

KINGS LANDING

# A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS HISTORY LESSON





## OBJECTIVES

- Learn how to make a pomander ball decoration at home
- Learn how to make a paper silhouette craft at home
- Provide students with a brief introduction to popular Victorian Christmas practices
- Consider how celebrations this time of year differ from the past

## MATERIALS NEEDED

### POMANDER BALLS:

- oranges
- whole cloves
- fork
- ribbon (optional)

### PAPER SILHOUETTES:

- paper
- pencil or writing utensil
- scissors
- design examples
- cookie cutter (optional)

## RESOURCES

The information gathered in this lesson comes from internal Kings Landing research files and *From the Kitchens of Kings Landing circa 1820 – 1890: Christmas in the Valley Edition* compiled and edited by Kaye Parker, former Public Relations & Marketing Director at Kings Landing.





# A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS HISTORY LESSON

## INTRODUCTION

Christmas celebrations date back many centuries. This lesson focuses on some of the important elements of a Victorian Christmas that became popular when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837. Victorians placed importance on family and charity. While not all the practices listed in this lesson were adopted by New Brunswickers, they were common during this era.

As you go through this lesson, ask yourself: How do some of these traditions compare to how I celebrate Christmas? Are there differences or similarities? How do they compare to how friends or relatives mark this time of year? Why do traditions change?





## LESSON

### THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

You have likely heard the 12 Days of Christmas song, but it was an actual tradition for some folks during the Victorian Era. This time was from December 25 to January 6. A yule log was lit on December 24 and would burn for all 12 days. This was a special time for gathering with family and going on sleigh rides. The last day, January 6, was called Epiphany and marked the end of the Christmas season.

### CHRISTMAS DAY

Christmas Day typically started with a visit to the local church and continued with feasting and toasting. Dinners featured food like turkey, beef, rabbit, venison, ham, seasonal vegetables plum pudding, pies, and doughnuts. Families practised gift-giving at this time. Parents would gift their young children small toys or treats in stockings as a goodwill and good fortune gesture rather than a reward for their behaviour.

### BOXING DAY

Boxing Day, December 26, used to be called St. Stephen Day. People were presented with clay bottles or small boxes with slots for money.

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

New Year's Eve was often more important than Christmas and featured a larger celebration. It was a sign for a new start and new chance to forget the previous year's struggles. Folks would give gifts as a sign of friendship.





## NEW YEAR'S DAY

On New Year's Day, January 1st, people observed the first footing. The first person to enter a home on New Year's Day was believed to bring good fortune to the family.

## WASSAILING

Wassailing was an early form of caroling. Singers would visit homes and bring good fortune. This was often accompanied by a drink called wassail. This practice was later replaced by caroling.

## DECORATIONS

Decorations included a lot of greenery throughout the home. Christmas Trees were popular in England thanks to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, but only appeared later in New Brunswick around 1860-70. Folks also decorated their home with pomander balls, paper chains, small candles, and kissing balls.

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

Christmas Cards became a popular item to exchange with family and friends. Folks would entertain themselves with concerts, plays, dancing, and magic lanterns. The stories "Twas the Night Before Christmas" by Clement C. Moore and "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens were popular.

## LEARN MORE

There's so much more to learn about how people celebrated Christmas in the past. Visit Kings Landing on December 4, 5, 11 & 12, 2021 to learn even more about a Victorian Christmas.





## ACTIVITIES

### MAKE YOUR OWN POMANDER BALL

What you will need:

- oranges
- whole cloves
- fork
- ribbon (optional)



If made correctly a pomander ball will give off its sweet, spicy aroma for years. The secret lies in completely studding the orange with the whole cloves. Then, as the orange dries out and shrinks, it is preserved by the cloves. Once an orange is completely dry, no peel should be visible. It is easier to prick the flesh of the orange with the tines of a fork before inserting the cloves. Once the pomander is finished, it could be shaken in a bag with ground spices - cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice - if you wish, but this is unnecessary if the skin has been completely covered by cloves.

Pomander balls can be brightened with ribbons and nestled in evergreens on a window ledge, added to a basket of pine cones, or just strewn along any area where they can contribute to the decorating scheme of a room.

After Christmas they can be carefully packed away for another year, or they could be stored in a drawer to lend a subtle spicy scent to whatever the contents.





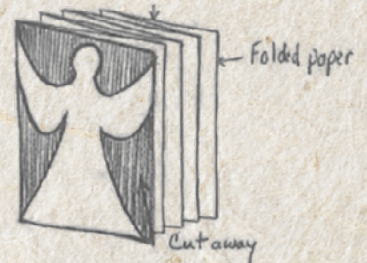
## MAKE A PAPER SILHOUETTE

What you'll need:

- paper
- pencil or writing utensil
- scissors
- design examples (see next page)
- cookie cutter (optional)

Decide which figure you want to make. It can 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 you have chosen and thick enough to make the chain the length you desire. On the folded paper, trace the pattern given or draw around your favourite cookie cutter.

Cut out the figure, being careful to leave part 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 and will instead be separate and unattached to one another. Hang your paper chain and admire your beautiful work!





## DESIGN TEMPLATES

Feel free to use any of these as inspiration for your paper silhouette.

