

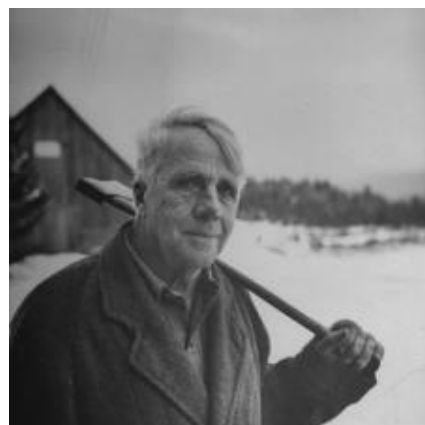


THE CHRONICLE

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An Old Man's Winter Night by Robert Frost

All out of doors looked darkly in at him
 Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars,
 That gathers on the pane in empty rooms.
 What kept his eyes from giving back the gaze
 Was the lamp tilted near them in his hand.
 What kept him from remembering what it was
 That brought him to that creaking room was age.
 He stood with barrels round him ~ at a loss,
 And having scared the cellar under him
 In clomping there, he scared it once again
 In clomping off; ~ and scared the outer night,
 Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar
 Of trees and crack of branches, common things,
 But nothing so like beating on a box.
 A light he was to no one but himself
 Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what,
 A quiet light, and then not even that.
 He consigned to the moon, such as she was,
 So late-arising, to the broken moon
 As better than the sun in any case
 For such a charge, his snow upon the roof,
 His icicles along the wall to keep;
 And slept. The log that shifted with a jolt
 Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted,
 And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept.
 One aged man ~ one man ~ can't keep a house,
 A farm, a countryside, or if he can,
 It's thus he does it of a winter night.



Robert Frost
Image taken from pageulp.com

Robert Frost Biography

Robert Frost is one of the most widely admired and highly honored American poets of the twentieth century. He is esteemed for his depictions of New England rural life, his command of American colloquial speech, and his realistic verse portraying ordinary people in everyday situations. Frost is considered an unofficial poet laureate of the United States.

*Biography Information taken from
www.famouspoetsandpoems.com*



Image taken from www.blingcheese.com

IN THIS EDITION: Winter Festivals



What is the Winter Solstice?

The 2011 solstice will be on Thursday, December 22nd. The North Pole is tilted furthest away from the sun at the solstice.

The December solstice occurs when the sun reaches its most southerly declination of -23.5 degrees. In other words, it is when the North Pole is tilted 23.5 degrees away from the sun. Depending on the Gregorian calendar, the December solstice occurs annually on a day between December 20 and December 23. On this date, all places above a latitude of 66.5 degrees north (Arctic Polar Circle) are now in darkness, while locations below a latitude of 66.5 degrees south (Antarctic Polar Circle) receive 24 hours of daylight.

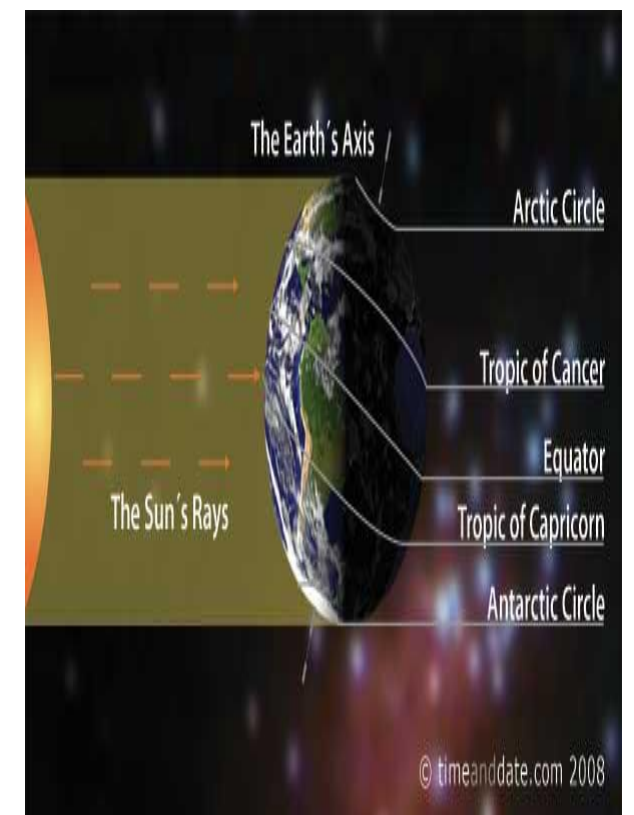
The sun is directly overhead on the Tropic of Capricorn in the southern hemisphere during the December solstice. It also marks the longest day of the year in terms of daylight hours for those living south of the equator. Those living or travelling south from the Antarctic Circle towards the South Pole will see the midnight sun during this time of the year.

On the contrary, for an observer in the northern hemisphere, the December solstice marks the day of the year with the least hours of daylight. Those living or traveling north of the Arctic Circle towards the North Pole will not be able to see the sun during this time of the year.

The December solstice has played an important role the lives of many people in ancient times. To this day, the world is still influenced by various traditions linked to the observance of the December solstice.

Information taken from www.timeanddate.com

THE WINTER SOLSTICE



The North Pole is tilted furthest away from the sun at the solstice (not to scale).

For more information on the
 Winter Solstice visit
www.timeanddate.com

SPIRITUAL AND SECULAR FESTIVALS

Bodhi Day A Day of Enlightenment

There are many special or holy days held throughout the year by the Buddhist community. Many of these days celebrate the birthdays of Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana tradition or other significant dates in the Buddhist calendar. Bodhi Day is on December 8th. In the *Lotus Sutra*, it is taught that the Buddha's awakened life actually precedes the temporal awakening beneath the Bodhi Tree 2,500 years ago. On this day, the Buddhist community honors the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama ~ the Buddha (a title which means "Awakened One") or Shakyamuni, which means the "Sage of the Shakya Clan." Buddhists observe the importance of this event in many ways, including prayer, meditation and teachings.

Thanks to BuddhaNet.net

and

*Bodhi Day
Celebrating the Buddha's Awakening*

by Ryuei Michael McCormick

*Copyright by Ryuei Michael
McCormick. 1997-9, 2002.*

Chinese Winter Festivals

Did you know that December 25th is a secular national holiday in China? *The Signature of the Constitution of the Republic of China* (Taiwan) is celebrated in some respects like Christmas due to its date! Also, the *Dongzhi Festival* is when the Chinese celebrate winter! This festival marks the yang qualities of light and energy.

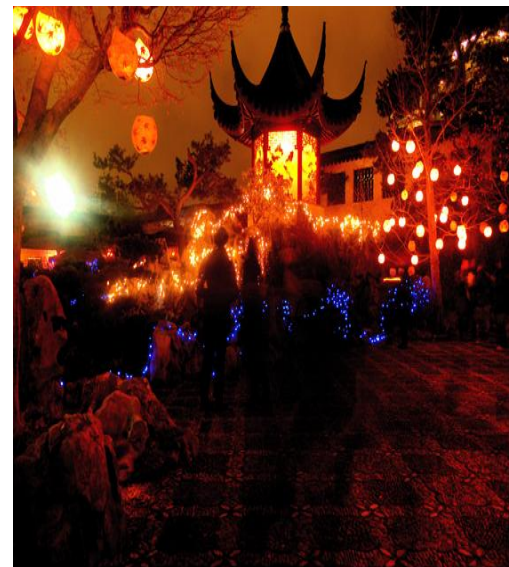
*Information and Image right taken from
www.vancouverforlife.com*



Image taken from www.wisdomquarterly.com

Above: The Buddha meditates below the Bodhi Tree.

Below: An enchanting display of lanterns and lights in celebration of the Dongzhi Festival.



Pagan and Neo-Pagan

Yule: The Pagan Winter Solstice

The Winter Solstice festival was called Yule in pre-Christian Northern Europe. The celebration of Yule predates the Christian holiday by thousands of years.

The etymology (or origin of the word) of Yule has been the object of much debate. Some believe it to be derived from the old Anglo-Saxon word *Iul*, which means *wheel*, and connected to the Celtic concept of the Wheel of the Year. Other linguists say that this interpretation is unlikely, since the word for *Yule*, which they spell *Yehwla*, predates the invention of the wheel by more than a thousand years. Still others have attempted to trace the word to *Julius Caesar*, or to *Jolnir*, which is another name for the Norse god Odin.

So, why is Christmas celebrated on December 25th when historical and biblical evidence indicate that Jesus Christ was not born on December 25, but in the Spring? A common theory is that the Christian church designated this date as the day of Christ's birth to coincide with the Roman Saturnalia festival and the Northern European pagan midwinter solstice celebrations, in order to facilitate the conversion of heathens.

Neo-Pagan Foundations

Neo-Pagan religions are also called Earth religions. They bring many of the old customs back to life. In fact, most so-called Christmas traditions are deeply rooted in ancient Yule rituals. From ancient times to the present day, the sun and its light has been celebrated by people all over the planet! The Vikings decorated the Yule log, usually a large oak log with sprigs of fir, holly, or yew. They carved runes on it to call on the Gods to protect from misfortune in the coming year. A piece of the previous year's Yule log was used to light the new log, and a piece of the log was always saved to protect the home during the coming year, and to use to light next year's fire. Today, most know the Yule log as a sweet edible treat; or, as a log burning in a fireplace to holiday music (24-7) on a cable network channel during the holidays.

Neo-Pagan Foundations (*continued*)

Even the Christmas tree goes back to pre-Christian times. The Vikings decorated evergreen trees with pieces of food and clothes, small statues of the Gods, carved runes, etc., to entice the tree spirits to come back in the spring. The Romans also decorated trees with trinkets and candles at the Saturnalia festival.

Ancient myths also surround the mistletoe. The Vikings believed it could resurrect the dead, a belief connected to a legend about the resurrection of Balder, the Sun God.

The Druids considered holly a sacred plant and believed that woodland spirits lived in it during winter time. (The Druids were the priests of the Celtic people, believed to have come from the Black Sea region about 4,000 years ago and spreading through southern and middle Europe, England, Scotland and Ireland.)

In ancient Rome, holly was the sacred plant of the Saturn, the god of sowing and harvest, and during the Saturnalia festival, holly was used to decorate homes, palaces and marketplaces in honor of Saturn. Romans also sent gifts of holly boughs to friends during the Saturnalia time.

Santa Claus is a combination of several pre-Christian legends. His origins have been traced back to Odin, who was depicted as a wise old man with a beard, riding on his eight-legged horse Sleipner. Another pre-Christian Santa forebear appeared at British, and later Saxon, pagan midwinter festivals. The Saxons called him Father Time, King Frost or King Winter and he was represented by an actor dressed in a green hooded cloak, wearing a wreath of holly, ivy or mistletoe.



*The Holly Berry
Image taken from treesforlife.org*

FESTIVALS OF LIGHT

In ancient Egypt, the Feast of the Burning Lamps honored the gods Isis and Osiris.

In ancient Rome, the Solstice Celebration was called Saturnalia in honor of Saturn, the Roman god of harvest.

The Hindu holiday Diwali, meaning Rows of Lighted Lamps, is celebrated like Christmas with decorating of homes, eating of sweets, etc., and is the most important festival in India. Different regions attach different legends to it, telling about deities winning victory over demons, symbolizing the victory of good over evil.

At the Jewish Hanukkah in December, one candle is lit for each day of an eight-day Feast of Lights.

The Chinese New Year, usually celebrated in January or February, is based on a legend where fireworks and lanterns were used to chase away a dragon that came out of the Yellow River.

In Thailand, Loy Krathong, which means "Festival of Floating Leaf Cups," has been celebrated for over 6,000 years. Leaf shaped boats with candles burning on them are launched into rivers to take away sins and grant good wishes for the new year.

The ancient Incas celebrated Inti Raymi, where the Sun god Wiracocha, was honored. The festival was banned by the Catholic church in the 16th century. Quecia Indians in Cusco, Peru, revived the festival about 1950, and it is now a major festival.

Native North Americans have celebrated both Solstices and equinoxes from ancient times, as shown by many stone structures aligned with the position of the Sun. The Pueblo tribes celebrate the Winter Solstice with rites focusing on Spring and rebirth. The Hopi Indians' Soyal ceremony lasts for 20 days and includes purification rituals, blessings and feasting. Other Native American winter celebrations include the Bear Dance, the Feather Dance and the Navajo Night Chant.



Diwali Rows of Lighted Lamps
Image taken from www.buddhachannel.tv



Hanukkah Menorah
Image taken from www.go4costumes.com



Navajo Night Chant
Image taken from degrazia.org

Seasons Greetings from Our Family to Yours

Snow, it won't be long before we'll all
be there with snow
Snow, I want to wash my hands, my
face and hair with snow

Snow, I long to clear a path and lift a
spade of snow
Snow, oh, to see a great big man
entirely made of snow

Where it's snowing
All winter through
That's where I want to be
Snowball throwing
That's what I'll do
How I'm longing to ski
Through the

Snow, those glist'ning houses that seem
to be built of snow
Snow, oh, to see a mountain covered
with a quilt of snow

I'll soon be there with snow
I'll wash my hair with snow
And with a spade of snow
I'll build a man that's made of snow
I'd love to stay up with you but I
recommend a little shuteye
Go to sleep
And dream
Of snow, snow, snow, snow, snow

Snow Lyrics
written by Irving Berlin