British Christmas Parcel

Wesley Cook
wesley.jcook360@gmail.com

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Custom

Informant: Christine D. Hamilton is a mother of seven. At 66 years-old, she is a grandmother and great grandmother to many grandchildren. Christine immigrated from England when she was still an infant, eventually settling in Provo, Utah. Christine is proud of her British heritage and is happy to share her experiences growing up in an immigrant household. Christine is my grandmother from my maternal side of the family. With her husband Ron Hamilton, Christine lives in the suburbs on the west side of Logan, Utah.

Context: I interviewed Christine in her cozy home in Logan, Utah on November 4, 2018. She was sitting in her office working on adding to her family history work. Christine was bundled in a warm pair of pajamas to help with the night’s chill. Decorating her office are the various objects from England she has collected over the years. When asked about any memorable traditions she had growing up, Christine thought for a minute, smiled, and began talking about Christmas traditions. Being first generation British, British traditions were very prevalent in Christine’s childhood home. Most of Christine’s extended family still live in England. As a result, Christine’s interaction with aunts and uncles was limited. One of Christine’s most memorable Christmas tradition was the English Parcel. Every year during Christmas time Christine’s extended family would send her family a package in the mail. This present was known as an English parcel. The English parcel was wrapped in a special kind of paper found in England and was the last thing they opened as a family. Inside were gifts unique to England. The English parcel was normally fun of English candy. Being something not found in America, this English candy always excited Christine and her siblings. This tradition was significant to Christine, as it was one of the limited interactions she had with her family in England.

Text: Another thing that I really remember at Christmas time was my dad loved to hand out the gifts. We always had to wait until the very end to open up our English parcel, which is the package that came from our relatives in England. And that had our favorite gifts, because they were English gifts and English candy that you cannot get in America. And we would look forward every single year to opening that last English package. It had its very own you know it was English paper, brown paper, but it was very English and very… you didn’t have the same kind of paper in America. So, I mean it really stood out from any other package. This was one of my favorite things about Christmas.
Texture: While talking about her childhood home during Christmas, Christine smiled a lot. She was very excited to share these experiences with me. It had been a very long time since she had the opportunity to share these memories with someone. This tradition is not used by my mom or her siblings. It is likely that this tradition would have been forgotten when my grandmother passes away. When talking about the English parcel, Christine’s eyes lit up. The English parcel was easiest Christine’s favorite growing up.