

DEC. 2019

STWG

SUSQUEHANNA TRAIL WOODWORKERS GUILD

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

We hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season with family and friends! Looking forward to seeing you at the Woodworking show in Baltimore, and the next meeting in January.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

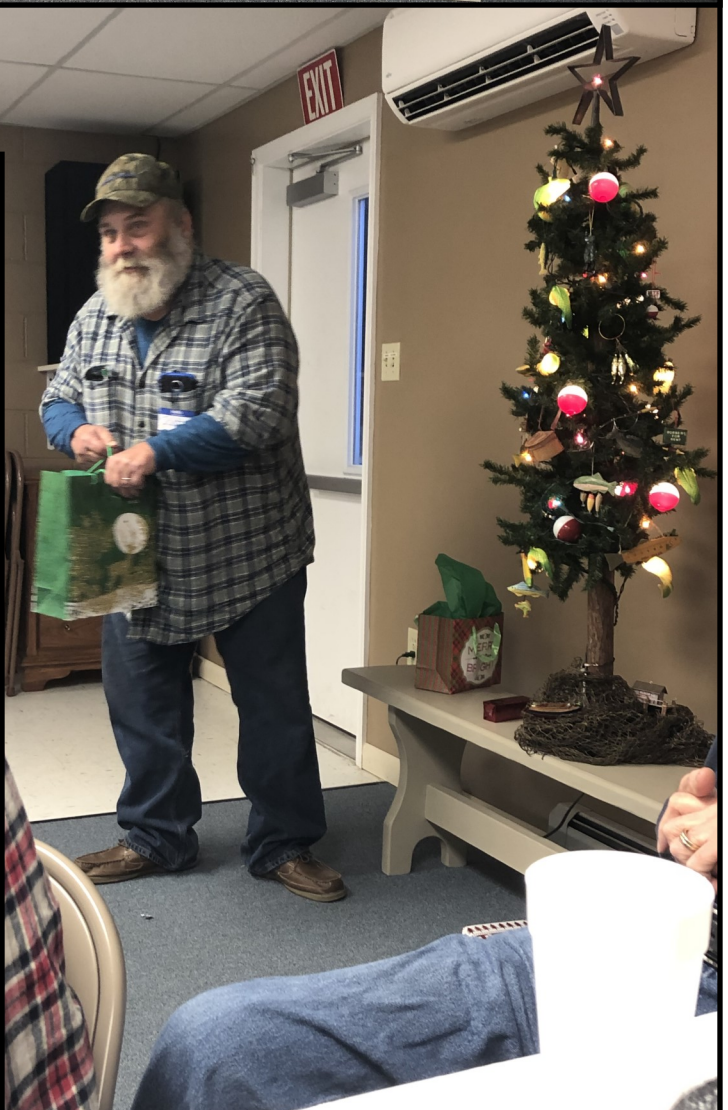


Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday,
Jan. 23rd, at 7 pm. The usual location:

York Town Craft Guild
Friendship Fire Co #8
639 N Franklin Street
York, PA 17403







THE FIVE MOST POPULAR CHRISTMAS TREE SPECIES

Balsam Fir – The Balsam fir is the most fragrant of the trees, making it the most popular Christmas tree variety. They're durable and have short, flat, dark green needles. They do dry out quickly, so be sure to check their water levels often. Fun Fact: The tree was named for the balsam or resin found in blisters on bark which was used to treat wounds during the Civil War.



Douglas Fir – A very common variety, these trees are favored for their perfect conical shape and fullness. Great for filling big rooms. Their needles are soft and flat with a blunt tip. Best to use lighter-weighted ornaments. Fun Fact: The tree was named after botanist David Douglas who studied the tree in the 1800s.



Fraser Fir – Recognizable by their needles, which are dark green on top and silver underneath. The branches, which curve slightly upward, are stiff so they hold ornaments well. And they last a long time — it's not uncommon for these trees to last as long as 6 weeks, and they keep their needles well. After Balsam Fir, Fraser Firs are especially fragrant. Fun Fact: It takes 7–10 years to grow a 6–7 foot Fraser Fir.



Scotch Pine (or Scots Pine) – This tree makes the list because it rarely sheds its needles, and has excellent water retention when cut. A Scotch Pine's sturdy branches curve upward making it great for holding ornaments. The needles can be sharp. Fun Fact: The Scotch Pine is the most widely-planted pine tree in the U.S.



Colorado Blue Spruce – This evergreen is hard to miss with its beautiful blue hue. It's a popular Christmas tree because it rarely sheds its needles. But they are sharp, so be careful (but they're a good pet deterrent!). Stiff branches hold ornaments well and they have a perfect pyramid shape. Consider the tree's color when selecting decorations. Fun Fact: A Blue Spruce is the living Christmas Tree planted on the south lawn of the White House.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE



Evergreen trees and plants have been used to celebrate winter festivals for thousands of years, long before the advent of Christianity.

Pagans in Europe used branches of evergreen fir trees to decorate their homes and brighten their spirits during the winter solstice.

Early Romans used evergreens to decorate their temples at the festival of Saturnalia, while ancient Egyptians used green palm rushes as part of their worship of the god Ra.

"The idea of bringing the evergreen into the house represents fertility and new life in the darkness of winter, which was much

more of the pagan themes," Dr Dominique Wilson from the University of Sydney said.

"That's also where the ideas of the holly and the ivy and the mistletoe come from because they're the few flowering plants at winter so therefore they hold special significance. "So the idea of bringing evergreens into the house started there and eventually that evolved into the Christmas tree."

From pagan customs to Christianity

There are several theories and legends as to how the evergreen fir tree went on to become a symbol of Christianity. One is credited to the English Benedictine monk Boniface, famous for his missionary work in Germany during the eighth century.

"The common story goes that [Boniface] encountered some native Germans performing some sacrifices in front of a mighty oak tree — oak trees being sacred to the god Thor," Dr Wilson said. "Boniface seized his axe and felled the tree in order to stop the pagans worshiping a false idol and the pagans were waiting for him to be struck down by lightning, but it didn't happen.

"So at this stage he took the opportunity to convert them." Then legend has it that a fir tree grew out of the fallen oak. "That became a symbol of Christ — being triangular in shape it represents the trinity — and from there came the idea that the tree should be a symbol of Christ and new life," Dr Wilson said. "That's one of the main origins of the Christmas tree and bringing it into the house."

Modern Christmas trees a German tradition

Modern Christmas trees emerged in western Germany during the 16th century as Christians brought trees into their homes and decorated them with gingerbread, nuts and apples.

"It's the 17th century that we really get the decorating happening, and we get a movement into the festivals and the big royal courts having these trees with the gold leaf on them, having paper decorations with candles," Dr Wilson said.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE



The custom became popular among nobility and spread to royal courts across Europe in the early 19th century.

As Germans emigrated to other parts of the world the tradition also spread.

But in places like the United States, having a Christmas tree was often viewed as a foreign pagan custom until the mid-19th century.

Queen Victoria, Prince Albert popularise Christmas trees

While the Christmas tree originated in Germany, it was Britain's Queen Victoria and Prince Albert who made it popular in the 1840s and 1850s.

Victoria's mother, Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, was German so she grew up having a decorated tree at Christmas time.

But the idea of decorating a whole tree was not common among Brits until a drawing of the royal family celebrating around a decorated Christmas tree in Windsor Castle was published by the Illustrated London News in 1848.

Victoria and Albert were popular royals and soon every British home had a tree decked out with decorations, candles and sweets. The same image was published two years later in the United States in Godey's Lady's Book — though Victoria's tiara and Albert's moustache were removed to make the image more American.

It was the first widely circulated picture of a decorated evergreen Christmas tree in the US and soon the Christmas tree was in vogue.

Christmas trees today

Today, Christmas trees come in all different shapes and sizes from traditional fir to artificial. The tradition of decorating a tree is embraced by millions of people worldwide of different faiths and cultures.

While it is still a symbol of Christianity to some, to others it is simply part of December celebrations.

"Here in Australia we've embraced the European aspect of Christmas," Dr Wilson said. "We eat the fish and the prawns, et cetera, but I think we are relatively traditional.

"The fact that so many of us still do the turkey and the ham, placing the gifts under the tree — that's definitely something that links back to our European roots."

Editors note: This article was sourced from ABC Radio (Canberra)