thoughts of Christmas, but its roots can be traced back to the ancient cultures of the Persian Empire. In that era, wreaths were a sign of importance or victory and took the form of fabric headbands occasionally adorned with jewels.

Around 776 B.C., the Greeks placed wreaths made of laurel on heads of victorious athletes in the original Olympic Games. As the Games began to move to different cities, each host city would award head garlands made from the local trees. In ancient Rome wreaths were worn on the heads of leaders such as Julius Caesar. The transition from head ornament to wall or door decoration is unclear. One theory is a warrior or athlete may have decided to save his or her award and placed it at their residence.

Perhaps the loveliest use of this symbol is the Advent wreath and probable originated in northern Europe when Pagan customs were practiced. The evergreen circle was a symbol of the recurring seasons or the "circle of Life" and the candles were to symbolize the coming of light or spring. The candles were lit to ward off the dark and cold of the winter night. The German Lutheran's and Christians also used evergreen boughs for door and wall decorations to invoke warm feeling of Christmas cheer.

The traditional of the Christmas stocking was introduced by the Dutch when a colonial settlement was established on lower Manhattan Island as a provincial extension of the Dutch Republic. The settlement of New Amsterdam (now New York City) continued their Dutch Christmas Eve tradition of having their children hang their clogs by the hearth, full of straw for the reindeer. Near the same spot, they placed a treat for "Sinterclass" (Santa Claus). As a return gift, Sinterclass would leave the children little gifts in the clogs as a thank you for the treat and the straw for the reindeer. With time, the clogs became stocking and Sinterclass became Santa Claus.

Paul C. Crandall is the Director of Marion County Technical Education Center and note this will be the last week that our Horticulture students will be selling Poinsettias.