

TIME TRAVELLER'S DIARY: A Gift Yule Remember

By Rachel Dice

Volunteer, Aurora Museum & Archives

With just under two weeks to go until Christmas, we are all in a tizzy making sure that everything is prepared for the upcoming holiday season. You might have a list quite a bit like Santa's that you're checking at least twice?a list of gifts and people to buy for. For those of us who are scrambling to find something for the more difficult people on our lists, the December issues of the 1914 Aurora Banner have plenty of holiday gift advice for those last-minute shoppers.

Christmas in 1914 was an interesting affair. The First World War was raging in Europe, and while there had been hope the war would be over by Christmas, it was beginning to look like that wouldn't be the case. The local paper urged Aurorans to continue as normal and make Christmas as merry as it has ever been. The advice was to 'buy gifts, give gifts, and keep things normal here while helping to care for the distressed, wounded, and bereaved' (Aurora Banner, November 26, 1914). Other advertisements remind readers not to forget an annual Christmas gathering, and to forgive the absence of Santa Claus as he has gone to fight the war. Undoubtedly, Aurorans were doing their best to celebrate the season with enough zeal to rival the Yuletide feasts of old.

Clearly, the most difficult part of Christmas is deciding just what to get for our friends and family. One advertisement urged Aurorans to get all they can out of Christmas and enjoy the atmosphere by making their own gifts (Aurora Banner, December 3, 1914). There's nothing more wonderful than receiving a scarf knitted just for you, or a patchwork quilt made with love in each stitch. Making homemade gifts can help send the message that Christmas is a giving time, meant for showing loved ones how much you appreciate them.

If homemade gifts aren't your style?and truly, that's understandable since at the time of writing I still have a blanket, two scarves, and one more hat to knit?then thankfully there are other options. A gift list published on December 14, 1914 provided plenty of fun suggestions for him, her, and the family home.

Popular gifts of the season for the house were corn poppers, piano lamps, or luminous radiators. Looking for gifts for a man on your list? A cigar lighter comes highly recommended, as well as a shaving mug or a bedside reading lamp. Need some gifts for the ladies on your list? An art glass table lamp might be a good idea, or even a hot water kettle or coffee percolator. If those gifts fail to tickle your fancy, then there are always home medical devices, which were pretty popular in 1914 for treating cases of hysteria and discomfort.

So, wherever you find yourself this holiday season, remember to keep up the spirit of giving and be thankful that Santa Claus won't be off fighting the war this time around!