

Candlelight History Hunt

6th—8th Grade

Christmas in the 19th Century

Christmas in early Dallas tended to be a simple holiday. Early settlers often used the holidays as a reason to celebrate the passing of another year. By 1848, Dallas hosted annual Christmas balls, featuring music and food.

Christmas trees became common in the 1870s. Many public places, such as churches and schools, would decorate a Christmas tree. It wasn't until a few years later that trees became more common in homes.

Store-bought toys did not become common gifts for children until the turn of the century. Prior to that, items such as fireworks, candy, fruit and clothing were much more common. Santa Claus first appears in Christmas stories in the late 1880s, but our modern image of him doesn't emerge until the 1910s.

While you visit the Village, notice the changes in Christmas celebrations.

- * Describe the decorations in **Millermore**. Are they what you expected to see?
- * How are the Christmas decorations different in **Millermore** and **Sullivan**?
- * Why might there be a tree in the **Renner School**?
- * What household objects in the **de Léon House** suggest holiday celebrations?
- * If you had relatives that lived far away, how might you visit them during the holidays in 1861? How could you visit them in 1901?
- * Who might stay in the **Hotel** during the holidays?

◆ Describe the differences between the **Shotgun House** decorations and the **de Léon House** decorations.

◆ Visit the **Blum Brothers General Store**. What would you buy as a holiday gift for someone in your family?

* What December holiday is celebrated in the **Blum House**? What objects in the house help them to celebrate?

* What kind of changes were there in celebrating Christmas between 1861 and 1901? How do those celebrations compare to today?

* What kind of gifts are there at the **Farmstead**?

Character Chat

When you meet a historic character, ask them questions. You might try starting with:

- * How do you celebrate the holidays?
- * What kind of special foods do you make or eat to celebrate?
- * What kind of presents might be under the tree?