

December 2020



# MANSION HOUSE NEWS

WESTPORT  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## Merry Christmas!

"Tis the season for decking the halls, hanging the mistletoe, baking the cookies, wrapping the presents and spending time with family and dear friends." The Staff, Board of Directors, and the Executive Officers of the Westport Historical Society and the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum wish you, your family, and friends a Blessed and Very Merry Christmas!

### A Christmas Wish

Christmas is a special time  
To serve, to give, to love.  
It's not a time about you,  
But others to think of.

Christmas is a special time.  
The gifts, the trees, the twinkling lights  
Are grand but have no part  
Of the real meaning of Christmas  
That is in your heart.

The holidays are a special time  
With many things that are kind and good,  
Because they keep us thinking  
About others like we should.

So, this year, do not think about yourself  
But think of things you can do  
To help others have a wonderful Christmas,  
And this will make you happy, too.

~author, unknown

## Cancellation

Because of the increasing number of COVID cases in Kansas and Missouri, it is with regret, but out of respect for our guests, members, friends, and staff that we cancel our CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE which was scheduled for December 6, 2020. We will miss the opportunity to see and visit with one and all, but everyone's health and well-being are of foremost importance. Please take care and enjoy the Christmas Season with your family.

## Winter Closing

The 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum will close for the 2020 season on Saturday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, and reopen on Friday, March 5, 2021. The House Museum will be available for group tours, private events, and meetings in January and February 2021, during the closure. Please call 913-231-6749 for reservations and information, or send an email to

[westporthistorical@gmail.com](mailto:westporthistorical@gmail.com)

## *Aunt Minerva's Kitchen*

### Oyster Stuffing

The stuffing is palatable, light, slightly moist, and well flavored. The quantity of any ingredient can be increased or decreased according to your taste.

- 4 cups bread crumbs or lightly toasted bread cut up into cubes
- ¼ to ½ cup melted butter
- ¼ to ½ cup onion, chopped
- 2 Tablespoons dried parsley, or ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 cup canned oysters, lightly sautéed (small=use whole, large=use chopped)
- ¼ to ½ cup oyster liquor; more if needed
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 1 egg
- ¼ to ½ cup celery, chopped
- Optional, juice of one lemon

Chopped green peppers, nutmeats, sauteed mushrooms, as desired, to taste.

### UNCLE MARK'S CORNER

Cozy fires in your fireplace during the fall and winter months are wonderful and inviting, but they leave you with lots of ash to sweep-up and remove. So, what to do with all the ashes those heat-producing fires leave behind? Below is a list of ways to recycle wood ash:

- Make Your Own Soap: Mix wood ash with water to get lye, which is a common ingredient in traditional soap-making. Throw in a form of fat and some fragrance, add a lot of boiling and lots of stirring, and you will have homemade soap.
- Clean the Silver: Wood ash is a mild abrasive. If you mix the ash with a little water, you can make a paste which is marvelous for polishing silver and other metals.
- Slow Algae Growth: Wood ash won't actually kill algae, but it can help to control it. Because wood ash is high in potassium, sprinkling it into a pond will encourage the other plants to grow and compete with the algae, keeping it in check.
- Remove Moisture: Wood ash is a desiccant that you can use in humid spaces. Put a small amount of wood ash on a saucer and placed in the corner of a room. The ash will help draw the humidity out of the air.
- Remove Skunk Smell: If your pet has ever had a run-in with a skunk, you know how hard it is to get rid of the stench! Because fireplace ashes absorb odors, you can use them to get help remove the skunk odor. Just rub ashes into your pet's fur to absorb the smell.
- Get Rid of The Ants: Sprinkle layer of ash over those ant hills to force them to relocate.
- Remove Soot: In the same way that a wood-ash paste can remove tarnish, it can also be used to remove soot from your fireplace doors. Simply mix ashes and a little water into a paste, then use it as a mild abrasive to get that glass shiny and clean again.
- Extinguish a Fire: Fine wood ash can smother a small fire. Keep a bucket of ash close to the fireplace in case you need to extinguish any wayward embers.
- Make Natural Bleach: Mix wood ash with water to get a substance call lye water. Lye water is often used in soap, but it can also be used by itself as a bleaching agent. A cupful added to a load of wash should do the trick.
- Remove Slugs and Snails: Wood ash is a natural desiccant, so put a ring of wood ash around plants to keep these pests out of your gardens.



Joe's  
Pizza  
Buy the Slice



KANSAS CITY ATHENAEUM



### EVENT SPACE RENTAL

The upper and lower galleries of the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum may be rented for luncheons, parties, celebrations, receptions or meetings. The parlor or dining room may be rented for small weddings, and the Mansion House grounds may be rented for outdoor events.

For more information pricing, and availability, please send an email of inquiry to:  
[westporthistorical@gmail.com](mailto:westporthistorical@gmail.com)





## OLD AND NEW FOR CHRISTMAS

We wish you joy as you celebrate the season of Christmastide, share in the old Christmas Traditions, and make new ones with your family to enjoy in the Christmases to come.

Mrs. Harris and her daughters established Christmas Traditions in their homes on the western prairie. They made memories that were cherished for many years, and still today, many of their descendants celebrate the memories and traditions of the 1800's.

Grandma "Hennie" Harris used what she had to deck the halls. Look around your yard and house to find natural elements to dress up your home. Collect pinecones and make a wreath or arrange with fresh greens and colorful berries in glass apothecary jars, or crystal bowls. Cut greenery and tuck into simple white pitchers. Tie evergreen branches together with ribbon to make ropes and swags. Use small sticks, berries, and ribbon tied together for festive decorations. String cranberries and popcorn for the tree. Dress up tree branches with cinnamon sticks and oranges stuffed with cloves for a wonderful aroma.

Make choosing a Christmas tree a family outing. Uncle Mark and the boys always found the perfect evergreen tree out on the prairie, but your family outing can take you to a tree farm or a tree lot.

Make paper chains for the tree using colored paper or bits of wallpaper. The Harris girls used homemade glue, but feel free to use scotch tape or staples.

Each year have the family either buy a new ornament or assemble a home-made family creation. Aunt Minerva dried slices of lemons and oranges and used ribbon to hang them on the tree, wreaths, or on pine-scented swags.

Just like the Harris children and grandchildren, go ice skating on a local pond, once it freezes, or go to a skating rink then make home-made hot chocolate—always a family favorite no matter what the century!

Have a family tree lighting ceremony. 19<sup>th</sup> century Christmas trees held candles which were lit on Christmas morning. Your electric lights offer tree lightings over and over when family and friends come to visit.

Enjoy a cookie exchange with neighbors. This is always a holiday favorite and a festive treat.

Get your family and neighbors together and go caroling and enjoy apple cider around a campfire. The Harris daughters enjoyed playing carols on their Chickering piano while the family gathered to sing their favorites.

Make a gingerbread house-- this tradition has been around for centuries. Gingerbread houses were surely a must at the Harris-House Hotel!



## FESTIVE FRAGRANCES

This holiday season don't purchase overpriced scented candles when you have the "aromas of the season" ingredients sitting in your kitchen. Simmer citrus fruits, apples, cinnamon sticks, and cloves for a cozy scent. Simmering water, cinnamon, coffee, and vanilla makes a heady fragrance. Toss a few fresh pinecones or cinnamon sticks on a crackling fire in the fireplace for an evocative aroma on a snowy night. There are no perfect measurements needed for the spices. Add what you like and simmer the pot. Fill small bowls with fragrant pieces of lavender, dried apples, or cloved stuffed oranges and display throughout the dining room, family room, and bathroom. The scents may be adjusted with the seasons.

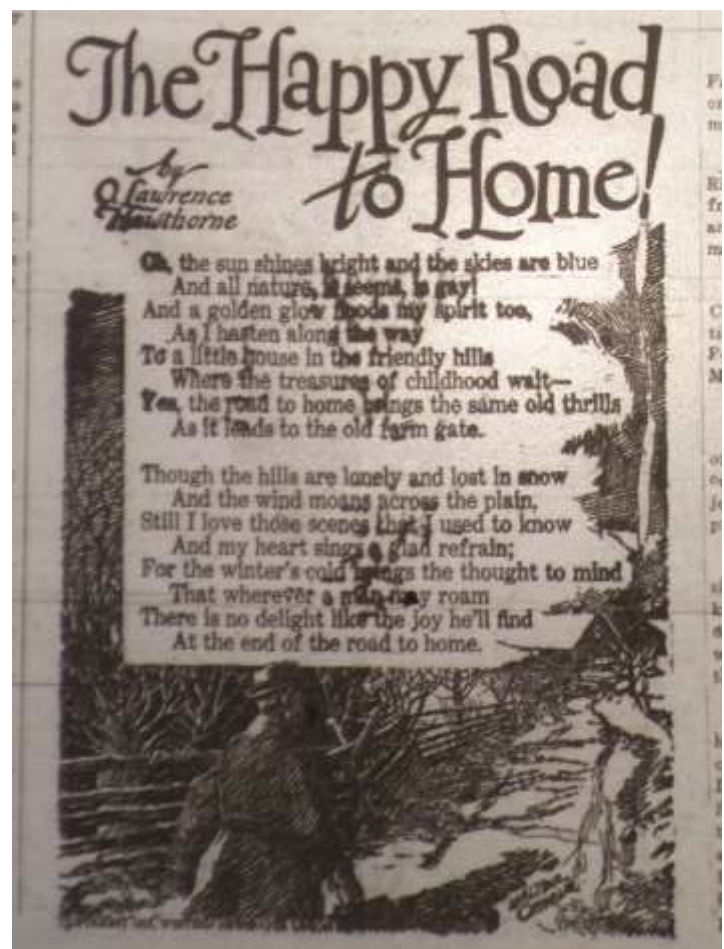
## December 2020 Holidays

**Hanukkah/Chanukah**, Friday, December 18- Final Day  
**Winter Solstice**, Monday, December 21  
**Christmas Eve**, Thursday, December 24, 2020  
**Christmas Day**, Friday, December 25, 2020



## COVID-19 DISCLOSURE

Depending on the state of the COVID-19 in our communities, events may be postponed or cancelled. Check our Facebook for the most current, up to date information. Or email [westporthistorical@gmail.com](mailto:westporthistorical@gmail.com).







Westport Historical Society seeks volunteers:

- Treasurer
- Board member
- Executive Director

-Docents and other volunteers **FOUR HOURS A WEEK;**  
we practice safe social distancing 🤝  
(Th, F, or Sat, 1-5 p.m.)

If you are interested, or you would like more information, e-mail Alana Smith  
[westporthistorical@gmail.com](mailto:westporthistorical@gmail.com), or call (913) 648-0952



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