

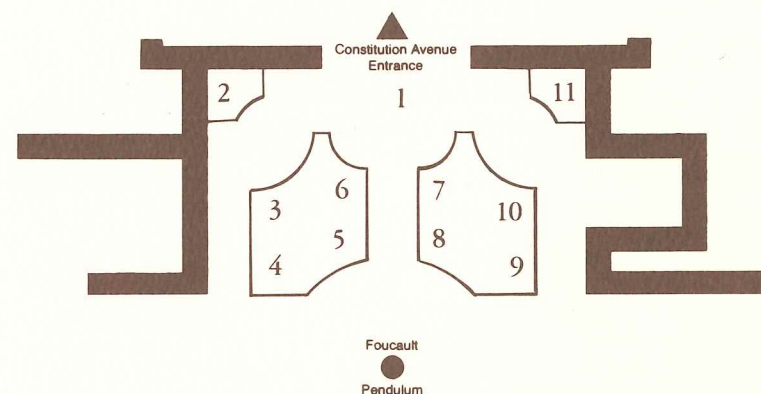
## The Trees of Christmas

The Christmas tree is one of the world's most beautiful and expressive Christmas symbols. In it are captured the sacred and the secular, the rich varieties of national and regional traditions and festivals, fact and folklore, the simple and the sophisticated.

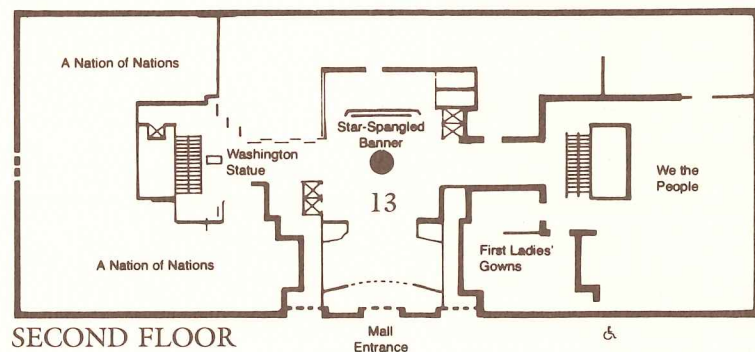
Just as the observance of Christmas itself has evolved out of many influences through the centuries, so has the decoration of the Christmas tree taken many distinctive forms as people have supplemented the traditional with their own original touches.\*

The ornaments that decorate these trees are not historic, but were made by Smithsonian volunteers. The decorations suggest that Christmas, especially through use of the tree, is now "visible" in many nations that are not predominantly Christian.

\*From the publishers' preface. *The Trees of Christmas* by Edna Metcalfe, (Abingdon Press: Nashville & New York, 1969).



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

## Credits

### Office of Horticulture

James R. Buckler  
Lauranne C. Nash  
Peter J. Nerret  
Kathryn Meehan  
Susan Gurney  
Sandra L. Conway  
August A. Dietz IV  
Kenneth Hawkins  
Daisy G. Reese

The Office of Horticulture gratefully acknowledges all Smithsonian staff members who helped develop this exhibition.

## Suggested Readings

Dean, Libby, *Critters, Angels and Stars*, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania: Tri-County Conservancy of the Brandywine, Inc., 1975.

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Haywood, Helen, *Crochet Snowflakes*, Books I, II, III, IV, V, and VI. Annapolis, Maryland.

Hornung, Clarence P., *An Old-Fashioned Christmas in Illustration and Decoration*. New York: Dover Publications, 1975.

Keller, Doxie and McNeil, Lois, *Wheat Weaving*. Hutchinson, Kansas: Mutual Press, 1977.

*Wheat Weaving II*. Hutchinson, Kansas: Mutual Press, 1979.

*Wheat and Straw*. Hutchinson, Kansas: Mutual Press, 1980.

*Country Straw I*. Hutchinson, Kansas: Mutual Press, 1981.

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O'Neil, Sunny, *The Gift of Christmas Past*. Nashville American Association for State and Local History, 1981.

O'Neil, Sunny, *Sunny O'Neil's Favorite Christmas Decorations*. Bethesda, Maryland, 1977.

Schultz, Carolyn and Stucky, Adelia, *Wheat Weaving Made Easy*. North Newton, Kansas: Mennonite Press, 1977.

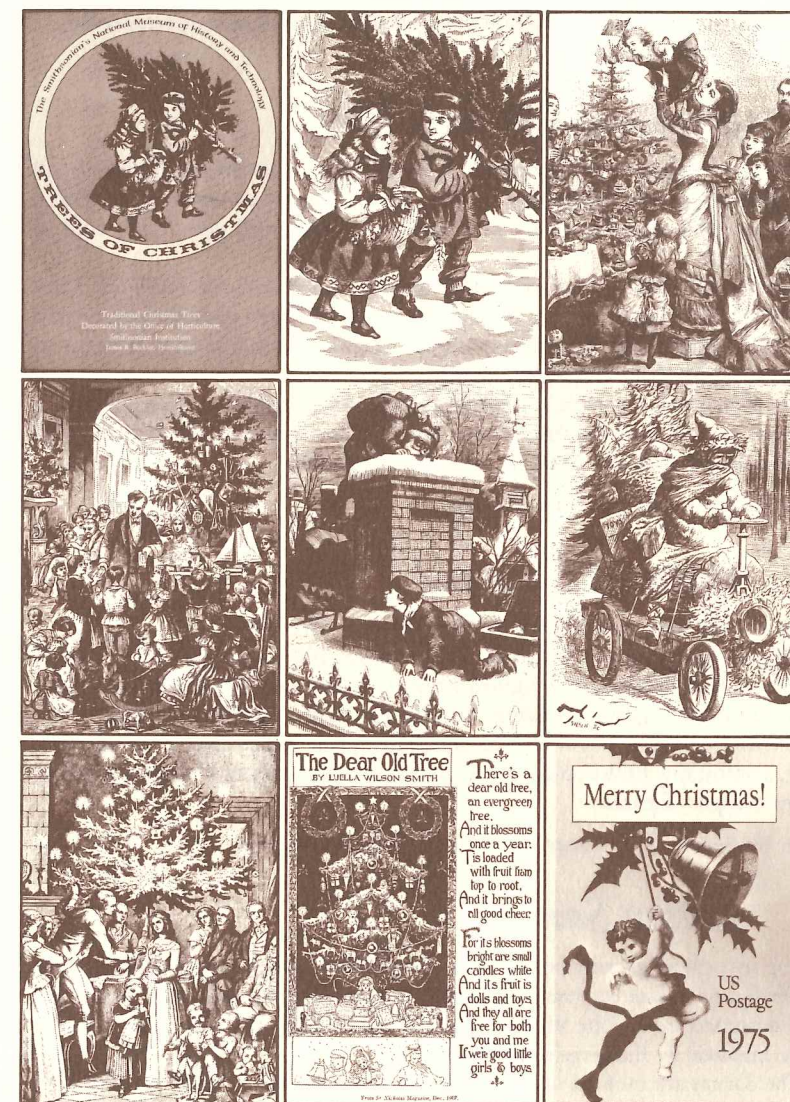
Snyder, Phillip V., *The Christmas Tree Book*. New York: Viking Press, 1976.

For further information on the *Trees of Christmas* exhibition contact the Office of Horticulture, Smithsonian Institution, Room 2401, Arts and Industries Building, Washington, D.C. 20560.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

## Tenth Annual Trees of Christmas

Decorated by the Office of Horticulture



National Museum of American History

DECEMBER 19, 1986 THROUGH JANUARY 6, 1987



## 1 The Trees of Christmas Tree

In honor of the tenth annual *Trees of Christmas* exhibition, several selections from each of the seventy-four trees that have appeared in the last nine years decorate this tree.

The use of the Christmas tree, although rather contemporary in its worldwide popularity, is a tradition that many Europeans have cherished for generations. In this country, the Christmas tree has been a custom since about 1747. This exhibition of ethnic, historical, and contemporary Christmas trees illustrates the many ways we Americans celebrate this religious, as well as secular, holiday with the Christmas tree.

*From the Office of Horticulture and the thousands of donors who have contributed to this collection in the last nine years*

## 2 Enchanted Wonderland

Once upon a time, when the North Wind blew over the Enchanted Forest, all the creatures hastily found ways to keep warm. Even the trees snuggled down to sleep—all except the Pine, who remained awake and grew quite cold as winter came.

The Rabbit family, who lived under the tree, worried about their Pine. They asked Mother Nature to help protect their tree. She then turned to Jack Frost and said, "Gather the Snowflakes and ask them to form a blanket of snow to shield the Pine from the North Wind."

So, if you happen to be out some moonlit winter night, you might catch a glimpse of Jack and the Snowflakes laying down Pine's winter blanket. The Rabbit family will very likely be nearby—supervising.

*From Elaine E. Head, Waterford, Virginia*

## 3 Japanese Origami

Origami, the Japanese art of paper folding, has two forms.

In traditional origami, which dates from about 1682, square pieces of colored paper are folded into simple figures without cutting or pasting. There are some 100 traditional figures, including the balloon, crane, frog, and helmet.

Creative origami, popular since the 1940s, gives artists more freedom. Cutting, combining folded pieces, and using a variety of paper shapes result in more complex figures.

*From Washington, D.C., Chapter Number 1 Ikebana International*

## 4 Action Santas

These rosy-cheeked, roly-poly Santas, which do everything from play lacrosse, football, and soccer to pose as a doctor, fireman, or crab trapper, were created and designed by Debby Hornyak. Many of the fifty different Action Santas were inspired by the artist's children.

The Santas are molded of salt dough dyed with paint and then slowly baked in a warm oven. Each Santa is then dipped in lacquer seven times for a shiny finish.

Candy canes, strings of popcorn and beads, and tartan plaid bows tied with baby's breath complete the trimmings for this family's tree.

*From Debby Hornyak and family, Severna Park, Maryland*

## 5 Folk Art Tree

Tole and other forms of decorative painting were introduced in America by early European immigrants. The French word *tole* means tin, although tole painting is applied to a number of surfaces, including wood, glass, porcelain, canvas, and fabric. Typical subjects are folk people, flowers, fruit, and animals.

*From the Nation's Capital Chapter of the National Society of Tole and Decorative Painters, Inc.*

## 6 American Embroidery

Embroidery and beadwork have been used over the centuries for personal and religious adornment. Silk, gold, and silver threads, similar to those employed by Sara Hamilton, were used on church vestments and on the garments of the wealthy in Europe in the Middle Ages. The techniques used to make these embroidery patterns, however, originated in China and elsewhere in the Far East. Ms. Hamilton was inspired by the turn-of-the-century embroidery work of Lucy Mackrille at the Washington Cathedral.

Dixie Rettig incorporated time-honored designs and symbols, representing many of America's ethnic and religious heritages, using ageless embroidery techniques and beadwork. She has been designing and producing these ornaments since the early 1970s.

*From Sara Hamilton, Lubbock, Texas, and Dixie Rettig, Alexandria, Virginia*

## 7 Germany

The earliest known reference to the Christmas tree dates to 1494, when Strasbourg poet Sebastian Brant mentioned one in his poem "Das Narrenschiff." Early trees were decorated with sweets, *oblaten* (German for unleavened bread), apples, and colored paper.

Over the centuries, millions have been captivated by the spectacle of the lavishly decorated and illuminated Christmas tree, especially the memorable German tree adorned with wax candles. The simple ornaments—made of wood, straw, nuts, or gold paper—draw upon folklore, mythology, and medieval art.

*From A.G.A.S., the Association of German-American Societies of Greater Washington, D.C.*

## 8 Nutcracker Suite

The Nutcracker story has been a traditional part of Christmas since E. T. A. Hoffmann introduced his tale of *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* in 1816. Hoffmann's tale inspired other stories, music, and ballets. Perhaps the best-known ballet is Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*. These ornaments, yet another adaptation of the colorful characters in this fantasy, are worked in different needle techniques using a variety of threads and fabrics.

*From the Washington, D.C., chapter, Embroiderers' Guild of America, Inc.*

### Cover

The cover reproduces, in miniature, the covers of *Trees of Christmas* exhibition brochures from the past nine years.

1977	1978	1979
1980	1981	1982
1983	1984	1985

## 9 Twelve Days of Christmas

The song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" originates from a traditional English rhyme or chant, with lyrics taken from *Mirth Without Mischief*, a children's book published in London about 1780. The characters from the song are depicted here by hand-cast pewter ornaments. Pewter, an alloy of copper and tin, was originally cast in molds of sand or brass; these ornaments were cast in plaster molds.

*From The National Art Honor Society, Northwestern High School (Hyattsville, Maryland), and Nancy DePlatchett*

## 10 Kansas Golden Wheat Dollies

The folkcraft of wheat weaving, traditionally called "corn dolly plaiting," dates to pagan times. At harvest time, people prepared straw figures and ornaments to add to the celebration of harvest festivals.

Wheat and straw work has become an important craft in Kansas, the Wheat State, where craftspeople duplicate the corn dollies of the past as well as create their own original designs. Wheat dollies have become especially prominent as Christmas tree decorations in many Kansas homes.

*From the wheat weavers of Kansas*

## 11 American Victorian

This tree is decorated as it would have been by an upper middle-class American family of the 1870s. The trimmings include reproductions of typical ornaments, cookies, and gifts made at home or bought in shops. The elaborateness of the ornaments reflects the influence of the Industrial Revolution.

*From Sunny O'Neil, Bethesda, Maryland*

## 12 Crocheted Snowflakes

The old European needle art of crocheting snowflakes has been gaining popularity in America, where crocheting has always been a popular pastime. Helen Haywood, Dorothy Scrimshaw, and Priscilla Sparks have created over 150 designs and styles, including three-dimensional and frosted varieties. The center of each snowflake shows a favorite activity on the front and the date and maker's name on the back. These creations preserve many cherished memories.

The snowflakes created by Virginia Smith reflect the natural beauty of the snowflake. The designs are based on nature's six-pointed crystalline structure.

*From Helen Haywood, Dorothy Scrimshaw, and Priscilla Sparks, Annapolis, Maryland, and Virginia Smith, Baxter, Tennessee*

## 13 1984 White House Christmas Tree

Thousands of visitors to the official 1984 White House Christmas tree delighted in the imaginative, handmade "critters" that were the contribution of the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. These whimsical creatures are fabricated by museum volunteers from pine cones, pods, flowers, nuts, seeds, and other natural materials gathered from roadsides, meadows, and gardens. The "glitter" that adorns some of the ornaments is made from mica.

*From the Brandywine River Museum volunteers, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania*